

From the Editor

New insights and trends in undergraduate research: evidence from Jordan

This special issue of Middle East Journal of Business aims to increase the visibility of an often-denied area of research, specifically the production of knowledge that comes from bachelor theses. Most of the times, these contributions are carried out under time constraints and with limited access to large databases and budgets, thus rarely such research represents a completely autonomous contribution, as for the standards of the international community.

However, this condition is simultaneously the weakness and the strength of this kind of research that possesses “seeds” to become a fully-flag contribution:

- i) The scientific focus of such research is often very specific, in relation to the time constraints condition;
- ii) Due to the limited access to secondary data from database, the source of the data analyzed is primary, so collected “on field” and thus specifically for the research design;
- iii) The research problem is addressed in local settings due to a limited budget employable for the data collection. However, such condition is particularly interesting since it can integrate mainstream framework and literature with “singularities” of specific contexts thus expanding the knowledge of the phenomenon in a global perspective.

Indeed, this is the case of this special issue. Specifically, the authors of the papers are now graduated students of a private University, Princess Sumaya University for Technology (PSUT) that operates in the capital Amman of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The university, although the small dimensions in terms of student numbers but with a stable positive trend over the years, has reached a considerable position in national and international ranking. For example, considered as a whole: it scored among the top three for teaching quality in the national public assessment of 2015, first in Engineering and Computer Science and third in Business, it has been awarded with the most prestigious international certifications e.g. ABET accreditation, it participated and won many European projects within the FP7 and the Tempus/ASPIRE programs. Quite recently, only six years ago, the university trustee board decided to open the King Talal Business School titled after his late Majesty. The School despite its young age has grown exponentially and has been accepted in the process for the accreditation with the AACSB, first of its kind across Jordan.

This special issue is the result of a two-year work (academic years 2013/2014 and 2014/2015) with undergraduate students in such Business School. Many initiatives, directly managed by these editors aimed to stimulate and to boost the quality of the theses and improving the experience of the students. Beyond the regular weekly appointments, an integrative non-mandatory course has been provided for all the undergrad students, addressing different problems of the test, such as the general approach to researching, different methodologies for literature review, qualitative and quantitative methods and formal lessons for academic writing. Thus, in this light, this special issue has been created. All the contributions are originally based on undergraduate theses of the Business School selected among the best and most original. The authors re-elaborated and integrated their original contributions before the review process and then submitted them to the special issue. After the final selection, only five contributions met the international standards of a scientific publication and so they have been accepted in this special issue. As premised, the whole set of contributions is very focused, based on primary data and give evidence of the

national context of the Kingdom of Jordan, enriching the debate in the Middle East and MENA centered studies as well as to the general audience.

Talking about the single contributions, the first one (Ozgul, Sahouri, Rantissi and Bishouti) is focused on understanding how characteristics of nascent entrepreneurs in two incubators may affect their decision-making processes. Based on a consistent sample of surveyed entrepreneurs, the authors show the validity (non-validity) of several hypotheses including some about differences occurring on a gender-base. The second contribution (Tuguz, Samra and Almallah) still inquires the process of the decision-making but particularly addressing the problem of the style of conflict adopted. The authors linked the three dimensions of cultural intelligence (CQ) to the possible conflict style adopted, thanks to a multiple regression method. The evidence, that confirms the role of the CQ in the preference regarding adopting a particular style of conflict, open up for further debate about cultural issues in Jordan and in the Middle East especially for a better business interaction. The third contribution (Khalaf, Nakhleh and Sara) addresses a consistent social problem of Jordan that is the female workforce. The work using a qualitative approach and re-elaborating from in-depth-interviews with female workers, gives a clear account of internal and external motivations to work or not work. The results clearly indicate that the external factors, tied to the cultural, political, legal and economic environment, play a significant role in refraining women from being fully engaged in and stably part of the workforce. The fourth contribution (Kilani, Al Junidi and Al Riziq) tackles upon another very sensitive problem: the effect of the Wasta, translated as nepotism or in a more general sense favoritism, on relations within the private sector and organizations. According to the results of the study, the Wasta phenomenon is indeed widespread in the organizations surveyed and in the whole “Arab world”. This practice is so embedded in the culture and in the business reality that apart from a formal personal blaming, most of managers and CEOs do not take strong corrective actions against it. Nevertheless, this phenomenon contributed most of the time to an uprising of conflicts and problems within the organization at different levels. Finally, the last contribution (Nimri, Bdair, Al Bitar) inquires the public sector employees and their motivations to work. The Public Sector in Jordan is one pillar of the whole economy and it has recently been reformed toward a more meritocratic system. Applying the Expectancy theory on a sample of more than two hundred employees, the study shows that the intrinsic motivation, thus motivations not tied to the merit, still play a major role in determining the behaviors of the public employees.

We considered this special issue a “fresh” and punctual picture of the actual situation in different aspects of the business world in Jordan. In addition, as premised, we hope to encourage similar initiatives to increase the awareness of the research performed but young scholars that in the future may fully join the Academic community. With such a wish and with the congratulations to the authors for their hard work to achieve this publication, we conclude our brief introduction to this issue.

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