

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT WORKING PAPER SERIES

SBMWPS: 05-05/2013

.....

The Influences on Female
Participation and Progress in the
Labor Force: Implications for
Human Resource Management in
the United Arab Emirates

Linzi Kemp



Working Paper 05-05/2013

School of Business & Management
Working Paper Series (SBM WPS)



The Influences on Female Participation and Progress in the Labor Force: Implications for Human Resource Management in the United Arab Emirates

Linzi Kemp
AUS

The views expressed in papers published in our series are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of any department at SBM, the SBM itself, the American University of Sharjah (AUS) and/or any of their affiliates. Additionally, all papers in the series are made available on an "as is" basis without warranties of any kind. We, that is, the relevant department at SBM, SBM, AUS and/or any of the affiliates, hereby expressly disclaim any warranties of any kind, whether expressed or implied, including without limitation, the warranties of non-infringement, merchantability, and fitness for a particular purpose. Furthermore, we offer no warranties, expressed or implied, regarding the accuracy, sufficiency or suitability of the material found in the published papers. The users have the sole responsibility for inspecting and testing all content to their satisfaction before using them.

**The Influences on Female Participation and Progress in the Labor Force:
Implications for Human Resource Management in the United Arab
Emirates.**

Linzi J Kemp

*School of Business & Management, American University of Sharjah
Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
PO 26666 Sharjah, UAE
¹ lkemp@aus.edu
00971 6 5152614*

¹ [*lkemp@aus.edu](mailto:lkemp@aus.edu)

The Abstract

This paper reports on the first qualitative research study of women's life histories in an investigation of their participation and progress in the labor force of the United Arab Emirates. Data were collected through interviews with 18 female participants. The sample represents a cross section of national women who work outside the home. Content analysis of the interview narratives recognizes emergent themes that influence women from early years, through education, and into careers. Findings show that the family and cultural context, significant others, professional considerations, and their future competency influence women's participation in the labor force. The implications for human resource management are discussed with references to these emerging themes. Changes to policies and practices are suggested to recruit and retain women in the labor force. The collection and analysis of further data will increase scholarly knowledge and has implications for business practice. Increased rates of local women in the labor force is a topic of national interest in the United Arab Emirates.

Keywords: HRM policies and practices; life histories; women in the labor force; United Arab Emirates.

Introduction

The aim of the study is introduced within the context for women's employment in the United Arab Emirates² (UAE). The methodological approach and data analysis are overviewed. The findings reveal the influences on women from early years through their careers. We discuss the implications for human resource management (HRM) to support women's participation and progress in the labor force.

The study was undertaken because of various factors pertinent for research interest. The labor market in the UAE is composed of citizens and expatriate workers, and women are a distinct minority in that population (UAE National Bureau of Statistics 2010; Harrison and Michailova 2012). As such, the population profile is an unusual and interesting context for HRM research. In this paper, we concentrate on women who are citizens of the country. Emirati³ females have taken advantage of improved access to education over relatively recent years, and their numbers in the labor force have increased (Abdulla and Ridge 2011; World Bank 2012). Increased rates of local women in the labor force is a topic of national interest in the United Arab Emirates. HRM policies and practices to support women's participation and progress in the labor force is therefore a worthy area for academic investigation (Burden-Leahy 2009).

The sample for this study is composed of 18 female UAE nationals, all of whom work outside the home. The research sample is extracted from a more extensive qualitative study of data collected from 30 working women (expatriate and citizens) over a two year period. A wealth of interview data was collected through audio recordings, later transcribed, field notes and other documentation supplied by the participants (Holliday 2001). Content analysis was performed on the life history narratives collected at interview. Themes were interpreted by

² The UAE is formed of seven Emirates: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm Al Quwain

³ Emirati, a term used to describe a citizen of the UAE; they are also termed 'nationals' or 'locals'.

the researcher from the participants words about early years (pre and early school), through education (high school, further and higher education) and in careers (work life).

Themes that emerged to form the findings of the study indicate that the context of the family and culture is important in the early years. The years of education are marked by the influence of significant people and individual career aspirations. Career progress is then defined by training and professional development initiated by the women, and provided by organizations. The implication for HRM is that policies and practices can extend beyond the company context to support female participation and progress in the labor force. In the early years, information is required by females and their families about the context of work. Partnerships between educational institutions and human resource managers (HR mgrs.) offer opportunity for exposure of young women to the work environment. On-going learning, provided by the company, through professional development, training, and sponsorship will retain women for successful career progress.

The study extends academic knowledge about the participation and progress of women in the UAE labor force. Furthermore, data collected through qualitative study on women's life histories is important for HRM. The knowledge gained about influences on females to enter, remain and progress within employment impacts on organizational policies and practices. HR managers, who drive policy change in support of women's progress, can attract, retain and develop these high calibre human resources.

Literature review

Context

The UAE is a relatively small country with a multicultural population of an estimated 8.264 million, of which 17% are citizens of the country (Balakrishnan 2010; UAE National Bureau of Statistics 2010⁴). Women (citizens and expatriates) make up 30% of the total UAE population; although in the national population the numbers of males and females are relatively equal (UAE National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). For studies about expatriate women cf. Vallaster (2003) and Kemp (2012).

The UAE government actively supports female citizens into education and employment, and 'launched a five-year plan to develop the role of women' (Al Masah Capital Ltd. 2012, p.3). The country has experienced an increase in women in business over recent years (Dubai Women Establishment 2011). For Emiratis, the increase of women in employment has been supported through a program of 'Emiratization' (Rees, Mamman, and Bin Braik 2007; Zeffane and Kemp 2012). Similar programs are also found in other countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council⁵ (GCC), e.g. 'Saudization' in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Al-Dosary and Rahman, 2005). The programs are aimed to increase the numbers of both genders in the workforce, and to reduce reliance on expatriate workers (Harry 2007).

It is important to study women who work outside the home for their impact on HRM strategies (Ibeh and Carter 2008). The Middle East is of global significance in this millennium, and the role of HRM in the region was recognized through a special issue of the *International Journal of Human Resource Management* (Budhwar and Mellahi 2007; Poole, Schuler, Jackson and Sparrow 2007). It is recognized however, that although there has been

⁴ Numbers tend to be estimates as the last census was in 2005 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010).

⁵ The GCC countries are Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE: <http://www.gcc-sg.org/eng/indexc64c.html?action=GCC> (accessed Feb., 2012).

some academic research to date, further investigation is required on women's participation and progress in the workforce (Burke 2001; Fielden and Davidson 2010; Zahra, 2011).

Madsen (2010a) conducted the first study of life history narratives with female students in the UAE. Kemp (2011) extended that study to investigate influences in the lives of women in the UAE from early years through their careers.

The influences on females from the early years through to higher education

We begin with the influence from their home environment on females in the early years. Waring (2003) found that women considered the support of parents critical for their success, examples are mothers' teaching daughters about life, and the high expectations of fathers as a force for girls to excel.

Family support is a significant influence in the early years on women's progress in education and towards employment, 'family support, educational opportunities... were found to significantly influence the progress of women across the Middle East' (Dubai Women Establishment 2011, p. 3). Metcalfe (2006) explored the cultural dimensions of gender in the Middle East, finding that there was encouragement for women's education. Learning (*hadith*) is important to Muslim families, and the mother's role in the teaching of children is significant (Tonnsen, Alexander, Topolka-Jorissen and Jacobs 2011). The motivation for women to pursue learning is particularly driven by women in the family, due to social and familial expectations of economic mobility and the financial protection that employment offers (Abdulla and Ridge 2011). Women and their families in the UAE value education very highly, 'regardless of where they were educated, whether in the Arab world or the West, these women share a deep-rooted appreciation for education' (Dubai Women Establishment 2011, p.23).

A strategic priority of the UAE government is for 'a first-rate education system', the result is that the country now has a 91% literacy rate amongst females (Rugh 2002; United

Arab Emirates The Cabinet 2012). The Human Development Indicator for education shows that the UAE, with an average of 9.3 years of schooling, is the second highest in the Middle East region (Gallup 2011; United Nations Development Program 2011). Access to education has increased over recent years; female nationals with secondary or higher education amongst those aged 15-29 years of age is at 85%, compared with 69% for those aged 30 years and older (Gallup 2011). Another indication of an improvement in the level of education for a younger generation of women in the UAE is that 95% of the female population now applies to college (Madsen 2010a). Access to further education is eased for women in this country because of the availability of domestic help and their extended families, as well as government sponsorship (Marmenout 2009).

Higher education is provided through a variety of institutions who offer different study options to satisfy the cultural sensibilities of the women and their families. The UAE government provides higher education for women in a mixed gender environment at *The UAE University*, and for women only at *The Higher Colleges of Technology* and *Zayed University*. According to the United Arab Emirates Yearbook (2010), 62% of the students at these government institutions are female. Private universities likewise provide options for higher education in either mixed gender settings, e.g. at *The American University of Sharjah*, or in gender segregated classes, as at *The University of Sharjah*. There are also approximately 40 international branch campuses in the UAE including *The London Business School* and *The University of Wollongong* (Wilkins 2010; Al Masah Capital 2011). Educational, career training and development needs of women are provided at these, and other local and foreign educational institutions (Madsen 2009; Madsen 2010a). Latest figures reveal that 70% of the students in UAE tertiary education are women (Burden-Leahy 2009; Randeree 2009; Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2009; Abdulla and Ridge

2011). Such a high percentage of women has raised the question, *'Where are All the Men?'* in *Higher Education in the United Arab Emirates* (Abdulla and Ridge 2011).

According to the World Economic Forum, 'access to education is one of the primary indicators of women's status and is the root of women's emancipation' (Randeree 2009, p.8). Education enables women to participate in the public sphere, and they have contributed greatly to economic growth in the Middle East (Fernea 2000).

Participation and progress in the labor force - the career years

There is high level government and political support in the UAE for women to gain qualifications that will lead to employment and senior roles.

His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, founder of the country, said:

Nothing could delight me more than to see the woman taking up her distinctive position in society. . . . Nothing should hinder her progress. . . . Like men, women deserve the right to occupy high positions according to their capabilities and qualifications (Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum 2010, para. 3).

Women in the workforce has increased in recent years, and with 28% of Emirati women in employment, the country has the second highest female participation in the GCC (behind Kuwait) (Davidson and Burke 2004; Hoteit, Shehadi, Lamaa and Tarazi 2011). That percentage however, lags behind other countries as, for example, the percentage of women's labor participation in the United States of America stands at 72% (GEM 2010).

A reason suggested for the low percentage of women in the labor force follows the Islamic belief that the roles of men and women are to complement each other (El-Sanabary 1994). This belief leads to a division in society between men and women, where 'it is widely believed that a woman's place is primarily in the home' (Hutchings, Metcalfe and Cooper 2010, p.68). Her Excellency Najla Al Awadhi (a local female entrepreneur) concurs that women are brought up traditionally to consider primarily their role to be that of marriage, and then to be focused on nurturing the next generation (Wharton Business School 2010). Due to

these societal and cultural preferences, women's choice of employment is somewhat channeled into jobs that support their role in the home.

A situation, replicated in other GCC countries, is a preference for national females to seek employment in the public rather than the private sector (Metle 2001; Nelson 2004). As shown by Metcalf (2007), in her study on employment in Bahrain, family friendly HRM policies in the public sector are shaped by Islamic values, evidenced in extensive maternity leave, and shorter working hours. There is also a financial incentive for citizens, because there is higher pay in the public sector than in private industry (Al-Awad and Elhiraika 2002). Furthermore, career choices by women are made towards health and education, services that are often government provided (Hutchings, Metcalfe and Cooper 2010; Wharton Business School, 2010).

Many of the private companies are owned by foreigners, many of whom employ a high percentage of men, this environment is possibly unfamiliar and uncomfortable for women (Rees et al., 2007; Randeree, 2009). An alternative for women, given the societal and cultural considerations on gender roles, is to own their own business (GEM 2012). Although small and medium sized business ownership by women is low, increased levels of entrepreneurship will emerge through training in business ownership (Fielden and Davidson 2010). The motivation for women towards business ownership comes from the needs for work satisfaction, challenge, and financial independence (Haan 2004). An aim for higher status is also a motivator for women to turn towards owning their own business (Toren, Konrad, Yoshioka and Kashlak 1997; Fels 2004).

There are many examples of successful Emirati women leaders in the workforce (Kemp 2008). However, discrimination against women in the Middle East achieving higher status in the public and private sector is a factor to consider, as women are employed in 'support or clerical jobs primarily at the lower end of organizational hierarchies – with

leadership positions typically reserved for men' (Hutchings, Metcalfe and Cooper 2010, p.68). There is evidence of a global phenomenon that equates the role of manager as male (Morgan 1990; Schein, Mueller, Lituchy and Liu 1996; Omar and Davidson 2001). Findings that are replicated in the attitudes of both men and women towards female managers in the UAE (Mostafa 2005). There is a low percentage of women in senior positions globally (Klenke 1999; Adler, Brody and Osland 2000; Adler, Brody and Osland 2001). Estimates for women in middle and senior management roles in the Middle East is low, and in the UAE the percentage varies between 4-9% (Burke 2001; Kemp 2011). In research exploring Middle Eastern women's management opportunities, training in 'self-esteem building, leadership and team work' are highlighted (Mayers, Sonleitner and Wooldridge 2007, p.16).

The literature review indicates that the cultural context, and family are important in the early years, in later years, education is an influence on women's readiness for work. In the career years, it is family friendly organizational policies and practices, training and development and promotion opportunities that effect women's participation and progress in the workforce. To investigate this information from the literature review, a qualitative study was undertaken to explore influences in the lives of Emirati women who work outside the home.

Methodology

The research methodology aims to investigate the life histories of female citizens who work in the UAE (Waring 2003; Tonnsen et al., 2011). A qualitative research methodology is valid for this study, as from talk at interviews and through analyses of what is heard, data are revealed that may not be gathered through quantitative research (Myers 1997). There have been such studies conducted in the United States of America, for example Madsen (2007, p.99) previously explored the childhood of female University Presidents, arguing that 'much of who we are is developed during childhood'.

Sample - participants

Participation in the study is based on four criteria, i.e. gender, location, nationality and role. The sample is of women only as the study is not to compare differences between the genders. It is a sample of convenience, as the researcher and the participants all live and work in the UAE. All the women are citizens who work outside the home, they own their own businesses or are employed in the public and private sectors.

The summary of the demographic, educational and employment profiles of participants are contained in table 1.

Table 1. Participant profiles - goes here.

Eighteen (18) women participated in this study, exceeding the recommendation for validity in qualitative research for a sample size of at least 10 (Madsen 2010b). The women joined the study following personal contact by the researcher, after reading and hearing about their work in local and international news articles, and from websites. Others came to participate via contact with local women's groups, and through meeting the women at business conferences.

The profile of the participants is representative of a cross sample of national women as compared with data on the country citizens. Three age ranges are represented in our study; female employment is mainly between 20-44 years of age, and it peaks at 53% aged 25-34 (United Arab Emirates National Bureau of Statistics, 2009, labor force, table 11). In the family category, the majority of participants' parents were employed (Father), or housewife (Mother). The employment status of Emiratis is that 97% are paid workers (United Arab Emirates National Bureau of Statistics, 2009, labor force, table 16). The study participants represent the educational profile of Emirati females; 72% graduate from a government college, with an undergraduate degree in Business & Economics. (United Arab Emirates

National Bureau of Statistics, 2011, education, table 23). In employment, the study participants show a similar progression in the organization to that of the population, i.e. the more senior the role, the fewer the women (Kemp, Madsen, and El-Saidi, 2013).

Table i Participant profile

Data Collection

The participants chose the interview locations based on convenience to themselves; we met in coffee shops; interviews also took place at their business premises, and in the researcher's office. The research was explained, a consent form was signed by each participant; stating the confidential nature of the interview process; that personal and organizational names would be disguised; data collection and analyses were for the purpose of academic publication (Alderson 1998).

Each interview lasted approximately one hour, the process was audio recorded with permission, and transcripts were made. The transcripts were prepared by a Graduate Assistant, following training by the researcher, and more than 360 pages of transcripts were prepared. In addition to recording, detailed field notes were taken at each interview. CVs were also requested and forwarded by some of the participants. Other documentation relating to the participants were collected, e.g. two sent newspaper articles in which they appeared, and others links to their business websites.

The format of these semi structured interviews followed a set of areas to explore, previously validated in interviews with women leaders in the USA, and with female students in the UAE (Madsen 2007; Madsen 2010a,b). The interviews were structured through categories of childhood, youth, and professional experience. Initially, questions were posed from which demographic and employment data were obtained. Too many structured i.e. pre-set interview questions might have led to 'set' responses from interviewees rather than

allowing a more natural conversation to arise (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Therefore, to encourage the women to talk about themselves, a semi structured approach to each interview was followed, to allow the participants to open up about what was important to them. So as the interview progressed, it became more semi - structured as open questions were asked, e.g. “what’s your thoughts about?” Clarification to answers was sought e.g. “can you elaborate further on that?” Through listening to each individual, and following the flow of their input, a discussion emerged about issues the participants considered influenced their career progress (Oakley 1990; Roberts 1990).

Content analysis

All data (transcripts, recordings, field-notes) were entered into *Nvivo 9*, software that facilitates effective qualitative research. Using the analytical functions of the software, the content of each interview was analyzed in three stages. Each stage built upon the next to investigate influences, as referred to by each of the participants.

Data collection

Table 2. Research analysis - context and themes. Goes here.

Stage 1. Keyword search

Content analysis was firstly performed on the interview data to reveal keywords of significance to the interviewees (Welch, Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki and Paavilainen-mäntymäki 2011). A ‘word frequency’ search was initially performed on the collected interview data for the most frequently occurring words across all participants. At this first stage, we confined the search to words with more than four letters, and to the 100 most frequent. The word frequency search included stem words and synonyms, for example, ‘school’ included stem words and synonyms such as ‘education, school, schooling, schools, trained, training’. Stage

1 of the analysis was to facilitate the descriptive coding i.e. without interpretation (Miles and Huberman 1994). Initial coding (parent nodes) on the data was made at this stage based on the keywords that emerged. An illustration of the keywords was enabled through the software tool that created a 'tag cloud' (fig. 1).

Figure 1. Research analysis - keywords. Goes here.

Stage 2. Contextual review

This second stage of content analysis was performed to dig deeper into the interview content to reveal rich data of significance for the study (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). In stage 2, each occurrence of the keyword was read in its context to review the 'background dynamics' of the data (Miles and Huberman 2004, p. 57). Keywords, not captured at stage 1, but of interest to this study, were also revealed at stage 2. The contextual review thus added new data in sub codes (child nodes) to stage 1, a higher level coding. In table ii, stage 2, context, are examples, in alphabetical order, from the interpretation of the context that surrounded the keywords.

Stage 3. Themes

Stage 3 was a deeper interpretation of the content, as emergent patterns or themes were coded (Miles and Huberman 2004; Carruthers, Ashill and Rod 2008). Each of the transcripts, interview field-notes, CVs and other materials were again read thoroughly to mine for further data. Furthermore, the original audio recordings were again listened to where clarity was needed. Continual return to the original sources, for reexamination of meaning, was a necessary check for reliability as each participant was speaking in their second language of English. Revisiting the content of source material is of importance in

qualitative research to achieve reliable analysis (Silverman 2000). Table ii, stage 3, themes, are significant trends (emergent themes) resulting from the keywords and context.

Illustrative quotations from some of the 18 participants are included in support of the analysis and findings (Lorenzen 1996). Quotations (pseudonyms are used) are extracted from the transcripts in illustration of the themes flowing from the context. When a direct quotation is not available, an interpretation is offered by the researcher based on substantial evidence surrounding a particular comment/statement from the participant. Those phrases are shown without quotation marks. The term, 'interpretation' has been deliberately incorporated here, as the words of participants in qualitative research are filtered through a researcher's own lens (Bernard 1994). The various stages in the content analyses help to ameliorate such filtering.

In qualitative studies it is recognized that the researcher's background adds to the interpretation (Boje 1999). In illustration, this researcher is not of Arab nationality, but has 10 years of experience in the Middle East. Therefore, some subtlety and nuance in speech may have been misinterpreted, and turns of phrase that 'hint' or 'imply' something about the society or organization may have been overlooked. That being admitted, the standard of English of the participants was high, and as previously mentioned, clarification of answers was sought (Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Holliday 2001). Where needed, to check for factual accuracy, the participants were re-contacted, and they were given the opportunity to add or edit that detail (Boje 1999).

Findings

Findings show that the family and cultural context, significant others, professional considerations, and their future competency influence women's participation in the labor force. Career progress is defined by training and professional development initiated by women, and provided by organizations.

Each of the participants acknowledged that learning was important within the family and cultural context (Cavalli-Sforza 1988). Marian commented on her love of learning math, *I would do it all in my mind. I loved doing that.* From an early age, significant others, particularly family members, influenced girls interest in work. Hind described her Mother as being determined for her daughters to be economically independent, *every woman must have a degree even she can work later, she should be supported, in Arabic we say "her weapon"*. Mothers were spoken of in terms of the work they did; *I come from a family of entrepreneurs, my Mom is a big entrepreneur* (Nadia). The women commented how Fathers motivated them, *that's why I loved mathematics and physics, learnt them from Dad.* Older siblings were role models in higher education and career achievement, as recalled by Nadia it was passion for their art that drove her to be a business entrepreneur like her brother, *we know our line of work is driven through our love* [for the work].

Participants occasionally commented on the religious background that shapes their lives, *my God because He gave me more than I deserve in life, I am very grateful to that* (Sahar). In this study, we discovered some examples of career ambition from an early age, but also where career progress was channeled by family pressure based on cultural/religious/traditional norms. Hibah was able to study at a college away from home as her brother became a chaperone. Nadia had to study for a first degree in the UAE due to travel restrictions. Sahar took a traditional route with an early marriage. Restrictions on unchaperoned travel are now somewhat lifted for Muslim women in the Middle East according to Hutchings, Liriob, and Metcalfe (2012). But in our study, lack of freedom to travel and live alone continues to affect the career progress of women in the UAE.

In terms of professional considerations and financial sponsorship, there was evidence of family influence. All the participants were exposed through their education and working lives to a multicultural experience; international curricula; schooling/college with

international classmates; and/or they studied overseas. All are fluent in at least two languages (Arabic and English), they learned at home from parents, enrolled in language courses during holidays, in classes at school, were taught in English at college. A learned language competency that fueled their progress in education and employment (Stephens 2003).

As the women progressed in their working lives the familial influence lessened, as exposure to other possibilities opened up choices. Training and professional development came as a few women gained some work experience at an early age. Nadia supplemented her college expenses with part time work. There was payment received for jobs within family enterprises. Work experience was gained through internships. There was evidence of the women exploring career options. Randa gained experience outside the family firm, and then chose to enter the family business with her father. Sahar was bored as a housewife and wanted something more, and so took a job with a bank to learn business management before starting her own business.

Participants in this sample were motivated to achieve in later life by friends, managers and their own ambition. Hanah talked of a friend who, *changed my life, you need someone to help you*. Nadia said to her manager, *I will give 120%*. Sahar stated that she was very ambitious even as a child. Hibah failed to get into her first choice for a medical qualification, but continued to another university. These findings add to those of others (Fels 2004; Fielden et al. 2000; Fielden and Davidson 2010) where criteria for business success included a drive to excel.

We now discuss the themes that emerged in the findings for their implications for HRM (Table ii, implications). The discussion focuses on HRM policies and practices (Table ii, Policies & Practices [P&P]) to support the participation and progress of female employees in the UAE labor force.

Discussion

From the findings there is cause to consider that the traditional view on women working outside the home or in senior positions is changing. There was less evidence of women being nurtured only for marriage, and more of a strong influence from families and the women themselves that education and employment are important for women.

Career direction for the women in this study was certainly influenced from an early age by the examples of family members (Fels 2004). The girls saw mothers, fathers and siblings working, and there was some involvement with working alongside them. Learning about business life within the home and classroom environment is important for the later career choice by women with their family members. The influence of cultural norms also negatively impacted on the career choice for these women caused by travel restrictions, and chaperoning. Effective HRM can be extended through the building of relationships between the family and organizations to recognize cultural norms, and the supportive role of families. HRM policies and practices directed towards the recruitment and retention of women in the UAE are effective when devised within a consideration of societal values.

An issue for females in the UAE is a lack of exposure to business before or during college as casual, part time or even voluntary work is not a cultural norm. Prior work experiences were not referred to by many participants in the study. HRM practices to reach out to the local populace can include working together with education partners in curricular design. They can then work together to offer opportunity for exposure to business life within the curricula, to increase females' opportunity for work experience in internships and through careers advice (GEM 2012). Thus an implication for HR mgrs. is to form strong partnerships with institutions of higher education to give careers information, and to recruit qualified women into employment.

Then a picture emerges of ambitious females who navigated cultural norms to create a working life for themselves. Lessons learned from the study show that within cultural

norms, women find their career direction with support from family, and educational establishments. HRM can endorse the factor of being driven to achieve in the early years and through careers through recognition of individual high achievers (at school, in university). Financial sponsorship for study, training and professional development is also a factor to attract high achievers into an organization. To support women's careers, HRM can continue to implement and extend family friendly policies in the private sector. The following of guidance by HR mgrs. towards *Emiratization*, proscribed by the UAE government, will open the employment door for competent female citizens to enter the private sector.

Training and professional development is a significant factor in women's' careers to enable application of this learning in their progress to higher positions. Women in the sample indicated their desire for challenge, they are passionate about their work and seek opportunities to continue their learning development. As noted in the analysis, and as supported in the literature, it is not necessarily money that motivates females to work (Fielden and Davidson 2010). Ongoing training and skills development can motivate women in the workforce to higher levels of achievement, and increase female potential for promotion to senior status. For the retention and progress of females at work, an implication for HR Mgrs. is to recognize the desire of women for learning, and to stimulate and maintain their knowledge acquisition for the benefit of the organization.

The discussion has considered the emergent themes that resulted from content analysis on the life histories of a sample of Emirati women in the UAE workforce. The building of relationships by HR mgrs. with families in the early years, through working within cultural values and endorsing exposure is a way forward. Institutions of Higher Education and HR mgrs. can form deep and lasting partnerships to expose females to the business world. Visits to schools for career guidance, investment in curricular discussions, internships, and work placements are implications for effective HRM. We have discussed

implications for change and extensions to HRM policies and practice to increase the participation and progress of female employees in the UAE.

Research limitations and opportunities for the future

This paper has reported on a sample of data, where even though the numbers exceeds the recommendations for a robust sample in qualitative research, a limitation lies within its scope (Madsen 2010b). This study is extracted from a wider research project of interviews with citizens and expatriate participants that will extend these findings.

A further limitation to this research lies in internal validity as the researcher chose the sample, collected and analyzed the data. A research opportunity for the future lies in overcoming these limitations through collaborative research with other academics and HR Mgrs. That collaboration will add research expertise to overcome any interpretive bias, and will extend the body of knowledge about women's participation and progress in the UAE labor force.

Conclusion

Interviews with 18 national women working in the UAE, across a strata of professional lives, has indicated themes of influence from their life histories. The findings reveal that the family and cultural context, significant others, professional considerations, and their future competency significantly influence women's participation in the labor force. Career progress is defined by training and professional development initiated by women, and provided by organizations. Knowledge of such influences has implications for HRM to effectively support women in the workforce.

To increase opportunities for women's participation and progress, effective HRM arises from policies that endorse external and internal practices. The development of close relationships for HR mgrs. with families, schools and universities is essential. External

communication about the working environment and careers is important for families and girls from early years. The opportunity for work experience, internships and scholarships offers exposure for females to the organizational environment. HR mgrs. can provide and follow up requests initiated by women for training and professional development. Successful provision of such training is dependent on adaptation to cultural norms. Furthermore, family friendly HR policies, adapted to support the woman's role in the home, enables more women to work and participate in professional development opportunities.

Academic knowledge has been strengthened through this study on the life histories of working women in the UAE. Particularly, knowledge has been gained in the discipline of HRM about continuing influences of family and culture in the working lives of Emirati women. In addition, academic knowledge has been extended on the Emirati woman as active participant in her own progress and success in the workforce. A research direction is signaled for further academic study on women's participation and progress in the UAE labor force.

References

- Abdulla, F., and Ridge, N. "Where are all the men? Gender, participation and higher education in the United Arab Emirates." Working Paper Series No. 11-03, Dubai School of Government, 2011.
<http://www.dsg.ae/en/publication/Description.aspx?PubID=228&PrimenuID=11&menu=Pri>
- Adler, N. J., L. W. Brody, and J.S. Osland. "The Women's Global Leadership Forum: Enhancing One Company's Global Leadership Capability." *Human Resource Management*, (2000): 39, 2, 209-225.
- Adler, N. J., L. W. Brody, and J.S. Osland. "Going Beyond Twentieth Century Leadership: A CEO Develops His Company's Global Competitiveness." *Cross Cultural Management*, (2001): 8, 3, 11-34.
- Al-Awad, M., and A.B. Elhiraika. "Skills, Gender, Nationality and Income Inequality in the United Arab Emirates." *Journal of Social Affairs*, (2002): 19, 76.
- Alderson, P. "Confidentiality and Consent in Qualitative Research." *British Sociological Association Network*, (1998): 69, 6-7.
- Al-Dosary, A. S., & S. Rahman. "Saudization (Localization) – A critical review." *Human Resource Development International*, (2005): 8, 4, 495-502.
- Al Masah Capital. "MENA Education Sector a Recession Proof Investment." *Research report*, Accessed November 13, 2011.
<http://almasahcapital.com/research.php?catid=3>.
- Al Masah Capital. "GCC Women: Challenging the Status Quo." *Research report*, Accessed February 26, 2012. <http://almasahcapital.com/research.php?catid=3>.
- Balakrishnan, M.S. "United Arab Emirates." In *Actions and Insights Business Cases from the UAE*, edited by M. S. Balakrishnan, P. Jayashree, and Michael, 35-51. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd, 2010.
- Bernard, H. R. *Research Methodology in Anthropology, Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, Field Notes: How to Take, Code and Manage Them*. London: Sage, 1994.
- Boje, D. M. "Qualitative Methods for Management and Communication Research." 1999.
http://business.nmsu.edu/~dboje/qm/i_intro.htm
- Budhwar, P., and K. Mellahi. "Introduction: Human Resource Management in the Middle East." *International Journal of Human Resource Management* (2007):18, 1, 2-10.
- Burden-Leahy, S.M. "Globalisation and Education in the Postcolonial World: the Conundrum of the Higher Education System of the United Arab Emirates." *Comparative Education* (2009): 45, 4, 525 - 544.
- Burke, R. "Women in Management: Cross-cultural research." *Cross Cultural Management* (2001): 8, 3, 3-10.
- Carruthers, J., N.J. Ashill, and M. Rod. "Purchaser-Provider Interaction in the UK Public Healthcare Sector: Strategies to Improve Stakeholder Cooperation." *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* (2008): 15, 1, 22-31.
- Cavalli-Sforza, L. "Cultural Transmission and Adaptation." *International Social Science Journal* (1988): 40, 2, 239.
- Davidson, M., and R.J. Burke. *Women in Management Worldwide: Facts, Figures and Analysis*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2004.
- Denzin, N. K., and Y. S Lincoln, eds., *The Landscape of Qualitative Research, Theories and Issues*, CA: Sage, 1998.

- Dubai Women Establishment. "Arab Women Leadership Outlook, 2009-2011" 2011. <http://dwe.gov.ae/index.aspx>.
- El-Sanabary, N. "Female education in Saudi Arabia and the Reproduction of Gender Division." *Gender and Education*, (1994): 6, 2, 141-150.
- Fels, A. "Do women Lack Ambition?" *Harvard Business Review*, (2004): 82, 4, 50-60.
- Ferne, E. "The Challenges for Middle Western Women in the 21st Century." *The Middle East Journal*, (2000): 54, 2, 185-193.
- Fielden, S.L., and M.J. Davidson. "Introduction." In *The International Research Handbook on Successful Women Entrepreneur*. Cheltenham, UK: Elgar, 2010.
- Gallup. *Progress and Tradition in the Gulf Cooperation Council states. Exploring the unique assets and challenges in a rapidly changing region*, 2011. <http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/154382/REPORT-BILINGUAL-Progress-Tradition-Gulf-Cooperation-Council-States.aspx>
- Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. *UAE report 2009*, 2011. <http://www.gemconsortium.org/docs/741/gem-uae-2009-report>
- Global Entrepreneurship Monitor . *GEM womens report 2010*, 2012. <http://www.gemconsortium.org/news/757/gem-2010-womens-report->
- Haan, H. C. "Small Enterprises: Women Entrepreneurs in the UAE." *Labour Market Study*, (2004): 19. Centre for Labour Market Research and Information (CLMRI), Dubai, UAE: The National Human Resource Development and Employment Authority (Tanmia).
- Harrison, E. C., and S. Michailova. "Working in the Middle East: Western Female Expatriates' Experiences in the United Arab Emirates." *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, (2012): 23, 4, 625-644.
- Harry, W. "Employment Creation and Localization: The Crucial Human Resource Issues for the GCC." *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, (2007): 18, 1, 132-146.
- Hoteit, L., R. Shehadi, A. Lamaa, and K. Tarazi. 'Educated, Ambitious, Essential Women Will Drive the GCC's Future.' *Report*. UAE: Booz and Co., 2011. http://www.booz.com/global/home/what_we_think/reports_and_white_papers/ic-display/50041441.
- Holliday A. *Doing and Writing Qualitative Research*, London, UK: Sage, 2001.
- Hutchings, K., P. Lirio, and B.D. Metcalfe. "Gender, Globalisation and Development: A Re-evaluation of the Nature of Women's Global Work." *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, (2012): 23, 9, 1763-1787.
- Hutchings, B., D. Metcalfe, and B.K. Cooper. "Exploring Arab Middle Eastern Women's Perceptions of Barriers to, and Facilitators of International Management Opportunities." *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, (2010): 21, 1, 61-83.
- Ibeh, K., and S. Carter. "Editorial: Perspectives on Women, Globalisation, and Global Management." *Journal of Business Ethics*, (2008): 83, 1, 1-3.
- Kemp, L. J. "Tejari – 'The Middle East Online Marketplace' under the Leadership of Sheika Lubna Al Qasimi." *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, (2008): 4, 1, 22-37, http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/ijls/new/previous_issues.htm
- Kemp, L.J. "Female Business Leaders in the United Arab Emirates: An Investigation of Their Presence, Value, Characteristics and Experiences." Paper Presented at the First Emerging Research Paradigms in Business and Social Sciences International Conference, Dubai, UAE, November 23, 2011.

- Kemp, L.J. "Implications for Recruitment in a Multinational Organization: A Case Study of Human Resource Management in the United Arab Emirates." *Emerging Market Case Studies Collection*, UK: Emerald, 2012.
- Kemp, L. J., S. Madsen, and M. El-Saidi. "The Current State of Female Leadership in the United Arab Emirates." *Journal of Global Responsibility*, (2013): 4, 1.
- Klenke, K. "Women Leaders and Women Managers in the Global Community." *Career Development International*, (1999): 4, 3, 134-139.
- Lincoln, Y. S., and E.G. Guba. *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1985.
- Lorenzen, Z. "Female Leadership: Some Personal and Professional Reflections", *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, (1996): 17, 6, 24-31.
- Madsen, S.R. "Developing Leadership: Exploring Childhoods of Women University Presidents." *Journal of Educational Administration*, (2007): 45, 1, 99-118.
- Madsen, S.R. "Transformational Learning Experiences of Female UAE College Students." *Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues*, (2009): 2, 1, 20-31.
- Madsen, S.R. "The Experiences of UAE Women Leaders in Developing Leadership Early in Life." *Feminist Formations*, (2010a): 22, 3, 75-95.
- Madsen, S.R. "Leadership Development in the United Arab Emirates: The Transformational Learning Experiences of Women." *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, (2010b): 17, 1, 100-110.
- Marmenout, K. "Women-Focused Leadership Development in the Middle East: Generating Local Knowledge." *INSEAD Working Paper No. 2009/25/IGLC*. Accessed June 30, 2009. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1427729>
- Mayers, G., N. Sonleitner, and D.G. Wooldridge. "Next Step: From Internship to Workplace Participation in the United Arab Emirates." *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, (2007): 74, 1, 12-16.
- Metcalfe, B. "Exploring Cultural Dimensions of Gender and Management in the Middle East." *Thunderbird International Business Review*, (2006): 48, 1, 93-107.
- Metcalfe, B.D. "Gender and Human Resource Management in the Middle East." *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, (2007): 18, 1, 54-74.
- Metle, M. Kh. "Education, Job Satisfaction and Gender in Kuwait." *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, (2001):12, 2, 311-332.
- Miles, M.B., and M. Huberman. *Qualitative Data Analysis*. London, UK: Sage, 1994.
- Morgan, D. "Men, Masculinity and the Process of Sociological Enquiry." In *Doing Feminist Research*. Edited by H. Roberts. London, UK: Routledge, 1990.
- Mostafa, M. "Attitudes Towards Women Managers in the United Arab Emirates: The Effects of Patriarchy, Age, and Sex Differences." *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, (2005): 20, 5, 522-540.
- Myers, M. D. "Qualitative Research in Information Systems." *MISQ Discovery*, 1997. <http://www.qual.auckland.ac.nz/>.
- Nelson, C. "UAE National Women at Work in the Private Sector: Conditions and Constraints." *Labor Market Study*, (2004): 20. Centre for Labour Market Research and Information (CLMRI), Dubai, UAE: The National Human Resource Development and Employment Authority (Tanmia).
- Oakley, A. "Interviewing Women: A contradiction in Terms." In *Doing Feminist Research* edited by H. Roberts. London, UK: Routledge, 1990.
- Omar, A., and J.M. Davidson. "Women in Management: A Comparative Cross-cultural Overview." *Cross Cultural Management*, (2001): 8, 3, 35-67.
- Poole, M., R. Schuler, S. Jackson, and P. Sparrow. "Foreword." *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, (2007): 18, 1, 1.

- Randeree, K. "Strategy, Policy and Practice in the Nationalisation of Human Capital: 'Project Emiratisation' Research and Practice in Human Resource Management." *Organizational Dynamics*, (2009): 40, 1, 1-9.
- Rees, C.J., A. Mamman, and A. Bin Braik, "Emiratization as a Strategic HRM Change Initiative: Case Study Evidence from a UAE Petroleum Company." *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, (2007): 18, 1, 33-53.
- Roberts, H. "Women and Their Doctors: Power and Powerlessness in the Research Process." In *Doing Feminist Research*. Edited by Author. London, UK: Routledge, 1990.
- Rugh, W.A. "Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform." *The Middle East Journal*, (2002): 56, 3, 396-414.
- Schein, V. E., R. Mueller, T. Lituchy, and J. Liu. "Think Manager - Think Male: A Global Phenomenon?" *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, (1996): 17, 1, 33-33.
- Silverman, D. *Doing Qualitative Research, a Practical Handbook*, London, UK: Sage, 2000.
- Stephens, J. "The Rhetoric of Women's Leadership: Language, Memory and Imagination." *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, (2003): 9, 3, 45-60.
- Tonnson, S., A. Alexander, K. Topolka-Jorissen, and J. Jacobs. "Influences of Early Life Experiences on the Generative Leadership Roles of Four Female Professors of Educational Leadership." *Advancing Women in Leadership*, (2011): 31, 34-39.
- Toren, N., A.M. Konrad, I. Yoshioka, and R. Kashlak "A Cross-national Cross-gender Study of Managerial Task Preferences and Evaluation of Work Characteristics." *Women in Management Review*, (1997): 12, 6, 234-243.
- United Arab Emirates The Cabinet. "Strategic Priorities of the UAE Government." *UAE Government Strategy 2011 - 2013*, 2012.
<http://uaecabinet.ae/English/UAEStrategy/Pages/UAEGovtStrategy2011-2013.aspx>
- United Arab Emirates National Bureau of Statistics. *Census*, 2005.
<http://www.uaestatistics.gov.ae/ReportDetailsEnglish/tabid/121/Default.aspx?ItemId=1637&PTID=104&MenuId=1>.
- United Arab Emirates National Bureau of Statistics. *Labor force, Education*, 2009.
<http://www.uaestatistics.gov.ae/EnglishHome/ReportsByDepartmentEnglish/tabid/104/Default.aspx?MenuId=1&NDId=446>.
- United Arab Emirates Yearbook. *Yearbook*, 2009.
<http://www.uaeyearbook.com/Yearbooks/2010/ENG/#206>
- United Nations Development Program. "International Human Development Indicators." *Regional and National Trends in the Human Development Index 1980-2011*, 2011.
<http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/trends/>
- Vallaster, C. "Expatriate Women Managers- Gender, Culture, and Career." *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal*, (2003): 24, 4, 242.
- Waring, A.L. "African-American Female College Presidents: Self Conceptions of Leadership." *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, (2003): 9, 3, 31-44.
- Welch, C., R. Piekkari, E. Plakoyiannaki, and E. Paavilainen-Mäntymäki. "Theorising from Case Studies: Towards a Pluralist Future for International Business Research." *Journal of International Business Studies* (2011): 42, 5, 740-762.
- Wharton Business School. "Dubai Media Deputy CEO Najla Al-Awadhi: Empowering Others Through Information." *Knowledge@Wharton*, Accessed on May 13, 2009.
<http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/10000women/article.cfm?articleid=6063>
- Wilkins, S. "Higher Education in the United Arab Emirates: an Analysis of the Outcomes of Significant Increases in Supply and Competition." *Journal Of Higher Education Policy and Management*, (2010): 32, 4, 389-400.

- World Bank. "Data." *United Arab Emirates*, 2012. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/united-arab-emirates>
- Zahra, S.A. "Doing Research in the (New) Middle East: Sailing with the Wind." *Academy of Management Perspectives*, (2011): 25, 4, 6-21.
- Zeffane, R., and L.J. Kemp. "Emiratization: Challenges of Strategic and Radical Change in the United Arab Emirates." In *Case Studies in Global Management Strategy, Innovation and People Management*. Edited by T. Dundon, and A. Wilkinson, pp. 306-314. Prahran VIC: Tilde University Press, 2012.

Table i: Participant Profile

	Individual									Family					
	Age			Country of birth		Marital status				Father			Mother		
	20-30	31-40	41-50	UAE	Other	Married	Single	Div.	not given	Occupation			Occupation		
										Employed	Self-employed	House wife	Emp.	Self-Emp.	not given
TOTAL	5	11	2	16	2	9	6	2	1	12	6	10	6	1	1
%	28%	61%	11%	89%	11%	50%	33%	11%	6%	67%	33%	56%	33%	6%	5%

	Education															
	School		Higher Education		Qualification - highest					Discipline						
	Govt.	Private	UAE	Int.	cert/dip./higher dip.	UG	Master	Phd	arts	Edu.	Hum.	Bus.	Eng.	IT	Med.	Sci.
TOTAL	12	6	15	3	3	9	5	1	2	1	2	7	3	1	1	1
%	67%	33%	83%	17%	17%	50%	28%	5%	11%	5%	11%	39%	17%	5%	5%	5%

	Employment						
	Company			Job title			
	Govt	Private	Self Emp.	Head	Manager	Dir.	Ptner
TOTAL	8	6	4	6	8	2	2
%	44%	33%	22%	33%	44%	11%	11%

Figure 1: Research Analysis Keywords

activities **after** **always** anything arabic around basically before **being**
brothers **business** called challenge change choose close college
coming communication **company** continue could **course** dealing **degree**
department **different** education engineering **english** enjoy
especially every everything example experience **family** **father** finished
first friends getting girls government graduate happened
important **interesting** international interview interviewee involved joined
leadership learn little looking mainly making **manager**
married maybe mentioned months myself never parents passed
people person place position problem professor
program project public right **school** senior sisters
skills sometimes speak **started** student **study** subject support
system taking thing **thinking** travel trying understand **university**
wanted women **working**

Table ii: Research Analysis – Context and Themes

Categories		Early years	Education		Careers
			<i>School</i>	<i>Further</i>	
Stage 2	Context	Family background Immediate and extended family Restriction/support from society inclusive of tradition, custom, religion.	Extra curricular Family Environment People Self	Profession Program Service Self Government	Future Training courses Managers Friends
Quotations		<i>I come from a family of entrepreneurs, my Mom is a big entrepreneur (Nadia).</i>	<i>When I was in high school I won the Olympic of Math for the GCC (Abeer).</i>	<i>Studying all the time. [I was a] hard-worker (Hibah).</i>	<i>I had a therapist, very close friend changed my life, you need someone to help you (Hanah).</i>

Categories		Early years	Education		Careers
			School	Further	
Stage 3	Themes	Culture (religion, tradition) Family	Exposure to business/professional/work/outside environment	Societal support Restriction on program of study/professional choice	Challenge Motivation Competency
Quotations		<i>My God because he gave me more than I deserve in life, I am very grateful to that (Sahar).</i>	<i>I remember in the last year of high school when we had the Math exam, we had this practice sheet where all exams you had to practice. I used to finish it all, and sometimes to an extent that I would solve it by looking at it, without writing down. I would do it all in my mind. I loved doing that (Marian).</i>	<i>When I worked in [name removed], I was the first one to work there [in the family]. Reason I wanted to work in open environment but because my father was conservative. He is open minded but he has to follow the rules of family. He wanted me to work but he makes sure I worked in good environment (Alya).</i>	<i>They want me to join me to setup a whole huge centralized business for [name removed] bank. I don't think I will get this experience anywhere also. So that was a challenge and I took, and they probably found something in me. (Fatma).</i>

Categories		Early years	Education		Careers
			<i>School</i>	<i>Further</i>	
HRM	<i>Implications</i>	Acceptance and work within the cultural values.	Visits to schools to advise on qualifications and career guidance.	Individual Sponsorship for recruitment. Offering placement, internship. Endorsement of social responsibility. Outreach to the community, Emiratization.	Coaching Training and professional development throughout careers. Family friendly policies for recruitment and retention throughout careers. Time and finance for on and off- the-job training. Skills development through cross training.
	<i>Policies and Practice</i>	Relationship building with families	Forming partnership with educational institutions		Investigation of, and changes to, policies and practices to support women's progress.