A Macro-National Level Analysis of Arab Women's Work Engagement

(1) Muntaha Bani Hani, Mutah University, Jordan

(2) Jawad Syed, University of Huddersfield, UK

For correspondence: Muntaha Banihani, College of Business Administration, Mutah University, Karak, Jordan. Email: mbanihan@mutah.edu.jo

Abstract

This paper reviews the macro-national level factors that influence women's work engagement in Arab countries. First, it offers an overview of the notions of work engagement and gendered work engagement. Next, the macro-national context is investigated where economic, socio-cultural, and legal factors are analysed that may explain differences in workplace engagement between men and women. Lastly, the discussion, implications for future research and practice, and conclusion are offered.

Key words: Arab countries; gender equality; Jordan; Middle East; women; work engagement

Introduction

Engagement in the workplace has recently received much attention as it is found to have desirable organisational outcomes such as job satisfaction, productivity, organisational commitment, employee performance, and less intention to quit (Alfes et al., 2012, Andrew and Sofian, 2012, Gruman and Saks, 2011, Li et al., 2015, Maslach et al., 2001, Rich et al., 2010, Saks, 2006). However, despite the plethora of studies on the antecedents and consequences of work engagement, there has been little research on women's work engagement. The way work engagement is constructed and investigated in the literature is assumed, implicitly, to be gender-neutral where women and men can equally demonstrate their engagement in the workplace (Banihani et al., 2013). The absence of attention to gender in organisational research does not imply gender neutrality, instead a male perspective is often tacitly adopted (Calas and Smircich, 1992), which ultimately may contribute to the perpetuation of inequalities in the workplace (Martin, 2000). Previous research has shown that the antecedents of work engagement presented in Kahn's (1990) classical theorisation, i.e., psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability, are gendered which makes it harder for women to be engaged than for men (Banihani et al., 2013). This review paper examines the macro-national context surrounding women's work engagement to develop a comprehensive, realistic and context-specific perspective of women's work engagement.

Work engagement as a concept has been mainly developed, explored, and researched in western countries (Albrecht and Corporation, 2010). As a result, little research has been conducted on work engagement in Arab cultures. Yet, as global organisations move, they bring their work practices with them and may also need to adapt to local cultural norms and values in order to attract, motivate and retain employees (Greblikaite and Daugeliene, 2010, Hofstede,

1997). The current expansion of the global economy has increased cross-cultural research. However, as far as work engagement is concerned, cross-cultural research has also been largely limited to western countries (Schaufeli et al., 2002a, Shimazu et al., 2010). The investigation of work engagement in Arab culture is still missing and this may affect our understanding and the generalisability of this concept in that region. This is of special relevance because it has been realised that research findings from western samples cannot always be generalised to non-western context (Shimazu et al., 2010, Scholz et al., 2002). Hofstede (1980) found that the Arab countries share similar societal and cultural values such as large power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, and high collectivism. Arab culture is also known to be patriarchal where men have negative views of women's abilities to succeed in the workplace (Mostafa, 2003, Whiteoak et al., 2006). Arab culture has unique characteristics and values that differ from western culture and research in such culture has the potential to improve our understanding of work engagement. Investigating work engagement in an Arab context is likely to add value to the current literature as research has shown that cultural differences, regardless of the measurements used, are present when considering work engagement (Gallup, 2012, Lockwood, 2007, Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004, TowersPerrin, 2006).

This paper reviews the macro-level factors that affect women's work engagement in an Arab context. It investigates the different factors that influence women's work engagement while at the same time making allowance for them to be situated in their social context. In doing so, the paper also highlights the factors that limit Arab women's work engagement in comparison to Arab men's work engagement. First, the paper offers a brief overview of work engagement and gendered work engagement. Next, the macro-national context is investigated where economic, socio-cultural, and legal factors are analysed. This is followed by implications and conclusion.

Work Engagement

The term work engagement began to emerge within the context of organisations and business about 25 years ago by Kahn (1990). Kahn's perspective on work engagement has been cited as providing the conceptual foundation for research on engagement (Alfes et al., 2010, Andrew and Sofian, 2012, Chen and Powell, 2012, Jeung, 2011, May et al., 2004, Rich et al., 2010, Schaufeli et al., 2002b). Work engagement according to Kahn is defined as the "harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles" (Kahn, 1990, p.694). In engagement, people express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance, while in disengagement people withdraw and separate themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally from work roles. Three psychological conditions were proposed by Kahn to influence work engagement: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Psychological meaningfulness refers to "a feeling that one is receiving a return on investments of one's self in a currency of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy" (Kahn, 1990, p. 704). Psychological safety is "feeling able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (p. 708). Psychological availability is "the sense of having the physical, emotional, or psychological resources to personally engage at a particular moment" (p. 714). Rich et al. (2010) suggest that work engagement may be understood based on Kahn's theoretical foundation. For example, Kahn's psychological conditions have been tested and it was found that they predict work engagement (May et al., 2004).

Macey and Schneider (2008) suggest that engagement has three different forms: trait, state, and behavioural. Trait engagement represents the positive view one has about work. It concerns dispositional characteristics that cannot be changed by an organisation or person, such as proactive personality, conscientiousness, and autotelic personality. State engagement is the

feelings of absorption and energy such as satisfaction, commitment, involvement, and empowerment. Behavioural engagement is related to extra-role behaviours (i.e., behaviours of employees, which are not part of their formal job requirements but they help in the smooth functioning of the organization as a social system) such as organisational citizenship behaviour, role expansion, and helping co-workers.

Byrne (2014) hypothesised that there are different inhibitors that affect the different forms of engagement. Trait engagement is inhibited by mental disorders that prevent positive disposition from emerging such as clinical depression. State engagement is inhibited by excessive demands that reduce positive feelings and that drain energy such as work conflict or competing tasks. Lastly, behavioural engagement is inhibited by work conditions that fail to allow people to exhibit extra-role behaviours.

It has been suggested that the notion of work engagement in itself is gendered where it is easier for men to be physically, cognitively and emotionally engaged than for women (Banihani et al., 2013). In other words, the work set-up in our society values, enables and targets engagement of men over engagement of women. Organisations' structure, culture, and ideologies disadvantage women and make it harder for them to experience the Kahn's three psychological conditions (i.e. psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability) of work engagement. Gendered work engagement implies that the psychological conditions presented by Kahn are gendered, in that women do not have the same opportunities to experience these conditions as men do. This is mainly because of gendered organisations and because: men and their characteristics are valued more than women and their characteristics; women mainly dominate the lower position jobs, whereas men dominate the higher position jobs; women are less influential in their interaction than men and usually are perceived as less

powerful and have less competencies; women usually perceive that their feminine characteristics will not lead them to higher positions and they feel the need to emulate men characteristics to succeed, consequently they try to hide their true selves; women in higher positions tend to be perceived as tokens where they are pressured and over-observed; and because organisations are usually built around the ideal worker who has no other responsibilities such as family responsibilities as women usually do. Therefore, women have less opportunity to experience psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability than men do (Banihani et al., 2013). Hence, this paper examines the macro-national factors that may influence women's level of engagement. The remainder of the paper explores the broader socio-cultural, economic and legal factors that may affect women's work engagement.

Macro-National Level Factors

Factors that shape and influence women's level of work engagement are not confined to the organisational context alone. Women's work engagement is also affected by socio-cultural, legal and other elements of macro-national context as well as by women's individual identity and agency. Therefore, to better understand women's work engagement it is imperative to adapt a framework that provides a context specific analysis of women's work engagement.

Taking into consideration that contents and meanings of gender differ from one place to another and overtime (Acker, 1992, Ely and Padavic, 2007, Walby, 2011), and that institutional contexts have a great impact on gender in organisational settings (Aaltio-Marjosola and Mills, 2002), a macro-national analysis may be useful in developing holistic view of women's work engagement. Context has a major influence on employees' experiences in the workplace (Connell, 1987, Lane, 1993, Williams, 2002), it is where "social difference codes are defined and accepted based upon generally accepted social stratifications and stereotypes" (Syed and

Ozbilgin, 2009, p.2445). Women's experiences in the workplace are influenced by factors presented at the macro-national level (Lane, 1993). As Connell noted, "beyond the individual workplace there is a wider social process that constitutes the sexual division of labour in terms of whole categories of workers" (Connell, 1987, p. 101).

The state of women in Arab countries is influenced by a number of socio-cultural, economic and political factors (UNDP, 2006). The countries share language (Arabic), religion (Islam), and tribal customs but are also have different political and economic contexts. This paper places relatively more focus on Jordan due to its upper middle economy and transition towards legal and democratic reforms. The 2014 Arab Democracy Index from the Arab Reform Initiative ranks Jordan second highest in the state of positive changes and legal reforms out of nine Arab countries (ARI, 2014). However, examples from other Arab countries are also provided as appropriate to illustrate the context of women's work engagement in the Arab world. We argue that in order to understand Arab women's experiences in the workplace, it is imperative to understand the macro-national context that surrounds their work and daily life.

Accordingly, the present section is divided into three sub-sections, the economic context, the socio-cultural context, and the legal context. In the economic context, women's economic activities, employment and unemployment rates, occupational segregation, and gender wage gap are discussed. In the socio-cultural context sub-section, factors such as social stereotypes, women's mobility, and women's modesty are investigated. In the legal context sub-section, laws that may influence women's work engagement are analysed. These sub-sections present the state of women in Arab countries and explain how macro-national factors may influence women's work engagement.

Economic context

By economic context, we refer to women's economic activities, employment and unemployment rates, occupational segregation, and gender wage gap. This sub-section discusses the economic situation in the Arab countries in general, followed by Jordan specifically.

The economic development in the Arab world exhibits heterogeneity. For example, there are significant differences between the oil-rich states of the Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait and the poor countries like the Comoros, Mauritania and Djibouti. The economic contrast is also evident from the fact that the GDP per capita of the wealthiest Arab Country, Qatar, is 73 times higher than that of Mauritania (El-Shenawi, 2011).

High unemployment, particularly among the young, female and the educated sections of the population, is considered by many to be the most important socioeconomic challenge currently facing the Arab world. Of female youth actively seeking work, 43.9% are unemployed in the Middle East, almost twice the male youth unemployment rate at 22.9% (ILO, 2013). Overall, the female labour force as a source of productivity improvement is extremely underused in this region. For example, women's participation in the labour market in the Middle East region in the year 2000 was only 30% whereas in Latin America and the Caribbean, it was 40%, South Asia 45%, Sub-Saharan Africa 60%, and in East Asia and Pacific 75% (UNDP, 2006).

More recent statistics suggest that compared with other countries and regions, Arab counties rank very low in terms of labour force participation and gender equality. WEF (2015) uses four criteria to assess the parity gap between men and women: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. All Arab countries ranked below 116th place, out of 145 surveyed in the 2014. Kuwait had the highest

ranking (117th), followed by the United Arab Emirates (119th), Qatar (116th), Egypt (122th), Saudi Arabia (134th), Jordan (140th) and Yemen (145th) (WEF, 2015).

In Jordan, the literacy rate has increased from 46% in 1990 to more than 85% in 2012 (DOS, 2012). Women's university participation also has increased and now there are more women than men in the Jordanian universities, with a female percentage of 51% compared to 49% for male. However, women's participation in the workplace remains very low (23%) when compared to men's participation in Jordan (77%) (DOS, 2012) or women's participation in developed countries (Moghadam, 2015). In fact, it is argued that women's participation rate in the workplace is declining once it is corrected for educational attainment, suggesting that opportunities for educated women are diminishing overtime (Assaad, et al., 2012).

The inequality and discrimination in the labour force is also manifested in wages (WEF, 2015). Gender wage gap in Middle East is estimated to be between 20% and 40% (Arnold, 2013). Agarwal (2014) suggests that justice and psychological contract fulfilment are positively related to work engagement. Gender gaps in wages and employment opportunities may only adversely affect women's work engagement in Arab countries.

There is also evidence of vertical and horizontal occupational segregation along gender lines in Arab countries. Vertical segregation also known as the glass ceiling indicates that women are concentrated more in lower paying echelons of organizations. This may also be linked to socio-cultural context where certain professions are culturally considered appropriate for women, which leads to segregation. Arab women in the public sector are usually found in lower-level white-collar jobs such as typists and clerks. They are also underrepresented in professional and managerial positions when compared to developed countries or even to other developing countries (Doumato and Posusney, 2003, Metcalfe, 2008). Horizontal segregation

indicates that certain professions are normally more female intensive than others. The majority of Arab women work in the public sector and in the service sector such as in health, education and social care (Metcalfe, 2008). This occupational segregation is mainly a result of gender roles and traditional social norms that affect women's jobs' availability, acceptability, respectability, or appropriateness. The availability of work is in turn linked to participation levels of women at work.

In Jordan, vertical segregation is evident in the imbalance in civil service, where men make up the majority of highest-ranking positions while women are concentrated in middle-ranked positions (WorldBank, 2005). Moreover, women are underrepresented in the administrative and managerial positions, holding about 11% of these positions (Husseini, 2010). In addition, more than 60% of Jordanian women are employed in 'social' professions, for example, 40% of them in education, 15.1% in health and social work, and 15.1% in personal, social, and service activities (DOS, 2008; Husseini, 2010). This segregation tends to be disadvantageous to women because the salaries in these professions tend to be low. The occupational segregation is also manifested in the sector in which women are concentrated. Female employees represent 37% in the public sector while only 12% in the private sector (Husseini, 2010).

Socio-cultural context

The socio-cultural context refers to local culture and society, tribal traditions as well the influence of Islamic faith and its various interpretations and practices. Afiouni (2014) suggests that the choice of profession by women in the Arab world is mainly driven by the subjective perception of a career as a calling, the lack of attractiveness of other career options in the region, and the appeal of the flexibility, such as work in academia. Afiouni's study highlights both

organisational factors, such as lack of mentoring and organisational support, and cultural factors, such as Islam, patriarchy, and family centrality, that affect women's careers choices and patterns in the Arab Middle East context. The macro-national influence on the choice of profession also indicates women's propensity to more engage with certain jobs as compared with other professions.

Gallup (2012) suggests that approximately 67% of young Arab women remain out of workforce whereas a similar figure for young Arab men is 20%. This gender gap is generally consistent across the 22 Arab countries and territories Gallup surveyed, but young women's labour force participation is slightly higher in low-income countries than in higher income countries.

According to the Arab Human Development Report (UNDP, 2003; 2006), Arabs support and stand with gender equality in education but not in employment, and in the case of scarce jobs men have the priority over women. In other words, "Arabs stood for gender equality in education but not in employment. In human development terms, Arabs expressed support for building the human capabilities of women but not for their utilisation" (UNDP, 2003, p. 19). The gender role in Arab countries is shaped by four factors: the centrality of the family which is the main unit in society, the recognition of the man as the sole provider of the family, the 'code of modesty' which depends on the reputation of the woman in the family, and the unequal balance of power in the private sphere (Metcalfe, 2007, WorldBank, 2004,). These factors determine women's access, interaction, and experiences in the workplace.

The traditional gender paradigm is based on a cognition that: (a) men and women differ biologically and that these biological differences determine their social function; (b) men and women carry different and complementary responsibilities within the family; and (c) they have

different but equitable rights associated with those responsibilities. The paradigm assumes that a woman will marry at an age earlier than that of a man; her recognised contribution to the family will be as a homemaker; the household will be headed by a man; and the man will have a job that will allow him to provide for his family. In return, women are expected to limit themselves to the family as wives and mothers—roles in which they are perceived as vulnerable and in need of protection. This protection is to be provided by the husband or by a close male family member. Men's responsibility as protectors is seen as justification for their exercise of authority over women in all areas of decision- making and action that relates to the public sphere. As a result, a woman's interaction with the state and society are mediated through her husband (WorldBank, 2004, p.94).

Next, the socio-cultural context will be discussed in depth with a focus on three different factors: social stereotypes, women's mobility and women's modesty. These factors are presented and investigated here as they may influence women's work engagement.

Social stereotypes. The traditional view in Arab countries is that women are responsible for the functions of their household and their primary commitment should be to their children and husbands (Abdalla, 1996). Metcalfe (2006) studied the experiences of professional women from Bahrain, Jordan, and Oman using a survey and interviews. The majority of women in Metcalfe's research pointed out that organisations, because of the traditional gender role, do not provide facilities for childcare as women are naturally expected to look after their children. Metcalfe's research confirmed the embedded traditional gender role in the Arab society. The expectation that women would leave their employment once married or have children, not only influence their availability for their job but also limit their opportunities for training programmes and career development (Metcalfe, 2006). Employers, because of their perceptions of the

traditional gender role, offer more opportunities and career development to men than to women (Doumato and Posusney, 2003). The justification for this is that investing in women development is considered as a loss of the specific human capital earned in-the-job training as women are expected to leave their employment when they get married or have children (Doumato and Posusney, 2003). Family responsibilities, especially childcare responsibilities, limit women's availability for their jobs and may limit their work engagement.

Thus, the lack of Arab women's work engagement may be attributed to factors such as the lack of responsibility placed on women to be household income earner which does not demand extension of full effort at work, lack of encouragement by family towards a successful career as well as a sense of entitlement due to the concept that men are to financially cater for women.

It may also be inferred from the above that women may have less meaningful jobs than men, who receive more support for their career development. Hence, women are less likely to experience psychological availability (Kahn, 1990) than men. Social stereotypes may influence employers' decisions regarding the type of jobs giving and the opportunities offered to women. This may lead to less meaningful jobs held by women than men. Connecting this to Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions that lead to engagement, it can be concluded that it is easier for a man to have a meaningful job and to experience work engagement than for a woman.

Women's mobility. Another factor that influences Arab women's work engagement is their limited mobility that in turn affects their experiences in the labour market (Assaad and Arntz, 2005, Miles, 2002, WorldBank, 2004). In several Arab countries, women are required to obtain permission of their male relative to travel abroad or even, in some countries, inside the country. This requirement, in some Arab countries, is enforced by laws, where women need to obtain a written permission from their guardian to travel (WorldBank, 2004). The restrictions on

women's mobility in the Arab countries are related to their household responsibilities including childcare responsibilities and the social concerns regarding women's safety (Assaad and Arntz, 2005). Constraints on women mobility limit their access to the workplace (Miles, 2002) and limit their career opportunities in the workplace (Assaad and Arntz, 2005). This reduces women's economic efficiency by denying them strategic professional opportunities, such as training opportunities in new production. Most global companies often require overseas assignment as a preparation for managers for promotion to more challenging levels of management (Nelson and Burke, 2002). But women's limited mobility may also influence their development in the workplace and their availability for professional opportunities. Constraints on women's mobility in the Arab countries limit women's availability for their work, and according to Kahn's (1990) theory of work engagement, availability is an antecedent to work engagement. Therefore, women's limited mobility may negatively affect their work engagement.

Women's modesty. Gender roles in the Arab countries, where Islam is the main religion, are determined by the code of modesty "in which family honour and dignity rest on the reputation of the woman. This code imposes restrictions on interaction between men and women" (WorldBank, 2004, p. 10). The code of modesty "entails humility and restraint in dress, conversation and in dealings between men and women who are not '*mehram*'" (Syed, 2008, p. 154). A '*mehram*' here is "a women's immediate family whom she cannot legally marry" (Syed, 2008, p. 167). Women in the Arab countries are not supposed to display certain emotions regarded inappropriate and inconsistent with the notion of modesty, even though these emotions may be typically described as feminine emotions such as affection, appreciation, or playfulness (Syed, 2008). Women's organisational experiences are likely to "comprise masking (restraint and inhibition) instead of integration (affection, friendliness, pride and pleasure)" (Kemper,

1984, Mann, 1997, Wharton and Erickson, 1993). Therefore, women who show excitement, liveliness, and affections will have a social stigma of being immodest. According to Kahn's theory of work engagement, employees have to experience psychological safety, which is the "sense of being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career", in order to be engaged (Kahn, 1990, p. 705). Moreover, being engaged is associated with the ability to display real identity, thoughts, and feelings. This self-expression is also referred to as the use of personal voice, authenticity, non-defensive communication, emotional expression, and playfulness. From the discussion above, women may face negative consequences if they, for example, express emotions and playfulness. Therefore, work engagement and the psychological conditions that lead to engagement may contradict Arab women's modesty. Engaged workers are supposed to show liveliness, pleasure, and pride, whereas, modesty requires women to be shy and restrained in their interactions.

Legal context

The legal framework in Arab countries hinders women's economic competitiveness by reinforcing the traditional financial dependency on male relatives and by enforcing the idea that women work to supplement their family rather than being economically independent. This is notwithstanding the fact that in most Arab counties, women's right to work is granted by law. For example, Articles 35 and 120 of the Labour Law in Egypt prohibit discrimination based on sex, language, religion or creed either in wages or the termination of the Employment Contract. In Jordan, Article 23 of the national Constitution of 1952 protects the right to work and ensures equal opportunity for all citizens (Husseini, 2010). Similarly, the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) upholds the principle of equal treatment of all citizens, but does not specifically address gender-based discrimination. Although Article 3 of the Constitution provides all Emirati

citizens with the right to freely choose his or her own occupation, trade or profession, Articles 27, 29, and 34 of the Labour Law impose certain restrictions, such as on women's employment at night, in jobs that could be hazardous to their physical or moral health (or any other work that is not specifically approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs), or working without the consent of husband or male guardian (UN Women, 2015). Moreover, the interpretation of labour laws is guided by custom and *sharia* law which reflect the need to *protect* women (Metcalfe, 2008).

Labour legislation in most Arab countries reinforces the bias against women in the workplace by imposing on employers female-specific benefits such as unpaid and paid maternity leaves and childcare provisions (Doumato and Posusney, 2003). Even though these are essential rights and protections that women in the work place should have, imposing these benefits on the employers instead of the social security system forces employers to discriminate against women in the workplace (Doumato and Posusney, 2003). In Jordan, in Article 70 of the labour law, women have the right to take a ten-week maternity leave for the purpose of child caring, out of these, six weeks must be allowed immediately after the birth of the child. Also, employers who employ twenty women or more must provide a child care facility for their children if there are at least ten children (Article 72 of the labour law) (Sonbol, 2003). This law may encourage employers to not employ more than twenty women at the same time, or to employ them on temporary not permanent basis. Similar restrictions are found in other countries. For example, in Egypt, Articles 91 and 94 of the Labour Law state that an employee may not avail paid maternity leave (90 days) more than two times during her service, and that the option of extended unpaid leave is available only in those organisations having more than 50 employees.

Laws as well as social norms place restrictions on women's working hours and the type of jobs that are appropriate for women (Husseini, 2010). Most of Arab countries prohibit women to work at night and many restrict women from working in places where gender segregation may be violated (Sullivan, 2012). In Saudi Arabia, there are restrictions on women being appointed as judges (LOC, 2014). In Jordan, Article 69 of the labour law specifies the works that are prohibited to women as well as the times during which women cannot work. Women by law cannot work in a dangerous environment such as in quarries (stone, limestone, phosphate, and so on) and, with a few exceptions, are not allowed to work between the hour of eight at night and six in the morning with minor exceptions (Peebles et al., 2007). This law was introduced to protect women's health and as a recognition of their domestic responsibilities. However, a closer look suggests that such laws serve the market interests, not women's interests (Abu Hassan, 2005). Further, these regulations usually benefit men because extra work is compensated more. Women wishing to earn extra income by working overtime cannot do that except when the job pressure requires them to do so (Sonbol, 2003).

Moreover, retirement age in Jordan is currently 60 years for men and 55 for women (Fanek, 2015).. These restrictions may affect women experiences in the workplace by limiting their professional advancement and deny women an equal opportunity to engage in some professions (Peebles et al., 2007). These legal restrictions affect women availability for their work, which in turn affect their work engagement.

In the same vein, Jordanian regulatory framework lacks some laws that are very important for women. For example, sexual harassment in the workplace is not prohibited by law. Amendments made in 2008 on labour law address sexual assault where victims are allowed to prematurely end their employment contract while retaining their end-of-service rights. But most

Jordanian women are unaware of this provision or how they can file complaints (Husseini, 2010). This may affect not only women's experience of safety but also psychological safety in terms of interpersonal interactions and risk taking in organisations, and may influence their work engagement. In summary, legal restrictions and social attitudes limit women's experiences of psychological conditions that lead to work engagement.

Discussion

The paper has analyses the macro-national (economic, socio- cultural, and legal) factors that can explain differences in workplace engagement amongst men and women. The combination of social attitudes and legal restrictions in an Arab context limits women's experiences of Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions (i.e. availability, safety, and meaningfulness) that lead to work engagement. For example, the factors that may affect women's availability are: social constraints on women's mobility, family responsibilities, and laws that restrict women's ability to work. The factors that may influence women's psychological safety are: social restrictions on women's modesty in their actions and interactions in the public sphere. These restrictions on women may prevent them from expressing themselves in the workplace and from violating any norms of female modesty. The factors that could influence women's psychological meaningfulness include occupational segregation, both the vertical and horizontal, which determines the positions that women can hold. Women usually occupy lower-level positions that are regarded as less valuable jobs. Further, gender wage gaps show that employers value men's jobs more than women's. Figure 1 offers a schematic representation of the macro-level influences on Arab women's work engagement. Lack of equal pay, women's modesty norms, burdensome demands in the household and legal restrictions on or

discrimination against women appear to be the most influential for Arab women, limiting their engagement levels in comparison to Arab men. While some of these factors may be true of women in most regions, their intensity is impact is most acute in Arab countries and continues to reflect in poor gender gap score on a yearly basis.

…………………….…..

Insert Figure 1 about here

……………………………

Indeed, the macro-national context influences other factors at the organisational or individual levels. For example, previous research has shown that the presence of job characteristics, or having an enriched job, positively affect employees' work engagement (Koyuncu et al., 2006, Kahn, 1990, Saks, 2006). One of the job characteristics' dimensions is autonomy or flexibility, which is the degree of control workers have over their jobs (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). However, social and legal constraints presented in Arab countries (e.g. the assumption that women's commitments are to their families and not to their work) limit their opportunities to develop (Metcalfe, 2006) and produce an occupational segregation where women are dominating the lower-level jobs which are usually characterised by low-level autonomy or flexibility (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004).

The macro-level factors also influence the level of social support employees receive in their organisations, which is found to be positively related to work engagement (Bakker et al., 2005, May et al., 2004, Rich et al., 2010, Saks, 2006). Given that the labour market in Arab countries is dominated by men (WorldBank, 2004), including the higher-level positions (Doumato and Posusney, 2003), it is safe to assume that most supervisors are men. In the Arab

culture, because of restrictions on women's modesty, women may face difficulties in their interaction with supervisors and male co-workers (Syed, 2008). These difficulties, in turn, disadvantage women and produce gender inequalities (Acker, 2006, Kanter, 1977, Reskin, 2003, Ridgeway, 1997).

Implications for research and practice

The findings and contentions offered in this paper may not be generalisable to all Arab countries and communities because of significant socio-economic diversity within the Arab world. While the paper has reviewed women's work engagement in the Arab world with more focus on Jordan, it will be equally interesting to examine Arab women's work engagement when these women live in non-Arab countries, e.g., Western countries. To what extent would a change in the macro-national context affect their ability and propensity to engage with work? Read's (2014) recent study examines gender differences in Arab Muslim civic engagement and assesses the influence of religious identity on their participation. Using national survey data with more than a thousand Arab Muslims, the study finds high levels of civic engagement for both men and women. While the study is not in the context of work, it does suggest that there are no significant gender differences in terms of civic engagement. The present review highlights the fact that in order to increase women's work engagement, employers should be aware of different factors which may influence the level of women's work engagement. Identifying these factors may help employers to modify the work environment and culture, so that these factors can be managed to the benefit of organisations. Consequently, this research may be useful to develop job interventions aiming to maximise women's work engagement and enhance their well-being both internal to and external to the workplace.

Future scholars may wish to use a mixed methods approach to test the theoretical framework presented in this paper. The approach is appropriate as some of the factors presented in this paper have not been analysed in relation to work engagement before. The approach involves collecting and analysing data using both quantitative and qualitative methods to better address research questions (Creswell, 2003). This approach has a high level of accuracy (Woodside, 2010) which may improve our understanding of women's work engagement.

In depth interviews may be conducted with both male and female employees from different organisations so that all factors relevant to macro-national are adequately identified. In addition, quantitative data may be collected using a questionnaire to identify factors that influence work engagement and whether there are gender differences in these factors. By doing this scholars may conduct a holistic and context specific analysis of women's work engagement and the different factors that may influence it.

Conclusion

The paper has attempted to theorise women's work engagement in Arab countries, with a specific focus on Jordan, and the macro-national factors that affect it. It has shown that in order to understand women's work engagement, macro-level factors such as laws, economy and culture have to be considered. Managers and policy makers may wish to reflect on their current policies and programmes and adjust them to make organisations more inclusive for women and provide them with the same opportunity to be as engaged as men. By doing so, not only women will have a better environment to work in but organisations also will benefit from more engaged employees.

References

AALTIO-MARJOSOLA, I. & MILLS, A. 2002. *Gender, identity and the culture of organizations.* London: Routledge.

ABDALLA, I. A. 1996. Attitudes towards women in the Arabian Gulf region. *Women in Management Review,* 11**,** 29-39.

ABU HASSAN, R. 2005. *Country Report: Jordan.* Washington DC: Freedom House Inc.

ACKER, J. 1992. From sex roles to gendered institutions. *Contemporary Sociology,* 21, 565-569.

ACKER, J. 2006. Inequality regimes. *Gender & Society,* 20**,** 441-464.

AFIOUNI, F. 2014. Women's careers in the Arab Middle East: Understanding institutional constraints to the boundaryless career view. *Career Development International*, 19(3), 314-336.

AGARWAL, U. 2014. Linking justice, trust and innovative work behaviour to work engagement. *Personnel Review*, 43(1), 41-73.

ALBRECHT, S. L. & CORPORATION, E. 2010. *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice*. Edward Elgar.

ALFES, K., SHANTZ, A. D., TRUSS, C. & SOANE, E. C. 2012. The link between perceived human resource management practices, engagement and employee behaviour: A moderated mediation model. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management***,** 1-22.

ALFES, K., TRUSS, C., SOANE, E. C., REES, C. & GATENBY, M. 2010. *Creating an Engaged Organisation.* Wimbledon: CIPD.

ANDREW, O. C. & SOFIAN, S. 2012. Individual factors and work outcomes of employee engagement. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences,* 40**,** 498-508.

ARI 2014. Arab Democracy Index IV. Arab Reform Initiative. Available at: http://www.arab-reform.net/arab-democracy-index-iv

ARNOLD, T. 2013. Gender pay gap in Middle East between 20-40%. *The National*, May 24. Available at: http://www.thenational.ae/business/industry-insights/economics/gender-pay-gap-in-middle-east-between-20-40

ASSAAD, R. & ARNTZ, M. 2005. Constrained geographical mobility and gendered labor market outcomes under structural adjustment: evidence from Egypt. *World Development,* 33**,** 431-454.

ASSAAD, R., HENDY, R., & YASSINE, C. 2012. Gender and the Jordanian labor market. *Working Paper 701*. Cairo: Economic Research Forum.

BAKKER, A. B., DEMEROUTI, E. & SCHAUFELI, W. B. 2005. The crossover of burnout and work engagement among working couples. *Human Relations,* 58**,** 661-689.

BANIHANI, M., LEWIS, P. & SYED, J. 2013. Is work engagement gendered? *Gender in Management: An International Journal,* 28**,** 400-423.

BYRNE, Z. S. 2014. *Understanding Employee Engagement: Theory, Research, and Practice*, Taylor & Francis.

CALAS, M. & SMIRCICH, L. 1992. Rewriting gender into organizational theorizing: Directions from feminist perspectives. *In:* REED, M. & HUGHES, M. (eds.) *Rethinking organization: New directions in organizational theory and analysis*. London: Sage.

CHEN, Z. & POWELL, G. N. 2012. No pain, no gain? A resource-based model of work-to-family enrichment and conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 81**,** 89-98.

CONNELL, R. 1987. *Gender and power: society, the person, and sexual politics*. Stanford University Press.

CRESWELL, J. W. 2003. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches*. Sage Publications.

DOS 2012. Department of Statistics. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Available at: http://www.dos.gov.jo

DOUMATO, E. A. & POSUSNEY, M. P. 2003. *Women and globalization in the Arab Middle East: gender, economy, and society*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

EL-SHENAWI, E. 2011. Poking at the Beast: How much is the Arab world worth? *Al-Arabiya News*, May 5. Available at: http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/05/05/147980.html

ELY, R. & PADAVIC, I. 2007. A feminist analysis of organizational research on sex differences. *Academy of Management Review,* 32**,** 1121-1144.

FANEK, F. 2015. Raising retirement age. *The Jordan Times*, August 30. Available at: http://www.jordantimes.com/opinion/fahed-fanek/raising-retirement-age

GALLUP 2012. *After the Arab Uprisings: Women on Rights, Religion, and Rebuilding -- Final Report.* Available at: http://www.gallup.com/poll/155306/Arab-Uprisings-Women-Rights-Religion-Rebuilding.aspx

GREBLIKAITE, J. & DAUGELIENE, R. 2010. The growing need of cross-cultural management and ethics in business. *European Integration Studies,* 1822-8402.

GRUMAN, J. A. & SAKS, A. M. 2011. Performance management and employee engagement. *Human Resource Management Review,* 21**,** 123-136.

HACKMAN, J. R. & OLDHAM, G. R. 1980. *Work redesign.* Reading: MA, Addison-Wesley.

HOFSTEDE, G. 1980. *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values,* Beverly Hills, CA, Sage.

HOFSTEDE, G. 1997. *Cultures and organizations: software of the mind*. McGraw-Hill.

HUSSEINI, R. 2010. Jordan. *In:* KELLY, S. & BRESLIN, J. (eds.) *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Progress amid Resistance.* Washington: Rowman and Littlefield.

ILO 2013. Global Employment Trends 2013. International Labour Organization. Available at: http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2013/lang--en/index.htm

JACOBS, J. A. & GERSON, K. 2004. *The time divide: Work, family, and gender inequality.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

JEUNG, C.-W. 2011. The concept of employee engagement: A comprehensive review from a positive organizational behavior perspective. *Performance Improvement Quarterly,* 24**,** 49-69.

KAHN, W. A. 1990. Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal,* 33**,** 692-724.

KANTER, R. 1977. *Men and women of the corporation*, Basic Books.

KEMPER, T. 1984. Power, status, and emotions: a sociological contribution to a psycho-physiological domain. *In:* SCHERER, K. & EKMAN, P. (eds.) *Approaches to Emotion.* Hillside, NJ: Erlbaum.

KOYUNCU, M., BURKE, R. J. & FIKSENBAUM, L. 2006. Work engagement among women managers and professionals in a Turkish bank: Potential antecedents and consequences. *Equal Opportunities International,* 25**,** 299-310.

LANE, C. 1993. Gender and the labour market in Europe: Britain, Germany and France compared. *The Sociological Review,* 41**,** 276-301.

LI, M., WANG, Z., GAO, J., & YOU, X. (2015). Proactive personality and job satisfaction: the mediating effects of self-efficacy and work engagement in teachers. *Current Psychology*, 1-8.

LOC 2014. Saudi Arabia: Women Not Allowed to Perform Notary Duties. Global Legal Monitor, November 14. Library of Congress. Available at: http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/saudi-arabia-women-not-allowed-to-perform-notary-duties/

LOCKWOOD, N. R. 2007. Leveraging employee engagement for competitive advantage: HR's strategic role. *HRMagazine,* 52**,** 1-11.

MACEY, W. H. & SCHNEIDER, B. 2008. The meaning of employee engagement. *Industrial & Organizational Psychology,* 1**,** 3-30.

MANN, S. 1997. Emotional labour in organisations. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 18**,** 4-12.

MARTIN, J. 2000. Hidden gendered assumptions in mainstream organizational theory and research. *Journal of Management Inquiry,* 9**,** 207-216.

MASLACH, C., SCHAUFELI, W. & LEITER, M. 2001. Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology,* 52**,** 397.

MAY, D. R., GILSON, R. L. & HARTER, L. M. 2004. The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology,* 77**,** 11-37.

METCALFE, B. D. 2006. Exploring cultural dimensions of gender and management in the Middle East. *Thunderbird International Business Review,* 48**,** 93- 107.

METCALFE, B. D. 2007. Gender and human resource management in the Middle East. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 18**,** 54-74.

METCALFE, B. D. 2008. Women, management and globalization in the Middle East. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 83**,** 85-100.

MILES, R. 2002. Employment and unemployment in Jordan: the importance of the gender system. *World Development* 30**,** 413-427.

MOGHADAM, V. (2015). Gender and globalization: Female labor and women's mobilization. *Journal of World-systems Research*, 5(2), 366-389.

MOSTAFA, M. M. 2003. Attitudes towards women who work in Egypt. *Women in Management Review,* 18**,** 252-68.

NELSON, D. L. & BURKE, R. J. 2002. *Gender, work stress, and health*. American Psychological Assoc.

PEEBLES, D., DARWAZEH, N., GOSHEH, H. & SABBAGH, A. 2007. *Factors Affecting Women's Participation in the Private Sector.* Available at: http://www.almanar.jo

READ, J. N. G. 2014. Gender, religious identity, and civic engagement among Arab Muslims in the United States. *Sociology of Religion*, doi: 10.1093/socrel/sru042

RESKIN, B. F. 2003. Including mechanisms in our models of ascriptive inequality. *American Sociological Review,* 68**,** 1-21.

RICH, B. L., LEPINE, J. A. & CRAWFORD, E. R. 2010. Job engagement: Antecedents and effects on job performance. *Academy of Management Journal,* 53**,** 617-635.

RIDGEWAY, C. L. 1997. Interaction and the conservation of gender inequality: Considering employment. *American Sociological Review,* 62**,** 218-235.

SAKS, A. M. 2006. Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* 21**,** 600-619.

SCHAUFELI, W. & BAKKER, A. 2004. *Utrecht work engagement scale.* Available at: www.schaufeli.com/downloads/tests/Test%20manual%20UWES.pdf

SCHAUFELI, W., MARTINEZ, I., MARQUES-PINTO, A., SALANOVA, M. & BAKKER, A. 2002a. Burnout and Engagement in university students: A cross national study. *J Cross Cult Psychol,* 33**,** 464 - 481.

SCHAUFELI, W., SALANOVA, M., GONZÁLEZ-ROMÁ, V. & BAKKER, A. 2002b. The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies,* 3**,** 71-92.

SCHOLZ, U., GUTIERREZ-DONA, B., SUD, S. & SCHWARZER, R. 2002. Is general self-efficacy a universal construct?: Psychometric findings from 25 countries. *Eur J Psychol Assess,* 18**,** 242 - 251.

SHIMAZU, A., SCHAUFELI, W. B., MIYANAKA, D. & IWATA, N. 2010. Why Japanese workers show low work engagement: An item response theory analysis of the Utrecht Work Engagement scale. *BioPsychoSocial Medicine,* 4.

SONBOL, A. E. A. 2003. *Women of Jordan: Islam, labor & the law,* Syracuse University Press.

SULLIVAN, K. 2012. Saudi Arabia struggles to employ its most-educated women. *The Independent*, November 13. Available at: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-struggles-to-employ-its-most-educated-women-8312035.html

SYED, J. 2008. A context-specific perspective of equal employment opportunity in Islamic societies. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management,* 25**,** 135-151.

SYED, J. & OZBILGIN, M. 2009. A relational framework for international transfer of diversity management practices. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,,* 20**,** 2435-2453.

TOWERSPERRIN. 2006. *Winning strategies for a global workforce.* Available at: www.towersperrin.com

UNDP 2003. *Arab Human Development Report.* New York, United Nations Publications.

UNDP 2006. *The Arab human development report 2005: Towards the rise of women in the Arab world*. UNDP: Regional Bureau for Arab States.

UN WOMEN 2015. United Arab Emirates. *Spring Forward for Women Programme*. Available at: http://spring-forward.unwomen.org/en/countries/united-arab-emirates

WALBY, S. 2011. *The Future of Feminism*, Wiley.

WHARTON, A. & ERICKSON, R. 1993. Managing emotion on the job and at home: understanding the consequences of multiple emotional roles. *Academy of Management Review,* 18**,** 457–486.

WHITEOAK, J. W., CRAWFORD, N. G. & MAPSTONE, R. H. 2006. Impact of gender and generational differences in work values and attitudes in an Arab culture. *Thunderbird International Business Review,* 48**,** 77-91.

WILLIAMS, L. S. 2002. Trying on gender, gender regimes, and the process of becoming women. *Gender & Society,* 16**,** 29-52.

WOODSIDE, A. G. 2010. Bridging the chasm between survey and case study research: Research methods for achieving generalization, accuracy, and complexity. *Industrial Marketing Management,* 39**,** 64-75.

WEF 2015. Global Gender Gap Report. *World Economic Forum*. Available at:

  http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/the-global-gender-gap-index-

  results-in-2015/

WORLDBANK 2004. *Gender and development in the Middle East and North Africa: Women in*
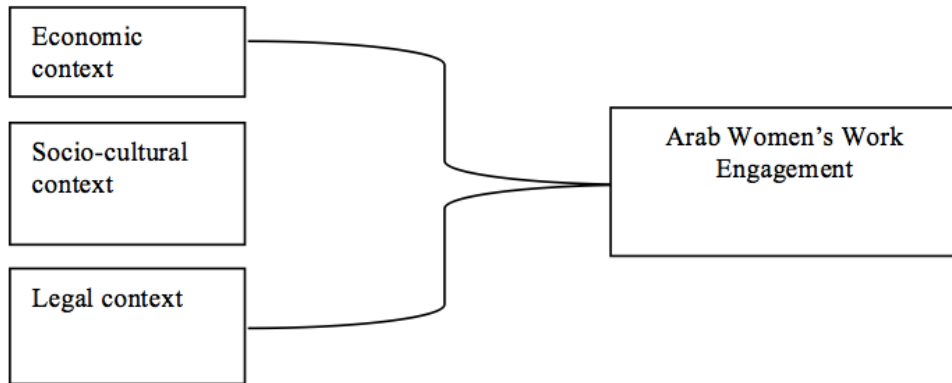
  the public sphere. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Figure 1. A macro-national perspective of Arab women's work engagement