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# Uncovering Educational Barriers to Female Leadership in the United Arab Emirates

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## **Introduction**

According to statistics, Emirati women comprise of 12% of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) workforce and account for only 7% of the country's legislators, senior officials, and managers (Abdalla, 2015). The underrepresentation of women is alarming considering that the education rate of women is quite high. Specifically, females outperform males in school and the ratio of women in third level education is 85% (Al Kassadi, 2000). In addition, one study found that 92% of the women in UAE considered themselves very ambitious and wanted to aspire to hold a top job (Hewlett & Rashi, 2010). Jamali and colleagues (2005) note that the higher rates of enrollment in schools and universities have not been "paralleled by equal access to work opportunities at higher levels of organizations or equal access to fair and equitable pay." Consequently, it is important to identify the relevant factors that influence the disconnect between women's educational experiences and aspirations and women's representation in leadership positions.

A gap that exists in the literature is that studies related to women's career advancement have been focused on North American and European contexts, while little attention has been given to women in Middle Eastern countries. As echoed by other researchers who have conducted reviews regarding Arab managers, there is less known about the reasons why women

are not progressing in careers compared to their male counterparts (Kauser & Saleema, 2011). In addition, the very few studies that do exist have not used rigorous methodologies to form conclusions. In addition for the need in scholarship, public, private, and social sector organizations as well as government initiatives are acknowledging the importance of preparing both men and women for leadership positions (Madsen, 2008).

The goal of the current manuscript is to address this gap in the literature and provide solutions to a practical problem. In order to do so, the paper will first provide contextual background in which the research question is being investigated. Then, the current state of female workers will be discussed, followed by the current state of female leaders. Afterwards, a literature review of the possible reasons for the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions will be presented. This will lead to an emphasis or focus on one of the reasons, education system and a discussion regarding that. Drawing from this area, data that has been collected for this paper will be presented. Finally, the paper will conclude with a discussion about the data and next steps to move the research forward.

### **Contextual Background**

When examining a research question, it is impossible to ignore the role of context. Drawing from a previous framework by Hijab (1988), the author identified three critical factors that are necessary at a national and personal level to affect employment participation for women in any society. It is important to examine if these exist within the United Arab Emirates. The first of these factors is the opportunity for women to work through supportive legislation and facilities (Hijab, 1988). Gallant and Pounder (2008) have identified many initiatives the UAE government has taken in supporting women's employment including legal provisions for equal pay and benefits as well as national strategies and frequent statements of support. More specifically,

UAE's government has many initiatives that support this cause such as laws including equal pay (Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR, 2003), benefits like maternity leave (cite), and public statements by the country's leaders. This is evidenced even in the early history of the country as the early ruler of UAE, His Highness Sheikh Zayed said,

*“Young women have the right to work in all spheres; there are no obstacles before them. We expect young women to support and to proceed with everything undertaken by their brothers, the youth of the United Arab Emirates, and that there will be fruitful cooperation between the young women and their brothers in the different spheres (Al-Nahyan, 1987, p. 109).”*

The second factor is the country and its individuals must see the need for the women to join the workforce. While the country recognizes the need for women in the workplace as evidenced by the government's explicit statements, many individuals in different families still object to workforce participation.

Finally, the third factor women need to have is the education and skills to be able to work. In this case, women are being highly educated in the UAE. However, one key area that may be limited is actual skills that have been developed. While formal training such as attaining a degree is occurring at a high percentage, it is still unclear if actual skills are being formed, especially considering many graduates are not working or seeking developmental opportunities during their undergraduate training.

Conclusively, considering that the first factor of having supportive legislation is in place and that the country promotes individuals to recognize the importance of women being in the workplace, the focus of the current manuscript is to identify barriers related to the third factor, in

education and skill attainment with the goal to rectify them and improve the preparedness of female leaders in the workplace.

### **Current State of Emirati Women in the Workplace**

According to Government of Dubai's (2012) official figures, 41% of Emirati women now in the workforce. More specifically, a relatively recent analysis suggested that women have a strong presence in a variety of industries including the government, law, medicine, engineering, ambassadors (see Bristol-Rhys 2010), with the UAE having the highest number of women appointed to these positions in any Arab country (Al Oraimi 2011). Even in professions that have been predominately occupied by men, like policing and the military, women have made significant progress in the last few years with 1500 women police in Dubai and 93 of these in senior positions, and 3 female judges and 17 female prosecutors in Dubai (Dubai Women Establishment 2012). While all the statistics are promising, in a large study of 954 organizations regarding the current state of female leadership in UAE, it was found that women are still underrepresented in senior company and top departments (Kemp, Madsen, & El-Saidi, 2012).

### **Explanations for Barriers to Female Leadership in UAE**

When studying the existing literature, there are numerous reasons for why women are disproportionally represented in upper leadership positions. Many of these explanations overlap with women around the world, while others are specific to the UAE context. In this section, a brief review of these reasons will be outlined, beginning with broader points that are similar to experiences female leaders in any country, while also adding the current state of the points in UAE.

**Gender Stereotypes.** One of the reasons for the disparity of women in leadership positions is due to stereotypes associated with gender and leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Incongruent stereotypes of females and leaders can result in lower performance evaluations of female leaders (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004). Research shows that women often receive lower evaluations than men in leadership positions (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992), and receiving lower evaluations can reduce the likelihood of an individual's promotion and advancement through an organization (e.g., Lyness & Heilman, 2006). In addition, stereotypes exist regarding gender roles, a this may be more prevalent in certain contexts. A study that Mostafa (2005) conducted a study and found that attitudes toward women managers in the UAE are changing to be less traditional, however, he notes that "should "by no means be interpreted as the UAE moving away rapidly from a patriarchal and traditional society" with clear-cut gender role difference." Clearly, stereotypes related to gender and leadership as well as gender and gender roles play a role.

**Gender Discrimination.** As a result of negative stereotypes held by individuals, personal and organizational barriers are created in the form of gender discrimination, which prevents women to advance in the organization (Davidson & Burke, 2000).. Specifically, the stereotype's that women are primarily responsible for their role as a caretaker, would perceive the women as not matching that of a female leader, leading to fewer promotions. In addition, discrimination is present in organizational policies and practices, such as affording men and women different opportunities, power and representation (Kanter, 1977).

Dr. Tlaiss interviewed Emirati women who worked at organizations employing over a 100 people. All with the exception of two of her managers had "encountered discriminatory organizational cultures that questioned the suitability of women for management and implicit

discriminatory organizational practices, especially in terms of allocation of training and development and promotions” (Tlaiss, 2014). These women used different strategies to overcome these barriers. A majority of the women described how they fought the system to get their position. A few mentioned quitting their jobs and going to organizations that offered a better environment for women’s advancement and gave promotions based on merit. The women in the study mentioned that in addition to working incredibly hard, including longer hours and providing better performance than their male counterparts, they also improved their professional skills and attained higher levels of education as well as built up strong networks in order to overcome the challenges related to gender discrimination (Tlaiss, 2014).

**Lack of Flexible Work Arrangements.** Another reason that has been offered as to why women may neglect to apply to higher level positions is because of concerns with flexible work arrangements and their personal family obligations. In the UAE specifically, while many family members help with child care in UAE, many times this is not a possibility or provides an undue burden on relatives. Therefore, a lack of high quality and affordable after-school care and childcare facilities are another reason for limited participation of women. Another area that is often under represented or discussed is adult care. More adult women in UAE compared to US live with their families or in-laws (Hewlett & Rashid, 2010). As a highly qualified Emirati woman explained in an interview some of the challenges, “It is part of the expectation of what children do in the Arab world. We take care of our parents when we grow up.”

**Lack of Mentorship and Networks.** Networking and relationship building are vital to access in the business world, especially leadership positions. In the Arab world, relationship building is essential as well as part of the culture. Therefore, combining these two areas, it is evident that networking is critical. However, for Arab women, barriers to career progression are



also related to being excluded from organizational networks (Jamali et al., 2005; McElwee and Al-Riyami, 2003). Consequently, this deprives women from professional support and access to personnel and organizational information.

In the UAE context, an aspect of networking comes from power relations such as *wasta*, which can be critical in career advancement of women. This form of social connection has been widely used to influence and facilitate the recruitment or the promotion of individuals in managerial positions (Metcalf, 2006). This means, the opportunities, promotions and advancement is being based on individual relations and family networks, rather than on personal qualifications (Metcalf, 2006). However, considering there are fewer women in senior leadership positions to act as mentors, it is often harder to establish relationships with male leaders (Kattara, 2005), especially given the views of close relationships between sexes mixing in the Arab culture being more restrictive. Therefore, women will overall have fewer power relations, networking and mentorship opportunities to help them advance in the organization.

**Cultural Restrictions.** While Arab women share many similar experiences to other women around the world regarding barriers to advancement, Jamali, Sidani, and Safieddine (2005) state that "living in an environment of cherished religious and cultural values and customs has a significant impact on societal attitudes and behaviors" (592) and this cannot be ignored. The UAE can still be identified largely as a family-based, patriarchal, Islamic society where gender roles are defined (Galant & Pounder, 2008). These preconceived notions influence family pressures, which emphasize these cultural traditions. These traditions require women to fulfill their duties at home. While men are taking more responsibility in the house, the ongoing presumption is still that women are ultimately responsible for the household. Arab women often consider marriage, children, and family important and do not see a tradeoff between family

responsibilities and a successful career (Al-Lamki, 1999, 2007; Moghadam, 1992). Gallant & Pounder (2008) conducted a literature based study to provide reasons for why female nationals in the UAE were not as employed as their potential. They found that cultural factors were largely responsible for inhibiting the level of employment in Emirati females.

**Educational Barriers.** The UAE government affords its citizens, including the women with full support of education with many opportunities to learn including fully subsidized education by the government. Researchers have noted that generally Arab countries have shown the fastest improvement in female education of any region (Neft & Levine, 1997). Specifically, women's literacy rates have increased threefold since the 1970 (The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2002, p. 3). Indeed, Emirati women in the education system are leading in many ways compared to their counterparts around the world. In a comparative study, researchers found that women represent 65% of the college graduates in UAE compared to 58% in USA and 47% in China for instance (Hewlett & Rashid, 2010). When comparing Emirati men and women, United Arab Emirates University women far outnumbered men with 11,872 registered in comparison with 3728, and of those graduating from universities; women again outnumbered men 4611–1910 (239; 2003). A more recent statistic suggests that Emirati women represented 70% of the graduates from higher education, which can be attributed in part to the government's public policy on gender equality (Al Oraimi, 2011). In addition, the attitudes of young Emirati women university students are also changing. In a recent survey Augsborg, Claus, and Randeree (2009) found that only 1% of Emirati women planned to stay at home, with 65% planning on working. In light of these attitudes, it is important to note that while women have been found to have educational and occupational aspirations, they reported being unsure about the expectations of their own role in society as daughters, wives and mothers (Abdulla,

2005). Some research suggests that reasons for the disparity between education and employment in Emirati women is due to the fact that educational qualifications do not match employment needs (Jarardhan, 2001-in Abdulla 2005).

Consequently, organizations have aimed to increase Emirati participation in specific sectors, such as banking. For example, bank training initiatives such as Noor Bank's Coaching and Mentoring Development Programme provides both men and women leadership training (Aljassmi, 2016). However, despite these formal programs, female leadership in the banking and financial services are still relatively low compared to the high graduation rates and participation of women employees. Specifically only 12% of Emirati women hold senior management positions in banking (Aljassmi, 2016).

### **Developing a Deeper Understanding regarding Educational Barriers**

While all the aforementioned factors are highly relevant factors contributing to women's lack of representation in upper management positions, one way to understand this discourse is to specifically examine how college experiences relate to preparing women for leadership positions. College serves as an important pre-employment training ground as students learn not only job related skills and knowledge, but also develop conceptions of their future careers. Drawing on a previous theoretical framework, *social cognitive career theory* (SCCT) joins perspectives on how career and academic interests develop and how career related choices are formed and enacted (Lent et al., 1994). The idea is that cognitive, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes guide judgments about one's choice of activities, environments, and reactions (Bandura, 1986). Behavior is ultimately determined through the reciprocal relationship between judgments of competence, outcome expectations, and goals as they influence choices and personal development (Bandura, 1986). Ideally, the interests and skills developed in college

translate into actual career goals, or occupational aspirations, guided by students' views of their own competence.

One way student's views of competence in an academic setting can be studied is by asking about their learning, which can include interactions with others and opportunities for growth. The feedback from these learning experiences drives intentions for future career goals and performance (Lent et al., 1994). Therefore, to begin to better understand educational experiences as they relate to leadership preparation, a pilot study was conducted on students directly asking about their experiences and perceptions of leadership.

### **Pilot Study Methods**

#### **Participants**

Thirty university students in the United Arab Emirates participated in the pilot study. The sample consisted of 100% females, ages ranging from 19 to 23 years old. A majority of the participants were in the College of Business (50%), followed by 13% in the College of Technological Innovation, 10% in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2 participants in the College of Communication and Media Sciences, 2 participants in the College of Natural and Health Sciences, 1 subject in the College of Education, 1 participant in the College of Arts and Creative Enterprises, 1 student who is taking General Education courses and 1 who did not reply. The overwhelming majority of the students were single (87%), while 1 was married with one child and 3 students declined to mention their marital status. Finally, most of the students were in their 4<sup>th</sup> year of studies (47%), followed by third year students (37%), two in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year, one student in their 1<sup>st</sup> year, one in their 5<sup>th</sup> year and one student who did not respond to this question

## **Procedure**

Data were collected using an online survey collection tool. Participants were contacted via e-mail by the researchers and sent a link in which they could respond anonymously (see Appendix A for recruitment email). After reading the informed consent, they were asked to voluntarily proceed to open-ended question items. The response rate was approximately 32% of the total number of students contacted and only one student who read the informed consent declined participation. The responses were then coded by the primary investigator to formulate themes.

## **Materials**

The pilot study consisted of a series of 8 open-ended questions and 7 demographic questions. The items were developed by the researchers based on a review of the literature measuring similar constructs specifically for this study. While the questions were open-ended, they also included probing questions that had follow-up items that were aimed to extract a range of information about the student's experiences and perceptions. Participants were asked two questions about their personal roles in leadership positions. For example, "Have you been involved in any formal leadership roles (i.e., in student council or student club, PALS, presenting at a conference or taken part in a panel discussion in a forum.... etc.)?" Second, they were asked about their general beliefs regarding leadership, such as "What do you think are the most important characteristics for a student to become a leader?" Third, students were asked about the role of their university in preparing them for leadership positions, "In what ways do you believe X University is preparing you and your peers to become leaders?" The participants were also asked to comment on what skills they were lacking and any education experiences they were lacking. They were asked two final general questions regarding leaders who were their role

models and their general thoughts about the barriers that prevent Emirati women from taking leadership roles (for complete questionnaire, see Appendix B).

### **Pilot Study Results**

For this pilot study, the aim was to allow current students to use their own “voice” to describe their current experiences, their perceptions regarding leadership and any institutional, personal and general barriers they may face in seeking leadership positions. The responses were placed into an excel file and then categorized by topic based on key ideas were identified. The emerging themes are highlighted in this section. In addition, comparisons are made with interview responses from UAE female leaders. In a recent study, Madsen (2016) conducted qualitative interviews to better understand the influences that current Arab women leaders believed were important in helping them in their lives to prepare them for their present leadership roles in the UAE. There were many influences that were identified including family members, influential individuals, schooling activities and experiences such as struggles that were highlighted in the interview. Where relevant, the connection between future leaders (i.e., university students in our sample) and the UAE female leader’s responses will be made.

**Involvement in Formal Leadership Roles.** Students were asked about their involvement in formal leadership roles on campus with follow-up questions relating to why they took the leadership role, or what held them back and if they are interested in the future. The general themes that emerged from this response were that some students described that they were participating in formal leadership roles and did so because they wanted to make a difference, experience a challenge, and felt like they wanted to grow themselves. Others mentioned that they were held back because they wanted to focus on their studies and they felt they did not have the time to balance coursework and a leadership role. Interestingly, most who were not in leadership

positions also expressed interest to do so in the future. In Madesen's (2016) interviews with UAE female leaders, they mentioned being achievement oriented to work hard and do their best. Students describe not taking leadership roles because of the balance with coursework, because similar to the female leaders, they are achievement oriented. However, it is important for these students to recognize the developmental opportunity in these leadership positions.

Sample response: *"No, because I wanted to focus on my studies and other activities that I do after university. Yes am interested in the future, in my workplace probably"*

**Involvement as a Leader for Class Projects.** Almost all of the respondents stated that they were leaders in the class setting due to the fact that they were committed to getting the work done, had the necessary skills and personalities or were put in the position where they had to. Only two mentioned they have not had the opportunity to be a leader for a project. The general theme from this response seems to be that when needed to, the students rose up to the occasion to be leaders in the classroom.

Sample response: *"I can guide people and understand them, also i have a strong personality that will match will the purpose of the position"*

**Important Characteristics of Being a Leader.** Students were asked to identify important characteristics for a student to have in order to be a leader. A wide array of characteristics were mentioned including friendly, multi-tasker, respectful, mature, adaptable, honest, charismatic, responsible, time-manager, critical thinker, confident, harder worker, problem solver, patient, highly educated, and have good communication skills. The general theme is that students have a good understanding of the necessary skillset in order to be a leader.

Sample response: *“A student need to be Responsible bright patient caring able to communicate clearly direct helping considerate detail-oriented charismatic strong willed, determined knowledgeable”*

**University Preparation.** When asked about how the university is preparing the student for a leadership role, students responded that formal systems such as classes, projects, group work were in place. In addition, students recognized the extra efforts of the university in putting together professional development days, workshops, events, volunteer opportunities and having extra-curricular activities. It is important that students take advantage of the opportunities provided, as the hobbies or activities UAE female leaders mentioned were watching tv, listening to or playing music, swimming, reading and learning (Madsen, 2016). Greater activities and opportunities allows individuals to develop competencies and skills, including management and leadership abilities.

Sample response: *“By giving course that help build up our leadership skills and by giving us training sessions held by professionals from different fields.”*

**Skills Lacking.** When asked about what skills the student felt they lacked for leadership positions, many said time-management, language abilities, communication, patience, confidence, experience and shy personality. Interestingly, Madsen conducted in-depth interviews with UAE female leaders and most of them discussed being shy at some point and overcoming this in college (Madsen, 2016; Madsen 2009a). Confidence and shyness were common themes that were presented in student responses as well.

**Education Experience Limitation.** When asked about what is lacking in terms of their educational experience, many students responded with nothing while others noted that there



should be more sessions that provide practice, real world experience, interesting workshops, outside university involvement.

Sample response: *“More interesting workshops, interesting things to do because most of the workshops are repetitive and nothing new we hear the same thing over and over again. We need something practical in some way”*

**Role Model.** Students were asked to mention their greatest influence or role model in their life and the responses often mentioned the leaders of their nation and their fathers. Some mentioned other family members like their brother or uncle. It is interesting to note that the overwhelming majority mentioned male role models.

This was consistently in line with previous research that has found many Emirati women also look to male role models, especially Shaikh Zayed Al Nahayan, the founder of the country who died in 2004, who embodies for most locals the qualities of a good leader and of Islamic principles, and quite often their fathers (Alhaj and Van Horne 2013; Harold and Stephenson 2008).

Sample response: *“Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid He takes care about his people and their happiness. He has all skills and abilities to be a successful leader.”*

**Perceptions of Barriers.** The participants were asked directly what barriers they believed existed that prevented Emirati women from taking leadership roles, they overwhelmingly responded with family, society, culture and tradition being the root causes.

Sample response: *“In my opinion, it is when their parents are so close minded about a woman working and having higher positions than man. Sadly, we still do have this going in our community because they are scared their might be hateful rumors will surface about their girls.”*

## **Discussion**

Thus far, the researchers have conducted an exploratory study to better understand educational barriers to female leadership in the United Arab Emirates. In this section, implications of the findings will be further elaborated; limitations of the current study and future research that is built upon this work will be discussed.

### **Implications**

While the preliminary findings of the pilot study cannot be generalized across all Emirati females in the UAE, they provide some insight into more recent experiences and perceptions of students in the country. In addition, this project is building upon previous theoretical models, namely the *social cognitive career theory*. Finally, the results of this project has great implications for educators and policy makers. Considering advancement of women in the UAE is a high priority for the government and university institution, findings can be used to develop strategies and initiatives in higher education that can combat the barriers preventing women from attaining leadership positions.

### **Limitation**

There are a number of limitations to consider that are related to this exploratory study. First, one mechanism of collecting qualitative data is via open-ended questions. However, qualitative interviews are another avenue that has its own advantages for providing rich data. While open-ended responses allow the participant to share their experiences anonymously, they may be limited in the sense that the participant may not elaborate on their responses the way that is often done in an interview setting where the researcher may be able to further probe for details as well. Second, while qualitative studies typically have smaller sample sizes, to get a better both experiences and perceptions of current students, it is important to increase the number of

participants in the study. Finally, as outlined in the literature review, previous research that is conducted in this topic area often utilizes qualitative approaches and case studies, whereas more rigorous methodologies such as various quantitative analyses are often not utilized.

### **Future Research**

To address the limitations present in the pilot study, the goal is to build and expand on the preliminary findings. Specifically, the researchers aim to utilize the data collected to inform a quantitatively focused questionnaire and sample a larger amount of current university students. This will allow the researchers to conduct greater rigorous analyses to better understand perceptions of educational barriers to leadership advancement that may still be present from the perspective of students. This approach will address both theoretical and methodological limitations evidenced in the literature.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the goal of the current manuscript is to identify and understand barriers to female advancement in leadership positions. As in many societies today, barriers are evident for women everywhere. While these challenges can be attributed to many levels of systematic barriers, including societal, institutional, and individual, it is important to consider what can be done to remediate these challenges. In a recent *Harvard Business Review* article (Hewlett & Rashid, 2010), the authors suggest that it is important to find talent early. Given that women are advancing to higher degrees, the best place to look for talent and find female leaders is in the universities. Consequently, barriers that can be remediated in the higher education system can help close the gap from women translating their ambitions to the workplace.

This project directly ties to a government priority as an objective of the UAE government is to facilitate the advancement of women in education and the workplace with the aim of setting

“a new benchmark for female empowerment in the region” (*Women in the United Arab Emirates*, 2009). This is not a new government goal, rather, has been deeply rooted in the history of UAE. For example, Al Nowais (2004, p. 2) reported that His Highness Sheikh Zayed “he insisted that they [UAE women] travel abroad to pursue education and later be employed in managerial positions.” The anticipated outcome of this proposal is to promote this UAE government strategic initiative along with publishing the work in aims of adding to the scholarly knowledge in this area all in hopes to cultivate appropriate change to build a pipeline of future female leaders. More specifically, the study can be a helpful tool for universities to have initiatives that may reduce this disparity and help policy makers in UAE work on strategies to promote women leadership representation.

## Appendix A

Hi everyone,

I am working on some research looking at educational barriers to Emirati leadership. I need some SME (subject matter experts) and since you all are ZU students, I am requesting that you take a few minutes to share some of your thoughts.

I truly appreciate your time and if you could complete it as soon as possible that would be very helpful! Feel free to send this to your friends as well!

Thank you so much in advance and enjoy your weekend!

Link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5GRL2CW>

Best,

Dr. Afra Saeed Ahmad

## **Appendix B**

### **Introduction & Consent:**

Dear Students,

I, along with my colleagues, Dr. Fatima Al-Dramaki and Rana AlMutawa would like to invite you to take part of this focus group by answering a few questions related to student leadership preparation and barriers to developing student leadership on campus.

More specifically, we are interested in understanding Zayed University students' perceptions about taking on leadership roles and how these perceptions may be developed.

Your responses are the first step toward developing a questionnaire to be used in collecting data from your peers in the university on the above mentioned subject. We hope that the results of this research will help us make suggestions to educational institutions about some programs or other interventions to improve students' leadership preparedness.

Your names are NOT recorded for any purpose and your responses will be confidential. Also, nobody will be informed of your participation or your refusal to participate.

It is important that you know that your participation is completely voluntary. If you would prefer not to take part in this focus group questionnaire, you do not have to.

Thank you for taking the time out of your winter break to respond to this short questionnaire.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Dr. Afra Saeed Ahmad at [Afra.Ahmad@zu.ac.ae](mailto:Afra.Ahmad@zu.ac.ae)

**Do you agree to be a part of this study?**

**YES/NO**

**Instructions:**

To help us understand what you think would be helpful in terms of attaining a leadership position, please respond to the following questions using a few sentences. There is no right or wrong answer, so feel free to share with us your experience and thoughts regarding these questions.

1. Have you been involved in any formal leadership roles (i.e., in student council or student club, PALS, presenting at a conference or taken part in a panel discussion in a forum... etc.)?
  - a. If yes, what made you take this particular leadership position?
  - b. If no, what has held you back from taking a leadership position?
  - c. If no, are you interested in taking a leadership role either now or in the future?  
Please explain.
  
2. Have you ever been a leader of your group for a class project?
  - a. If yes, what made you take this role as a leader?
  - b. If no, what has held you back from taking the role as a leader?
  - c. If yes or no, can you tell us what you think it means to be a good group leader?
  
3. What do you think are the most important characteristics for a student to become a leader?

4. In what ways do you believe Zayed University is preparing you and your peers to become leaders?
5. What skills required in leadership roles do you feel that you lack?
6. What do you believe is currently lacking from your education or experience at Zayed University to prepare you for a leadership role?
7. Who is the greatest influence/role model in leadership in your life (including from your family)? Please explain why?
8. In general, what might be some of the barriers that prevent Emirati women from taking on leadership roles?

Gender:

- Male
- Female

Age:

(open ended)

College:

- College of Business



- College of Communication & Media Sciences
- College of Technological Innovation
- College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- College of Natural and Health Sciences

Year in the University:

- 1<sup>st</sup> year
- 2<sup>nd</sup> year
- 3<sup>rd</sup> year
- 4<sup>th</sup> year

Marital Status:

- Married
- Single

Parental Status (Kids)

- Yes
- No

GPA:

(open ended)