

Work-Life Balance, Family Culture and Women's Leadership in the UAE

A Dissertation Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree
Doctor of Business Administration

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Division of Online and Professional Studies
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by

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has been approved by the Dr. Robert K Jabs School of Business in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Business Administration

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ABSTRACT

Women's empowerment and women's leadership are important in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In the recently developed National Strategy for the Empowerment of Emirati Women (UNESCO, 2016), the UAE government emphasizes the support and empowerment of women in the workplace and society. Emirati women have greatly benefitted from the steps taken by the UAE government to empower women. As a result, the country now has the world's highest rate of female representation in the Federal Parliament and a growing number of women entering the workforce (Fyfe, 2013). However, there is still room for greater numbers of women in positions of leadership in the UAE. In addition, some have expressed concern regarding the high employment turnover rate for Emirati women, which is influenced by job satisfaction, quality of work-life (Jabeen et al., 2018a), and the work-life balance of Emirati women (Nanjiani & Dahlstrom, 2017). Therefore, more research on these topic of women's advancement in the UAE and other Arab nations is needed. This study intends to assess the influence of work-life balance and the role of women's family culture on women's attainment of leadership positions in the UAE. The study adopts a mixed methodology, beginning with the collection of quantitative data from a questionnaire focused on the factors that influence their work-life balance using a non-probability sampling technique from 58 Emirati women leaders. Data gathered from the quantitative study was analyzed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS.v.25). The second part of the research utilizes qualitative interviews to explore more about UAE women's perspectives on work-life balance and the influence of the family culture on attainment of leadership positions. The qualitative data was collected from 12 Emirati leaders who complete the initial quantitative survey through a semi-structured interview. The NVivo (v.12) software program was used to code the qualitative interviews. The findings of this study revealed that women leaders in the UAE face various challenges, including gender bias, male-dominated occupations, cultural

norms, sociocultural beliefs, "wasta" in procuring jobs, and lack of support (family and organizational). The results of this study will provide information about the factors that influence Emirati women's leadership in the UAE, which may help leaders and policymakers identify future areas of focus for the goal of empowering women in the country.

Keywords: Work-life Balance, Leadership positions, Emirati women, United Arab Emirates.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, who believed in me and has been a tower of strength during this endeavor. Thank you for being my inspiration, and without your continued support, I could have never achieved my dream of a doctorate. I hope that I make you proud!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On International Women's Day in 2015, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) government unveiled the National Strategy for Empowerment of Emirati Women. The strategy provides a broad framework for all federal and local government, private sector, and civil society establishments to set work procedures and plans to help women in the UAE. The strategy sets a framework to ensure the coexistence of women in UAE society, with equal legal status and special rights under the constitution. The strategy intends to equip more women as leaders, entrepreneurs, astronauts, fighter pilots, cabinet ministers, and others (The Official Portal of the UAE Government, 2015). Ensuring leadership opportunities for Emirati women is a national goal of the UAE government and its Gender Balance Council, which aims to equalize opportunities for leadership and decision-making positions for all genders. Women's leadership is critical for increasing diversity, competitiveness, and innovation at the senior management levels. It also aids in promoting gender-sensitive institutional practices and creates greater awareness about gender balance at the workplace (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2017). Although the public and private sectors in the UAE continue to be male-dominated, the number of women in leadership roles is increasing.

As the number of women joining the labor force in the UAE grows, there is a need to develop more gender-balanced human resource policies and provide more opportunities to train women as future leaders. Women's equal participation and leadership in decision-making processes play a fundamental role in challenging unsustainable economic and social systems that perpetuate patriarchy in society (Hoare & Gell, 2009). This issue has become critical in the context of the UAE, where females account for 49.6% of the total population but have historically held a tiny percentage of leadership positions. Approximately 91.5% of the adult

female population consists of educated young women with considerable potential to be active participants and leaders in the region's labor force (Eckermann, 2018). Currently, the literacy rate of women in the UAE is 95.8% (Embassy of the United Arab Emirates Washington DC., 2020), and 33% of women-run enterprises in the UAE generate revenue greater than US\$100,000 per annum (Eckermann, 2018). The remarkable achievements of H. Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi, the UAE Minister of State for Tolerance, are embraced by Emirati women. She is recognized as one of the 100 most powerful women in the world. These statistics indicate an improvement in women's employment prospects over time compared to other countries in the region. The investigation of how these Emirati women obtain and experience leadership is crucial as we look to the future of UAE women in the workplace.

Historically, Emirati women struggled to obtain equal access to education and employment. In 1975, only 31% of UAE women were literate, compared to 54% of men. The scenario has improved tremendously, and the literacy rate for women in the UAE was approximately 95% in 2015 (The Official Portal of the UAE Government, 2015). The UAE constitution grants Emirati women the same access to education and the right to practice their preferred occupation as men (Farrell, 2008). However, within the UAE, there is also obligatory gender separation in education. Though the religious, social, and cultural customs might have traditionally positioned Emirati women in the home-based role as a mother or wife, the trend towards high levels of female education and an increased number of Emirati women working outside the home persists (Farrell, 2008).

In the past fifty years, the vision of the great leader His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder of the UAE, has been to provide education to all Emirati women. This goal has almost been successfully achieved. As a result, more women are entering the

workforce. According to UAE Gender Balance Council (2020), more than 23,000 Emirati women run businesses in the nation, and 66% of the public sector workforce is comprised of Emirati women; of these women, about 30% hold leadership positions as well. Moreover, in their latest report regarding gender equality, the UAE Gender Balance Council (2020) reported that the Emirates Mars Mission team was comprised of 34% women, and that 80% of the scientists on the team were women. Although women have made considerable progress in their participation in the UAE's labor force, this positive evolution overlooks various social, economic, cultural, and political challenges women in the UAE still encounter in breaking through the glass ceiling and acquiring leadership positions.

The term 'glass ceiling' was first coined by Marilyn Loden in 1978 to describe the invisible constraints that prevented women from progressing beyond a certain position in a corporation. The term quickly gained popularity and was used in the Women's Institute for Freedom Conference in 1979 (Ganiyu et al., 2018). Also, it has lately been used to include minorities and ethnicities that suffer such biases (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Elliott & Smith, 2004; Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995; Johns, 2013; Zhang & Qu, 2016). These barriers can be societal, governmental, cultural, political, economic, structural, and internal to the business (Johns, 2013). Even though laws are set to foster Emirati women's leadership, UAE women may find difficulty managing work-life and family. Emirati women are pressured to take up social responsibilities and household responsibilities that interfere with their goals at work.

Social and religious customs have traditionally directed the status of women in the UAE, where tribal roots are firmly entrenched in the Emirati individuals. The rapid economic progress and subsequent alteration in economic situations have intensely reformed several features of female Emirati lives, such as access to education, healthcare, and access to employment options

(Farrell, 2008). However, the fundamental cultural outlines of Emirati women have not yet transformed, especially as they relate to patriarchal family arrangements. Males in UAE families often hold the majority of power in the family and are seen as accountable for support and protection. Further, a husband's honor and reputation still rest on his spouse and daughters' behavior. Cousin marriage is preferred, and the notion of extended family life is strong. Despite these traditional values, Emirati society is gradually becoming more accepting of modern values (Farrell, 2008).

Although the policies exist to support women in maintaining proper work-life balance and advance in the workplace, there is much work still to be done within UAE organizations to support women's work lives. Research by Al Suwaidi (2012) uncovered significant gender discrimination and bias favoring men in organizations in the UAE, particularly those managed by men. Challenges faced at work and within work-related leadership positions prevent UAE women from attaining and remaining in leadership positions. Gender stereotypes and gender categorization persist, with a prevailing perception of women being less competent leaders. In-group favoritism sometimes leads men to act on a preference for other men in high-level appointments and promotions, a notion termed 'homosocial reproduction' (Reskin, 2000). Women are less likely to have workplace support, social ties to elites, and strong professional networks than men. Women's challenges with work-life balance have been marked by increased frustration and pressure regarding the women's roles of balancing the work and non-work domains (Donnelly et al., 2015).

Work-life balance (WLB) is a term that describes the circumstances in the workplace that helps employees achieve a balance between work-life and family life (Lakkoju & Jeyalakshmi, 2015) and the ability of an individual to perform both work and non-work duties successfully

(Brue, 2018). Donnelly et al. (2015) assert that women's promotion to leadership positions is associated with increasing frustrations and pressure to balance the work and non-work domains. The successful attainment of leadership roles is complicated in the UAE because of women's familial obligations (Al Suwaidi, 2012). Research by Mulnix et al. (2014) illuminated the significance of family support and work-life balance to Emirati women's success in leadership positions. Many Emirati women still find it challenging to manage their profession and family life. The dynamics of WLB for women include work, family, and social support, especially for those working within occupations that men have traditionally dominated. Social support from family members and relatives is an important criterion, and support from relatives has been identified as the most influential aspect for women leaders (Al Suwaidi, 2012). Women also recognize the value of emotional support from female superiors and female co-workers as being necessary for success (Al Suwaidi, 2012). Attaining an optimum work-family balance is challenging. Preceding research has found social support to be a strategic element in helping to ease work-life conflict. Social support such as emotional spousal support and emotional supervisory support can significantly affect work-life conflict and employment-related guilt (Irak et al., 2019).

In contrast to work-life balance, work-life conflict occurs when there is a disagreement between work and other personal aspects of one's life (Michel et al., 2013). It creates distractions in work and family life. Work-life conflict is the aftermath of improper WLB, and it has been noted that Emirati women sometimes opt out of their jobs to cater to the needs of the family. Research by Nanjiani & Dahlstrom (2017) emphasizes the growing concern that although two-thirds of university graduates are women and Emirati women are highly ambitious and goal-oriented, only 4% of women contribute to the Emirati workforce (Nanjiani & Dahlstrom, 2017).

The statistics show that only a small minority of most university graduates are currently working in leadership positions (Nanjiani & Dahlstrom, 2017). It highlights the barriers Emirati women face in joining the workforce, the conflicts they encounter in job life, and the effects of work-life conflicts in their lives. Nanjiani & Dahlstrom (2017) conclude that part of the solution for supporting female employees is enriching work-family relationships. However, their research concluded that the antecedents and outcomes of work-life imbalance of Emirati women leaders are a matter that requires further exploration.

Although the Emirati culture is patriarchal, it is noteworthy to mention that in the Quran, the central text of the Islam faith, women are recognized equally to have the rights to learn, debate, and attend educational organizations to attain modern education and hold positions in organizations (Lootah, 2006). These values are of critical importance in women's leadership. The family culture in UAE is evolving to reflect these notions of equality in the Quran. Moghadam (2008) explains that by the 1960s, the Emirati women's families, although patriarchal, increasingly encouraged women to occupy high-status professions in universities, medicine, and law. Jabeen et al. (2018) describe UAE as a collectivistic society, where family is the predominant territory. According to Prager (2020), Emirati women who pursue work do not always have financial motives, choosing instead to work for self-fulfillment and self-sovereignty. This may contribute to Emirati women not being willing to pursue their careers in the long run, choosing to conform to cultural norms over work. Because the support from family is an important element in the career path of Emirati women, the government has developed counseling sessions that educate Emirati family members to support the Emirati women in maintaining a work-life balance. Al Khayyal et al. (2020) suggest a set of directions for future

research to address the present scarcity of experiential investigations on women's leadership in the UAE, despite all the initiatives and programs to empower UAE national women.

Jabeen et al. (2015) emphasized that family support and societal support will help businesses owned by Emirati women entrepreneurs to attain profits and that family support is the most crucial factor behind the success of Emirati women. Al Suwaidi (2012) stressed that gender diversity and work-life balance issues are Emirati women's prime challenges. This aspect is reinforced in Prager's (2020) study, highlighting the difficulties faced by qualified and intelligent Emirati women in society. Counter to the background of the rapid economic development of the UAE, Emirati women still live in a society that holds patriarchal morals and creates gender roles in conservative and traditional manners, although encouraging high levels of women education. Though the UAE government has undertaken considerable initiatives to facilitate women in the workforce, the current low percentage of women who hold senior leadership positions remains an issue. Besides, the gender disparity in the UAE is a matter of concern, with family-based masculine attitudes considering females as too emotional and incompetent to lead (Farrell, 2008). More focused research is needed to explore how UAE family culture impacts Emirati women to seek or avoid leadership roles or escalate to senior leadership roles.

Background

The lack of women's participation in leadership positions is a critical concern for their empowerment worldwide. This shortfall in women's leadership is partially related to women's access to high-ranking positions in different sectors such as agriculture, health (Kalaitzi et al., 2019), education, and political governance (Brodowsky et al., 2019).

Although women's rights have been highlighted as a symbol of national development in the decades following independence in 1971, the UAE government now describes women's

rights as advanced enough to create a new system of empowering women and men. The UAE government has strengthened its collaboration with entities that support gender equality and empowerment to increase women's economic participation, particularly in the entrepreneurship sector. It has launched various initiatives to significantly alleviate the gender gap and highlight the significant contribution of women to economic growth. According to the Ministry of Economy of UAE, the Gender Balance Council was established to enhance the leading role of Emirati women in the country's development and ensure that federal institutions are implementing best practices to meet their gender equality goals. The government has also introduced laws and initiatives to protect women's rights, provide equal job opportunities, ensure their decent living and foster their creativity in sustainable and developmental domains (Ministry of Economy of UAE, 2022).

A landmark in the Middle East, the UAE has also declared its goal of becoming one of the 25 countries in the world for gender equality by 2021 (Pinto, 2019). In the Arab world, the dominant leadership style is a male style that has been repeatedly recognized as a prominent and acceptable style in the last century. Therefore, for women, the easiest leadership style is to use a masculine leadership style. This is because masculine leadership styles are accepted especially in masculine organizational contexts. Thus, women encounter many challenges to come forward and lead. It is pertinent to address the unique factors that directly or indirectly prevent women from advancing their careers to explore this aspect in the UAE.

Sociocultural Background of UAE

The UAE has shown exponential growth from its independence to date. The UAE government has developed several initiatives to bring up Emirati women's contribution to society (WAM Emirates News Agency, 2015a, 2015b). The role of UAE women in society has changed

over the last two generations because UAE society has transformed in numerous ways.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) status report on Millennium Development Goals in 2007, UAE's target-oriented policies, especially those focused on women empowerment, have generated positive results (Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs, 2008). Furthermore, state legislation in the UAE was also increasingly based on gender equality principles concerning education, employment, and other services (Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs, 2008). The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report in 2016 also ranked UAE in the 8th position for the sub-index of wage equality for similar work. Although leadership positions have traditionally belonged to men, the number of women leaders in the UAE has depicted a gradual yet upward trend. Recently, Arab women have also been appointed in important ministries and the Parliament (Arar, 2018). In the UAE, the cabinet consists of nine women, while eight women serve in the Federal National Council (FNC), and 20% of the diplomatic corps are women. UAE women are also sole business owners, accounting for 10% of the UAE's private sector. They also hold 15% of the positions industry-wide and on the boards of commerce chambers (Embassy of the United Arab Emirates Washington DC., 2020).

When analyzing the social background and its impact on female leadership, it has been stated that as a tribal society, the UAE's leadership positions are primarily male-dominated and not a natural incubator for female leadership (Arar, 2018). This nature has both hindered and postponed women's access to higher administration. Previously, women in most Gulf countries worked primarily in the agriculture sector, where their unpaid labor was used on the farm or to tend to livestock. In addition, women were involved in domestic work and family welfare at home (Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs, 2008). This fact suited the

traditional structure of social and economic life in the UAE and limited the women's role to the private sphere.

Hussain (2015) stated that the theoretical comparison of the socio-cultural background of UAE is not possible with any western theories because of the socio-cultural differences of the nation and its effect on the lives of the women in the UAE. Hussain (2015) revealed that Emirati families could provide support to enhance Emirati women's career choices. Family support enables them to have better work-life management. Even though the work-life balance is a hot topic of discussion, women struggle to manage family and work stress, which often pushes them to ill health and mental anxiety, eventually leading to and withdrawal from work (Al Yammahi, 2018).

The common Emirati woman prioritizes nurturing the family over career, and this sentiment is indoctrinated in society (Al Matroushi et al., 2018). When work-life conflicts occur, they are expected to tend to the family before work, which leads to a dearth of non-interrupted access to full-time employment for these women (Al Matroushi et al., 2018). The eventual outcome of the circumstances mentioned above is that women remain unemployed or quit pursuing their careers altogether. Research findings by the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority (2017) suggested that nearly 60% of Emirati women joined the workforce in their mid-twenties. In the age bracket of 30-45, the graph for women in the workforce declined to 34%. This can be accredited to women struggling to achieve a work-life balance when they have children and families to tend to (Rizvi, 2021). Besides culture, the Arabian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) found that women felt bound by religious obligations which restricted their optimal participation in the labor force (Al Gharaibeh, 2015). These factors have contributed towards a 19.3% rate of unemployment amongst women (ILO's Global Employment Trends

report; Mathew 2019). It is pertinent to realize that if women's participation in the labor market were equivalent to that of men's, it could lead to a 47% increase in the Middle East region's GDP by the next decade (Eckermann, 2018).

In the Middle East, where entrepreneurship and development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is a way to reduce the nation's dependence on oil, the rise in female entrepreneurship is an exciting phenomenon. According to Tahir & Al Baradie (2019), women entrepreneurs and SME owners face several challenges, such as lack of funding options for start-up capital, gender discrimination, and lack of training and networking opportunities. It is important to note that women, as a group, are impacted by gender biases, difficulties in maintaining a work-home balance, lack of training and mentoring, and exclusion from informal networks (Gargani et al., 2012). These factors deter them from successfully navigating through this patriarchal culture and impact their self-confidence, which is essential for taking on leadership roles. Al Matroushi et al. (2020) developed a push-pull factor theory to identify factors that influence Emirati women to become entrepreneurs with and without business family backgrounds. Results show that skills, education, and training are the most important for the success of Emirati women entrepreneurs. Hence, the UAE government should offer inclusive economic policies and training opportunities to support these Emirati women's aspirations, who want to take more prominent roles in the business sector. However, this requires assessing the existing challenges of Emirati women and their family culture role that impacts their career choices.

Statement of the Research Problem

The lack of women serving in leadership positions is a critical concern for women's empowerment in the UAE. Nanjiani & Dahlstrom (2017) observed that Emirati women

professionals drop out of careers because of work-family conflicts. The rate of employed Emirati women is identified to be as low as 4% in 2020, although over 70% of government university graduates in the UAE are Emirati women (Nanjiani & Dahlstrom, 2017). Emirati women are concerned about managing work life and family life, regardless of numerous government initiatives to promote their inclusion in the work place (Nanjiani & Dahlstrom, 2017).

Researchers suggest the necessity of a proper work-life balance for women to support access and success in leadership roles. It will help the employees combat burnout and stress and improve employee performance (Kshirsagar, 2019; Mukanzi et al., 2014). Studies have shown that supervisor support can help reduce work-family conflict, enhance employees' level of satisfaction, and result in organizational commitment (Talukder, 2019). Supervisory support includes measures by the supervisor aimed at the employee's welfare (Penning de Vries et al., 2020). The supervisors can offer their support by inquiring if they need assistance, providing feedback on their work, or informing them of available opportunities for growth in the organization (Penning de Vries et al., 2020). Additionally, Emirati women who work in male-dominated fields face more discrimination because stereotypical gender perceptions result in their gender being a poor fit for the male-dominated occupational expectations. This discrimination indicates the need for female leaders' gender-neutral opportunities to reduce this perceived gender-norm violation (Mendoza & DiMaria, 2018). It is important to note that women, as a group, are exposed to gender bias, difficulties in maintaining a work-home balance, lack of training and mentoring, and exclusion from informal networks (Gargani et al., 2012). All these factors disable them from successfully navigating through this patriarchal culture and impact their self-confidence, which is essential for taking on leadership roles.

The studies analyzing the work-life balance of successful women leaders among the Emirati women in UAE are a small number of the studies related to Emirati women (Al Khayyal et al., 2020; Kemp & Zhao, 2016; Samier, 2015). Thus, there is a growing need to develop a structural model to support these Emirati women's aspirations at the government, institutional, and sectoral levels. Emirati women encounter many barriers and obstacles in their work-life; however, limited resources are documented in this regard (Rapanta & Badran, 2016). This research attempts to study the dynamics of work-life balance on successful women leadership among Emirati women in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Furthermore, the study intends to shed light on the role of the family culture and various challenges of Emirati women in influencing them to access senior leadership positions in the UAE.

Purpose Statement

Corporate interest and scholarship in WLB initiatives and work-life interference are on the rise, particularly where women's desire to advance into leadership positions is concerned (Adame et al., 2016). This research aims to investigate the experiences of Emirati women leaders in terms of organizational and individual work-life balance in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The study also aims to explore the role of family culture and the challenges Emirati women leaders face in their successful professional journey and to understand why more Emirati women are not advancing in leadership roles within the UAE.

The non-work and work role obligations that impact UAE women's success as business leaders have distinct importance. Women's challenges in their leadership roles are often involve extensive personal costs linked to their senior leadership positions (Loeffen, 2016). Emirati women's WLB challenges involve the juggling of conflicting priorities between lifestyle, family, and job. Loeffen (2016) has argued that women leaders can maintain successful careers, although

not without a system of support and not without sacrifices. Also, women in leadership frequently have a feeling that they must justify their leadership role with the demonstration of proving competency, technical mastery, sustaining a work level more remarkable than their male counterparts (Ely et al., 2011), which often leads to a greater need for WLB. The leadership experiences of Emirati women are not explored thoroughly (Rapanta & Badran, 2016). Erogul & McCrohan (2008) identified the limited support offered by the friends and family members of the Emirati entrepreneurs and encouraged the necessity of a further study concentrated on non-entrepreneurs. Even though (Al Khayyal et al., 2020) reported a growing trend in the Emirati women workforce in the UAE, the personal, social, and organizational initiatives in supporting the Emirati women leaders in the UAE are yet to be explored further. The study analyses Emirati women's mindsets as they face many challenges acquiring and attaining leadership positions in the United Arab Emirates' unique context. This study also examines how their individual experiences differentiate them from other women leaders across the globe by focusing on the unique factor of family support in the context of the UAE.

Research Questions

1. What is the nature of work-life balance (WLB) in Emirati women working in leadership positions?
2. How does the culture of Emirati families influence women's attainment of leadership positions?
3. What are the factors that influence the work-life balance of Emirati women leaders?

Significance of the Problem

Work-life balance is a critical concern among women in the UAE; Nanjiani & Dahlstrom (2017) addressed the necessity of studying the work-life balance issues among Emirati women.

Women professionals need support and training to balance work life and excel in building leadership capability with the gender disparity in the working space. Emirati women are under-represented, according to Alhammadi (2019), and there is an urgent need to conduct further research to build new policies and reformations.

Women leaders have emerged as valuable players in the UAE's corporate landscape. Gender equality at the workplace and equal leadership opportunities in the social, cultural, economic, and political arenas have enabled Emirati women to develop professionally while also contributing positively to their workplaces and the country at large. According to Singh's (2019) interview-based study of around 35 women from 15 different institutions in the UAE, women in managerial posts have higher productivity and performance levels than their male counterparts. Additionally, studies on female representation at the leadership level also show positive results. Female board representation positively correlates with accounting returns and market performance in countries with higher gender parity (Post & Byron, 2015).

This research may contribute to the growing body of knowledge on women in leadership. It analyzes the literature on the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, an increasing concern worldwide, especially in the UAE, where socio-cultural factors hamper women's progress. It also aims to investigate the family culture's role and the challenges these women leaders face. This study aims to fill the literature gap by looking at the UAE and the work-life balance of Emirati women and female leadership; this specific focus is vital because western scholarship in this field does not account for Middle Eastern conditions or Emirati culture (Samier, 2015). A review of the literature has shown that scholars have infrequently scrutinized research status on women leaders in the third world (Al Qumbarji, 2016). Further investigation on women in management in Arab societies is crucial to discover the dynamics of

mitigating career progression hurdles with rising female empowerment. Therefore, this study will observe women leaders' unique contexts in the UAE by offering a comprehensive understanding of these Emirati women's leadership, WLB dynamics, challenges, and the role of family culture factors to generate a holistic interpretation of how these issues impact Emirati women leaders' career advancement.

Organization of the Study

This study will explore the existing literature along with three broad themes. Firstly, it will look at the feminization of leadership in organizations and the need for greater female participation before moving on to the challenges faced by Emirati women. Then, it will examine what general perceptions are regarding women leaders and then suggest the way forward for the Emirati workforce in terms of feminization and work-life balance. The second part of this study will describe the elements of the research design. The surveys will be conducted to gauge perceptions regarding work-life balance, followed by interviews to delve into the challenges Emirati women face and their family culture's role in obtaining leadership positions. The survey and the interview participants will be working women of the UAE holding all level leadership positions; entry-level (3 years or less experience), middle-level leadership positions (7+ years relevant experience), or senior-level positions (12+ years relevant experience).

The obtained results will fulfill the aim of the study by exploring the influence of WLB on successful women's leadership and uncovering the constraints that impact women's leadership experiences in the Emirati workforce and the role of the family culture in attaining leadership positions. Moreover, the findings of this study will provide information about the aspects that impact Emirati women's leadership in the UAE, which may help leaders and policymakers pinpoint future areas of focus for the aim of empowering women in the country.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will present the literature related to women leaders in the UAE, women's work-life balance (WLB) and the influence of the UAE family culture in acquiring and maintaining senior leadership positions. This chapter will shed light on women's role in the UAE society throughout history, the challenges women face due to their gender within the culture of the UAE. Supporting theories will also be discussed.

Women Employment and Leadership in the UAE

Historically, women of the Arab world have been given a respectable place in society. However, their primary role is domestic in nature, limited to taking care of the household, maintaining the Islamic heritage and culture among offspring, and retaining a healthy family life. When the UAE was founded in 1971, early leaders brought along a vision about progress in the region with respect to the role of women. The Late President and founding father of UAE Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan said, "Nothing could delight me more than to see the woman taking up her distinctive position in society...Like men; women deserve the right to occupy high positions according to their capabilities and qualifications" (UKEssays, 2018). Since that time, the government has taken steps to empower women, and a positive trend has been observed for the past 36 years. Abiding by this vision, UAE has become one of the most crucial economic centers of its region.

Soon after the establishment of the UAE, the first women's meeting in the region, The Renaissance of Abu Dhabi Women Association, took place in 1973 (Bains & Bhatia, 2019). This event catalyzed and paved the way for other similar women's advocacy groups, which brought forth opportunities for UAE women in areas where they were formerly underrepresented. One such association was the General Women's Union (GWU) which was started by Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, wife of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. The outcome of these efforts were documented by the United Nations

Development Program (UNDP) in 2018. It reported that the number of Emirati women in the workforce had grown from 1000 to 135,000 between 1975 and 2015. They reported that the percentage of men holding bachelor's degrees was 23%, whereas 43% women held bachelor's degrees. According to UNDP, the UAE stood on top in gender equality in the Arab countries, which acknowledges the country's commitment towards empowering women (Bains & Bhatia, 2019).

With supportive policies, improved access to education, and social equity, Emirati women experienced more employment security and wage equality during the 1990's (Fyfe, 2013). Women's roles have continued to evolve in the UAE, primarily due to the government's commitment to improving women's access to education and insertion into the labor force (Allagui & Al-Najjar, 2018). Under the UAE constitution, women should obtain the same legal status, access to education and professions, claim to titles, and the right to inherit property as men. Around 23,000 businesswomen in UAE are now leading projects worth more than AED50 billion and occupying 15% of the positions in chambers of industry and commerce (Embassy of the United Arab Emirates Washington DC., 2020).

While Emirati women have made remarkable advances across various professions in the last two decades, the deeply ingrained cultural, attitudinal, and structural barriers have prevented the creation of a level playing field in the region, and workplace equality has not been achieved. Despite the numerous efforts made by the UAE government and private sector in increasing women's participation in the labor force, the proportion of Emirati women working in the private sector, as either employers or employees, is 5% of the total number of Emiratis in the UAE labor force. Most Emirati women still prefer to work in the public sector due to better work environments that align with their socio-cultural values and have higher pay rates and benefits, allowing them to achieve a more harmonious work-life balance (Forster, 2017).

Laws Affecting Women's Role in UAE Society

The UAE government has proved to have a progressive ideology since its inception in 1971, encouraging diversity in the workforce which has translated into growth in social and economic sectors. While observing certain limitations set by Islam, they have developed policies that motivate women to contribute their human resources to their economy. The constitution of the UAE assures equal rights for men and women, and acknowledges that women play a pivotal role in attaining a sustainable society (Alismail, 2016). The UAE government has also given the utmost importance to female education, taking the necessary measures to ensure that gender does not hinder people's right to a quality education. Despite this, the female employment rate in UAE does not translate into the same in numbers that would be expected based on the number of women graduating from tertiary-level institutes and universities.

Women in Emirati society has seen increases in representation within the judiciary, diplomatic, political, and commercial sectors. In 2015, it was noted that many women occupied prominent positions in the Cabinet, such as the Secretary-General, who was Her Excellency Maryam Al Hammadi at the time (Alismail, 2016). Their statistics also indicated that women represented 20% of the UAE's Federal National Council (Alismail, 2016). Furthermore, a female speaker was elected for the first time in the Gulf region from amongst these women in November 2015. While the world average of women in the public sector workforce stood at 48%, it was 66% in the UAE, and 30% of these women were in decision-making positions (UAEINTERACT, 2015). To circumvent the effects of a male-dominated society and to send out a positive message in the country that there are no "glass ceilings" for women in UAE, the Cabinet introduced a law in 2014 mandating the presence of at least one woman in the boardroom. This made the UAE the first Arab country and the second country globally to recognize this as a requirement. This step was taken to bring about innovation,

competitiveness, and entrepreneurship with women in leading positions (Permanent Mission of the UAE to the UN, 2015).

The UAE government has also begun to promote women's employment through the efforts at Emiratization. Emiratization, also known as Tawteen in Arabic, is an initiative launched by the UAE government to overcome this structural division in the UAE workforce. By targeting employable Emirati men and women, the UAE government aims to make them the beneficiaries of the economic development in the country. The policies of Emiratization mandate that a certain percentage of the employment recruitment be comprised of Emiratis in both public and private sectors (The United Arab Emirates' Government Portal, 2021).

Statistics from 2001 suggest that 50% of the foreign workforce in the UAE are from the Indian subcontinent like India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan (Alismail, 2016). As a result, the government and the Federal National Council (FNC) express a growing concern that Emirati nationals' rights may be marginalized if expatriates hamper the economy (Gallant & Pounder, 2008). Moreover, the research of Zachariah et al. (2002) estimated that 60% of the public sector workforce in the UAE was composed of expatriates, with the majority being in the service and construction industry. The reason for employing expatriates was because the majority of them (about two-thirds) are recruited as inexpensive, unskilled labor because they lack secondary education. The vast influx of expatriates is affecting the UAE culture and is beginning to show its impact on society, and the government is concerned that the country's identity could be decimating. Therefore, the government is focusing on Emiratization policy, which will ensure a sound balance in employing expatriates and UAE nationals (Zachariah et al., 2002; Zeffane & Kemp, 2012). To reduce the UAE's dependence on outsourcing workers and exhausting resources in training them, the government is now focused on employing qualified women into the workforce and providing women with equal opportunities, and training UAE nationals, thus controlling the entry of unskilled workers. A suitable

environment for skilled workers can be created by targeting the knowledge economy (Zachariah et al., 2002).

Women are considered an integral part of this Emiratization policy, and initiatives developed by the government reflect that. For instance, public university education is rarely provided for free in many developed countries, but UAE extends this benefit to its nationals free of cost (Article 17 of the UAE's Constitution and Article 1 of Federal Law No. 11 of 1972). As a result, an improved literacy rate has opened a world of opportunities to freshly graduated female candidates in the finance and engineering sectors. With many women opting for career lines that are otherwise considered suitable for men only (like energy sectors), more jobs are being created to induce these female graduates to enter these areas. As a result of these measures, UAE had the highest level of women in the workforce, i.e., 57.5%, among all Arab countries (The World Bank, 2021). There has not been any compromise in educating the female population of UAE, and many women are found engaged in the business operations within the country (Nelson, 2004). Approximately 77% of university students in the year 2000 were female (Alkassadi, 2000). Erogul & McCrohan (2008) noted that 28% of the UAE workforce was composed of women. Many of these women are employed in the government, science and engineering fields, oil industries, healthcare, law, media, computers and software industries, and fields of education. In contrast to other countries with similar GDP per capita like Norway, Finland, and Singapore, the number of women involved in the business is lower in Arab countries. However, the researchers point out that amongst all the Arab Gulf states, UAE holds the highest percentage of women entrepreneurs (Erogul & McCrohan, 2008). The UAE government encourages women to be independent and facilitates this by creating an inclusive work environment for expatriate and Emirati females. The work environment for expatriate females has been ensured to be comfortable, and they are not required to cover as the Emirati women are needed to. While

they UAE government encourages women's access to education and employment, UAE women may still face criticism at home if their family disapproves of them choosing a professional life, and some may even consider these choices to be non-Islamic.

Gender Discrimination and Leadership Roles

The case of the UAE is particularly vital for this study on women's leadership. It offers a deeper understanding of the challenges women face in acquiring and retaining leadership positions and presents an opportunity for a nuanced intersectional analysis based on the distinct experiences of Emirati women leaders. Women's rights issues in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have gained more visibility and prominence than a decade ago, especially in gender research, policy discussions, and feminist activism (Moghadam, 2008). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, are part of the United Nation's post-2015 development agenda. SDGs are an ambitious step towards sustainable development, taking a broader view of sustainability than ever attained earlier. SDGs comprise a collection of 17 correlating global aims intended to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all, yet concrete challenges continue, including implementing change (Holm et al., 2016). Moghadam (2008) alleges that gender biases are built into many MENA countries' sociocultural attitudes, policy-making procedures, and legal frameworks. These forms of gender discrimination prevent these countries from achieving several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Gender and the Pay Gap

Gender stereotypes and patriarchally dictated gender-based roles are deeply ingrained in the Middle Eastern culture, to the extent that gender segregation is still a legal requirement in some domains (Moghadam, 2005). Even though the right to education has been ensured for girls and boys equally without any prejudice, female participation in the workforce or political domains post-graduation is not manifested the same way (The World Bank, 2013).

This can be attributed to the cultural belief that women are best suited to caregiving roles such as mothers and wives. This often leads to women opting to stay home and men assuming roles as the breadwinners and providers of the family (Yeganeh & May, 2011). Abalkhail (2019) highlighted that in the Arab Middle East context, the government initiatives to enhance women's educational opportunities and increase the proportion of women who attained professional training is a grand success. Nevertheless, the study pointed out that these initiatives did not promote women's favored atmosphere in the workplace and that the prevalence of women's leadership challenges that could not be resolved even after a decade of the 22nd century.

Even though men and women are, in most cases, equally qualified, the wage gap and promotion preferences are seen to be affected by gender. Hausmann et al., (2012) found the current wage gap in the Middle East to fall between 20% to 40% for men and women. As an example, Tlaiss & Kauser (2011) found that in 2009 the income of women in Lebanon was US\$2,552 in contrast to US\$8,826 of men. Tong (2010) observed a similar trend in the UAE, where the median salary for women employees was set around AED 24,000 per month against AED 43,000 per month for male employees. According to ILO (2015), male employees in Jordan in the public sector earned 28% more than women; this percentage stood at 43% more in the private sector.

Women's Leadership- General Insight

The underrepresentation of women in leadership is a global phenomenon. Glass & Cook (2016) assert that women leaders, in general, are significantly underrepresented in corporate leadership positions. In one study, they observed women CEOs' career trajectories and experiences in Fortune 500 companies with a matched sample of their male counterparts to understand gender inequality at that level of leadership. Their research findings indicate that women are more likely to be promoted to high-risk leadership positions than men. They

also do not receive similar support and authority required to accomplish their strategic goals. This also explains shorter tenures in women leaders. Sarna et al. (2019) mentioned that women do not often get the support of leader-mentors in higher positions. Further recognizing the constraints women leaders face, Rhee & Sigler (2015) discuss that sexual biases and stereotypes prevent women from ascending to higher managerial positions. Regardless of their management style, women leaders face critical challenges in terms of negative perceptions about their effectiveness and are penalized for not meeting the stereotypical expectations associated with their gender.

The scenario is slightly impactful in the western world since the proportion of women leaders increase (Goethals & Hoyt, 2016). Still, Goethals & Hoyt (2016) commented that women leaders are constantly being dejected. The same point is validated by Randsley de Moura et al. (2018), stating that women leaders are often opposed by the majority in an organization and thus may disrupt the organization's harmony. In most cases, it is identified that the organization's culture is an important aspect that understands women's leadership skills. Shinbrot et al. (2019), like many other academicians, stressed the organizational culture is the biggest constraint in creating successful women leaders.

Women have much to contribute as leaders in contemporary organizations throughout the world. Current literature on leadership emphasizes leaders' role in today's rapidly changing and unstable global corporate environment. With technology, globalization, and competition transforming businesses worldwide, it has become increasingly crucial for 21st-century leaders to develop fundamental leadership traits and the necessary business acumen to steer their respective organizations in the right direction amidst complex and dynamic business situations (Parida, 2019). Leadership is not limited to giving directives and delegating work. It extends to the sense of collective ability and wisdom, which influential leaders use to create organizational benefits, address their employees' needs, and integrate

corporate resources to achieve common, mutually beneficial goals. So, an effective leader's role includes developing a progressive organizational culture that adheres to the principles of gender equality, ensures higher employees' motivation, and generates innovative and high-performance outcomes (Zeb et al., 2018).

Another prominent aspect of organizational leadership is leadership's impact on the organization's culture and work environment. A leader plays a significant role in developing its culture, values, and decision-making processes. Thus, business leaders with different personal values and styles will create different organizational cultures and work environments for their subordinates (Gao, 2015). In today's competitive global environment, where businesses are expanding their operations and workforces worldwide, inculcating an inclusive organizational culture has become increasingly important. An inclusive climate entails eliminating discriminatory human resource policies and developing gender-neutral and ethnically diverse teams to enrich decision-making processes and boost performance. According to Ashikali et al. (2020), inclusive leadership is a prerequisite for an inclusive climate where managers value different teams for what they bring in their work practices and not for their gender or ethnicity.

Along the same lines, Najmaei (2017) also develops a strong case for gender inclusivity being a fundamental yet ignored aspect of the strategic leadership paradigm and argues that embedding gender inclusivity in leadership is a meaningful way to advance research on how leaders learn, progress, and strategize in today's diverse world. Similarly, as more women become part of the labor force and aspire to attain leadership positions, a growing trend in gendered leadership studies has emerged. Women leaders' distinct experiences are recognized as inherently different from their male counterparts and are studied to develop better insights into their challenges. It has become critical to create a more

gendered and context-driven approach to leadership in understanding the distinct barriers and opportunities encountered by leaders worldwide.

Women's Leadership- A Global View

The desire amongst women to lead at professional positions dates centuries back, but a holistic change has been observed in the past few decades worldwide. The fact that women must circumvent several hurdles in acquiring leadership positions can be understood by discerning that less than 1 in 10 businesses are led by women worldwide. Contrary to popular belief, Lagerberg (2012) found that organizations which included both genders on top managerial posts and held a higher proportion of female leaders on the board excelled in sales, returns on equity, and invested capital compared to businesses that chose to keep a single-gendered board. The findings of Lagerberg (2012) suggest a very gradual growth in accepting and facilitating women reach senior leadership positions, which was 19% in 2004 and only 21% till 2011.

Businesses and industries willing to appoint women to leadership positions seems to vary drastically across the globe, and some are doing better than others at moving towards equality for women (Lagerberg, 2012). Globally, nearly 13% of senior positions in the financial sector like corporate chief controllers and 13% of other senior finance positions are occupied by women. In contrast, 22% of women occupy senior level human resources positions. In Scandinavian countries, 1 in 4 companies hire a female chief finance officer. Globally, as chief operating officers, women are at 12%, with the highest presence of 45% in Mainland China. There are still many departments worldwide that lie below 10% in appointing women to senior positions. For example, on average head of sales positions lies at eight percent for women, eight percent as chief marketing officers, five percent as chief information officers, five percent as general managers, and three percent as business partners worldwide (Lagerberg, 2012). These statistics show that women's roles are mainly

concentrated around finance and Human Resources. However, there is a need to see more women leading businesses and support any efforts to help them accomplish this (Lagerberg, 2012). Companies must recognize the benefits that a more gender-balanced decision-making process can provide growth prospects.

Women's leadership appears to be the weakest in public governance sectors. The polarity in appointments of men compared to women is evident in these sectors and should be circumvented to ensure a democratic system (Al-Waqfi, 2015). The opportunity to engage in one's government and public affairs is a right that should be provided regardless of gender to every individual, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2010) records that the involvement of women in their country's parliaments has gradually increased all over the world. They found that women's participation in national parliaments was low, and single houses have enhanced from 10% in 1995 to 17% in April 2009 (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010). Very few women are serving as presiding officers, pointing towards the weak trend of women holding high positions in the national parliaments. For example, only 21 out of 176 lower or single parliaments and 10 out of 73 seats in the upper chamber worldwide are led by women (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010). Only seven out of 150 women are heads of state worldwide, and female leaders govern only 11 out of 192 countries. There was minimal growth in percentage for female ministers worldwide, from 8% in 1998 to 17% in 2008 (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010).

The above statistics were explained by Hoobler et al. (2011), who associated the low percentages with four main driving factors. Primarily, the glass ceiling phenomenon is endorsed by several scholars who found the stereotypical mindset of linking leadership roles with the male gender only and termed it the "think leader, think male" phenomenon. Secondly, the absence of preparatory workshops and programs that cater to women and

support their qualifications and training in acquiring executive leadership positions. This means fewer women will be competent enough to escalate the corporate ladder and reach executive levels (Al Qumbarji, 2016). Cultural norms stand as the third main obstacle in women's progress to leadership roles, which defines them as caregivers and homemakers and validates the male superiority over women, deeming them unfit for a leadership position. Lastly, the economy in today's world has become highly competitive, leaving no room for women to attain work-life balance (Hoobler et al., 2011). We can easily derive from the above references that women worldwide struggle to acquire leadership positions, and this study should be expanded to lesser developed regions of the world to understand the struggles of women in those regions.

Women's Leadership in the Arab World-UAE Context

The most recent research on women leaders in the middle east found that women are drastically underrepresented, and that those present in the organization are not as empowered as their male counterparts (Omair, 2011; Sidani, 2005). This inadequate representation of female employees in senior management positions is endorsed by several researchers (Moghadam, 2005). Only a few women have managed to emerge in senior management positions, while a vast majority of the women have little to no growth after reaching certain positions (Al-Lamky, 2007; Metcalfe, 2008; Yaseen, 2010). Only a few female managers in Lebanon managed to secure higher leadership roles, while the majority remained at lower managerial positions (Sidani, 2005). For Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, this number appears to be even smaller. This can be attributed to their socio-cultural attitudes (Jamali et al., 2006). Most women managers in the emirates were at entry-level positions, and only a few women could steer their way to higher managerial positions (Omair, 2011).

The career development of Emirati women is hindered by several obstacles, including societal structure, recruitment practices, the absence of gender-sensitive policies in any

organization, and investments in human capital (Kelly & Breslin, 2010). Furthermore, a hesitation in employing women is seen at the organizational level to avoid the extra cost that may be incurred due to maternity leaves and the culture in this region (Al-Lamky, 2007). Many Emirati countries have devised their independent institutional frameworks and ministries to protect women's rights and affairs in the economic and political sectors to tackle these obstacles. These ministries are pivotal in career advancements of women, as they collect necessary data to understand areas that require the most attention, which will help in progressing women and develop gender-specific strategies (United Nations Public Administration Network, 2007).

Barriers to Women's Entry in Leadership

Women have fought for their rights and their place throughout history, which can be seen in the form of several movements that emerged in this struggle. Some progress has been made in attaining rights for women, but there are certain stereotypes that women have to break to strengthen their position in society. Even today, men are at an advantage over women when securing top management positions (Davidson, 2012). Women stagnating at lower positions and men of equal caliber progressing to higher posts is seen to be a global phenomenon (Mohammadkhani & Gholamzadeh, 2016). The American Association of University Women- AAUW (2016) reports that women have gained notable labor participation. However, this participation falls short when religious bodies, unions, academia, the legal profession, and leadership positions in business sectors are considered.

Baxter & Wright (2000) report that women in executive positions are not the only ones facing the 'glass ceiling conundrum.' Women at middle-level management and people of race, color and disabilities, religion, etc., are also victims of these barriers. Globally, the percentage of women participation in the workforce has reduced from 52.4% to 49.6% between 1995 and 2015, and for men, this rate has diminished from 79.9% to 76.1%

(International Labor Organization-ILO). This disparity in the representation of women in organizations has furthered a negative impact on employment opportunities for women (ILO, 2015). Other researchers have found that women rarely make it to top positions and top tier stratum in the corporate sector (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000). Constance et al. (2006) confirmed this with their research that found that two-thirds of managerial-rank women at Fortune 1000 firms cluster were below the top two steps of leadership levels. It has been reported by Catalyst (2015) that the patriarchal preferences prevent women from progressing to leadership positions for which men are given prime consideration. Among the top 200 businesses worldwide, the state of women is that only two of these enterprises are directed by women, and only four have women, chief executives. This was revealed by the statistics issued by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (Kee, 2006).

UAE Context

It is central to note that the UAE's institutional and social context plays an influential role in shaping the situational opportunities and constraints that impact female leaders and entrepreneurs. Although recently, women empowerment in the UAE has depicted positive trends with more women emerging as fundamental players in the economy, whether it is as entrepreneurs or corporate leaders, traces of stereotype assertions and patriarchal norms persist and continue to constrain the free expression and progress of these Emirati women leaders and entrepreneurs (Naguib & Jamali, 2015). Marmenout & Lirio (2014) conduct a study on female talent retention in the Gulf region, focusing on Emirati women, identifying four main challenges women face in the workforce. While the desire to work may not be a challenge, the space in which these women leaders must work may have in-built challenges for them in the form of existing societal norms, patriarchal family formations, primary commitment to home life, and modesty issues at work which limit the career pursuits of these Emirati women.

In addition to this, it is pertinent to note that these women entrepreneurs also lack awareness about supporting institutions such as credit facilities and training opportunities that prevent them from acquiring the relevant skill sets and traits essential for breaking the glass ceiling. Srinivasa Rao (2018) conducted a study on micro women entrepreneurs in the UAE to analyze the role these Emirati women entrepreneurs play in economic development. Results from a sample of 200 Emirati micro women entrepreneurs show that these women leaders face two momentous challenges: cost of operations and competition. Due to a lack of formal education and training on business management or entrepreneurship, these women leaders do not have sufficient knowledge and awareness on cost-effective planning and competitive strategy. Henceforth, leadership training and development should not be strictly the domain of Emirati men, and these opportunities should be open for aspiring Emirati women leaders.

It has become progressively momentous that these challenges, including socio-cultural perception issues, familial responsibilities, lack of role models, and training and development opportunities, should be incorporated in policy design to recognize Emirati's unique context of women leaders and the support to empower them.

The Benefits of Female Leadership

The study of leadership has a long and multifaceted history. While women did not have the right to vote as equal citizens until the suffragette movement of the 19th century, the female demographic has emerged as a powerful, politically mobile force. Historically, women have been precluded from formal leadership, as it has been disproportionately dominated by men, which has perpetuated a hollow understanding of socio-economic realities and created severe structural inequalities in modern societies. It has been identified that women have faced a great deal of stereotyping, especially about their role in a professional framework, as they have often been portrayed (primarily through the media and popular

culture) as subordinate to their male counterparts, and very rarely in a position of leadership. People portrayed women in these rare leadership positions as somewhat masculine and assertive personalities, a troubling misrepresentation, as shown in a plethora of research about women's leadership characteristics (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).

Likewise, research has shown that despite the proliferation of this misleading rhetoric for decades, women bring a unique skill set and ideology to the realm of leadership, as they are not only better aware of the structural inequalities but can also empathize with the needs of the populace, and can be more adept at a diplomatic approach to solving problems (Gipson et al., 2017). Furthermore, across a broad spectrum of factors, including leadership style, development, and performance, women have performed above par to (if not equal to) their male counterparts. They have brought a more structured organizational approach to their respective leadership positions (Gipson et al., 2017). Female leaders can potentially have a positive impact on organizational productivity and growth. It could be through designing better and more effective management strategies, improving the work environment by offering a valuable gendered perspective to corporate strategy or serving as important role models for other women in their vicinity. Because there has been a surge in women in crucial political leadership positions, including Jacinda Ardern in New Zealand and Erna Solberg in Norway, it may be that parts of the Middle East are also going to be increasingly occupied by women in the foreseeable future. Perhaps with increasing numbers of women gaining political power, the international community would inevitably turn towards unorthodox solutions to their complex problems.

Impact of Women Leaders on Organizations

Previous studies on female leadership explore female managers' role as agents of change, fostering gender equality in the workplace. This hypothesis is rooted in the assumption that unequal gender representation creates social and economic inequality in

leadership positions. Henceforward, women must be trained and supported to attain leadership roles to navigate society's patriarchal structures and norms.

Offermann & Foley (2020) analyze female leadership using an organizational approach and suggest that female leaders have unique leadership traits, attributes, and behaviors that positively contribute to a workplace. Various cultural and organizational contexts may facilitate or impede this female leadership advantage, depending on its ability to successfully remove female leadership barriers through fair policies and performance evaluations. Post (2015) adds that female leadership benefits are contingent on their teams, i.e., functional diversity, size, and geographic dispersion. Employing survey responses from 82 teams in 29 organizations, she argues that there is greater cohesion in more extensive and functionally diverse women-led groups and greater cooperation and participative interaction in larger and geographically dispersed women-led teams. Thus, innovative human resource practices and gender-neutral organizational policies are necessary to help women leaders achieve improvements in firm or team-level performance.

Preceding literature on female leadership has also focused on gender diversity in top management teams and its impact on firm performance, risk, and executive compensation, indicating that although female executives are under-paid compared to male executives, greater gender diversity has shown lower risk and better performance at the firm-level (Perryman et al., 2016). According to Tsou & Yang (2019), an increase in gender diversity also leads to significant improvements in firm productivity and contributes to the overall feminization of industries - this impact is more evident for smaller firms with highly-educated women employees. Terjesen et al. (2015) use data from 3,876 public firms in 47 countries to find that more female directors enhance the board of directors' independence and efficiency and lead to higher firm performance in accounting and market measures. Firms aiming for greater strategic flexibility should consider hiring female CEOs to enhance firm-

level outcomes and remain competitive in increasingly dynamic environments (Xiu et al., 2017).

Dezsö & Ross (2012) use 15 years of panel data on the top management teams of the S&P 1500 firms to contend that as a firm's performance is a function of its full management team, which is responsible for strategic and organizational decision-making, female representation in the top management leaders leads to social and informational diversity, improvements in firm performance, and a greater focus on innovation. Vo et al. (2019) examine the impact of gender in leadership on Vietnamese listed firms' account and risk and find that female Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) generate higher profitability than their male counterparts. In their study, women-led firms also experience less systematic and idiosyncratic risks and lower volatility in their returns on assets than firms with male CEOs. This study illustrates that women leaders bring unique perspectives, work styles, and experiences onboard, creating positive results at the firm level.

Similarly, Beltran (2019) analyzes the impact of female leadership at two different managerial levels, i.e., CEOs and firm owners, and investigates how the inter-relationships between these two roles can affect firm-level outcomes. Her study uses data from the World Bank Enterprise Surveys (WBES) from 2009-14 to measure firm performance via productivity and sales growth. The findings prove that a female firm owner can strengthen a female CEO's position and business skills, leading to better firm performance, compared to cases when there are female CEO and male owner. Previous research on gender and organizational outcomes suggest that more females in higher management positions must address the 21st-century business environment's unique challenges.

Impact of Women Leadership on Subordinates

Female leaders in the corporate sector have improved productivity and growth at the firm level. Still, they also play an important role in inculcating female empowerment and

influence corporate culture in their respective organizations. In addition to setting a precedent for other female employees in their organization, female leaders have also improved the gender balance, gender-wage differentials, and the overall work environment by breaking the glass ceiling.

Flabbi et al. (2019) scrutinize how female executives impact gender-specific wage distribution and firm performance by accounting for endogeneity induced by non-random executives' gender through firm fixed-effects. A two-way fixed-effects regression shows that female leaders are more efficient at interpreting productivity signals from female employees and that their leadership positively impacts those at the top of the female wage distribution. Their study also displays that firm productivity improves with increasing the share of female employees in the workforce. Arvate et al. (2018) also studied female leadership's effect on gender differences in public and private organizations using a quasi-experiment based on mayoral elections. They conclude that municipalities with a woman elected leader have a more significant number of top and middle female managers in public organizations than cities with a male elected leader. This study employs a role model analysis to understand that women leaders who have managerial discretion behave courteously toward their subordinate women. In favorable organizational environments that afford female leaders with the necessary power and managerial discretion, women leaders are benevolent and create opportunities and pro-female conditions/choices for other women. Such powerful women are top-level female leaders who improve the status of women within organizations as they act as role models and implement leader preferences (Arvate et al., 2018). Therefore, women must have similar decision-making power and managerial discretion in organizations to bring satisfactory changes for women themselves, which may influence other women's ambitions or their self-perception.

In their comprehensive study on the politics of women empowerment, Abdulkadir & Muller (2020) argue that in recent years the United Arab Emirates, and other states in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), have substantially increased the promotion of women in public life - a role from which this demographic has been chiefly separated. This study also documents that more women are obtaining senior positions in a wide array of domains and professions, and despite this progress, it still considerably lags what women have achieved around other parts of the world. Despite the perpetuating disparities, women's presence in leadership positions can fundamentally change the power dynamics in societies that have shied away from gender equality. It can also empower women in more vulnerable socio-economic circumstances. Similarly, Halldén et al. (2018) explore whether an increase in female representation at the managerial level is associated with positive outcomes for female employees in terms of role modeling, mentoring, or other incentives to productivity. They derived their conclusions by researching to find any affiliation between the wages of female employees and the gender of their immediate managers. The relationship between female employees and lower-level female managers was found to be negative, whereas female employees and high-rank female managers had a positive relationship. It is safe to conclude that granting decision-making authority to women can improve the wage outcomes for other female employees.

In a study on de-gendered leadership in the United Arab Emirates, Singh (2019) concludes that the gender of any individual in a leadership position is inconsequential if men and women are treated on equal footing, as women have exhibited a high level of productivity and performance in their work and have shown the requisite commitment and motivation to progress in their careers. The heightened presence of women in leadership roles will subsequently drastically improve productivity and performance-related indicators. It will positively impact their subordinates by inculcating a culture of female empowerment

(including equal wages and career growth). Further, in a study on the impact of the 'glass ceiling' in the projected career paths of women in the United Arab Emirates, Behery et al. (2017) postulate that women who introduce an effective style of leadership are very likely to undergo a significant progression in their respective careers. Moreover, these women will set a solid precedent to introduce women to positions to exercise their leadership abilities.

With the increase in the number of women joining the labor force, there is a growing need to develop more gender-balanced human resource policies and provide more significant opportunities to train women as future leaders. Women's equal participation and leadership in decision-making processes play a fundamental role in challenging unsustainable economic and social systems that perpetuate patriarchy in society (Hoare & Gell, 2009). Previous research on women's empowerment and decision-making also indicates a positive link between empowerment and economic development. Empowering women has many potentials to change society's choices in meaningful ways (Duflo, 2012). Hence, gender equality must be a prerequisite at every decision-making level and in every sector.

Family Culture

To understand what family culture is, we may breakdown the term into 'family,' which implies a group of people that are socially related to each other by blood, marriage, or adoption (UKEssays, 2018) and 'culture,' which is a set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2012). In a nutshell, the term family culture can be defined as an aggregate of ideas, ideals, attitudes, and environments passed on to each individual from their family. These principles usually become the moral compass of individuals in making essential decisions in life and give them values to adhere to throughout their lives (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2012). Middle Eastern countries are Muslim majority countries, and many of their family and societal culture traditions are motivated by Islam.

There are defined values and behavior that every Muslim must abide by in their day-to-day life. Family relations are a significant part of this behavior, so women have assigned roles according to societal perceptions. The participation of women in the workforce thus becomes impeded because of the concrete beliefs. As Metcalfe (2006) observed in Middle Eastern families, men have the decision-making authority and are considered the breadwinners of the house, whereas women have no such obligation. Moreover, self-desires and needs are outweighed by the family's needs. Lastly, women are considered to be a family's honor, and thus it is assumed that the best way they can protect their dignity is by maintaining their roles at home.

Connection to Women's Work and Leadership Access in UAE

Metcalfe's (2006) study has been endorsed by Al-Ahmadi (2011), who observed that the male attitude and their response to women participating in the workforce were major obstacles preventing women from taking up such roles. Their expectations of women being the caregivers, and men being the household's economic providers, prevent them from accepting women having a career.

Gallant & Pounder (2008) conducted literature-based research on this subject and found that women's input in the workforce and career advancement was heavily influenced by societal norms and the culture in the Middle East. This study acquires supporting evidence from Hijab's (1988) framework to understand the dynamics of women's participation in the GCC and the extent of the impact culture has on it. Their research aims at understanding if and when a society welcomes female participation in the workforce, the opportunities available for them, and most importantly, if women are qualified and skilled enough to take up such responsibilities. Taking these three factors into account in the context of Emirati women, Gallant & Pounder (2008) found that the first two factors were well in place, but they did not translate into numbers when observing the participation rate. The study suggests that

culture and societal expectations of women prevented them from prioritizing career over family. This research agrees with the findings of Kattara (2005), Mostafa (2005), and Whiteoak et al. (2006). Kattara (2005) found the culture to be a significant obstacle for women in the hotel industry in Egypt and these restrictions are similar to those faced by the Emirati women. Religion-based attitudes towards gender roles and their effect on women working in that sector were further supported by Omair's (2008) research.

This gender discrimination driven by culture extends back to times before oil was discovered in the gulf region. Evidence for this was verified in Abdalla's (1996) research and Whiteoak et al.'s (2006) report, which found a dearth of women participating in the GCC due to cultural restrictions and/or limitations. Considering the infrastructure and economic growth till the present time, the culture has only evolved sparingly, maintaining Islamic values and norms. However, the change in government attitude towards gender-defined roles is catalyzed by a high dependency on outsourcing foreign labor due to insufficient local manpower available with a defined skill set. Hence, the latest strategic plan, Vision 2030, Government of UAE, and the 8th Development Plan of Saudi Arabia, intends to incorporate women in the workforce to tackle the lack of manpower. However, this change would not come quickly since the people are comfortable in their culture and belief system. Whiteoak et al. (2006) state that this contrasted trend points towards a possibility of change in attitudes at an individual level.

Work Life Balance

This section provides a brief summary of existing literature on the work-family balance. This research is concerned with work-life balance, family culture, and women's leadership in the UAE; therefore, the literature in the realm of work-life balance needs to be explored.

Work Life Balance and Leadership of Women

Researchers have helped us understand work-life balance by defining it as the ability to achieve a dexterous and dynamic balance between work life and life at home without compromising adherence in any domain (Clark, 2000). Men and women both strive to acquire work-life balance, but sometimes, the burden of work eclipses an individual's family life (Fapohunda, 2014). However, for men, this dilemma is excused more than it is for women. Returning home from work, for most women, means taking care of a different set of responsibilities, and it is expected of them to not compromise their role as a mother or a wife. Balancing work and family for women is particularly challenging and will continue to be a fundamental concern for both individuals and organizations (Valcour, 2007). Women's progress in the corporate hierarchy is generally impacted because they recognize caregiving roles as their prime responsibility, affecting their performance at times.

Connection to Women's Work and Leadership Access in UAE

Women's work-life balance requires them to juggle many elements such as family, children, and professional life. The Malaysian government recently moved forward to protect women's interests by arranging flexible timing, policy for non-segregation and recruitment, training, and opportunities to upskills and reskill women to enhance the work-family balance promote women leadership (Saufi, 2018). Even though several women-friendly policies, the workforce is considered as straining to bring about balance and inconvenience. Hence the issue of work-life balance should be a consideration for women-centric studies assessing leadership and professionalism.

The work-life balance directly links to life satisfaction and happiness, with no relative differences between private and public organizations (Cazan et al., 2019). Several socio-cultural aspects play a significant role in shaping women's work-life balance in the UAE (Hussain, 2015). Emirati women believe and trust in family support to climb on their work profile ladders. Muthu Kumarasamy et al. (2015) studied and proved the significance of the

individual, organizational, and environmental factors affecting work-life balance. Individual factors include family and friends; organizational factors include the work culture, support from supervisors, job satisfaction, job engagement, workload, etc. The environmental factors include society's social and cultural background (Mittal et al., 2017).

Cultural perceptions about gender roles, social pressures, including an inability to achieve a work-life balance, and dependency issues at home, specifically for young working mothers, also serve as unique constraints in Emirati women leaders' progress. Erogul & McCrohan (2008) argue that the local UAE society has deemed a specific occupation outside the traditional gender biases inappropriate for women. This matter especially applies to professions that require traveling overnight and interactions with large audiences. These barriers to women's occupational and geographical mobility limit their exposure to practical business knowledge and prevent them from pursuing leadership roles in the UAE.

Achieving a work-life balance is critical for increasing female labor force participation and ensuring that these women ascend to leadership positions. Jabeen et al. (2018) employed structured questionnaires and partial least squares structural equation modeling for Emirati female employees working in public organizations in Abu Dhabi. The results indicate a significant and positive effect of quality of work-life on job satisfaction and a negative impact on Emirati women's turnover. This study specifies the urgency to focus on factors that directly cater to the quality of work-life and job satisfaction of Emirati women to reduce their turnover, improve productivity, and enhance alignment with a localized strategy.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is informed by previous research on female leadership and integrates several theoretical perspectives related to identity, career development, institutional structures, cultural socialization, business ethics, and feminist literature to explore the complexity of this topic. In reviewing issues that arise in gender

discrimination, the concept of intersectionality will be employed as lens in reviewing literature relevant to this study. Kimberle Williams introduced this concept in 1989. It is an analytical approach to investigate the relationship between different social and political variables, which amalgamate to create additional privileges and discrimination factors (Carastathis, 2018). This framework needs to be applied in the context of the UAE to attain more in-depth insights into the different perspectives on gender where mainstream research on women's leadership generally neglects it (Singh, 2019). The aim is to examine the challenges of women leaders in the UAE, family culture's role, and work-life balance dynamics in acquiring and maintaining senior leadership positions. The researcher will engage in a thoughtful analysis using the following three theories: poststructuralist feminist theory, social role, identity theory, and the role congruity theory. A solid theoretical foundation will enable the design of a coherent methodological framework to investigate factors and conditions that will allow women leaders to attain and maintain leadership positions in Emirati society with the goal of developing policy recommendations for enhancing women's empowerment in the UAE.

Poststructuralist Feminist Theory

Feminist literature on leadership investigates how women navigate various cultural and gendered assumptions in a patriarchal society to become successful leaders. A gendered leadership analysis offers insights into the various challenges women encounter in attaining leadership positions. Although previous research shows that women leadership and gender diversity at higher management levels has led to positive impacts on the overall business performance (Moreno-Gómez et al., 2018), it is crucial to analyze how the lived experiences of the Emirati women might be inherently different from other women across the globe due to their specific socio-cultural context. Hence, a poststructuralist feminist perspective enables an intersectional understanding of the Emirati women's experience negotiating their place as

leaders in the patriarchal UAE society. According to poststructuralist feminists, self and identity are realized within a historical context, setting the spatial and temporal coordinates of a specific experience. In other words, differences in race, class, region, and society situate women in different social locations (Forsythe, 2017). Hence, these differences must be taken into account while conducting a gendered analysis of leadership.

A poststructuralist feminist perspective is necessary for developing a keen understanding of the leadership traits in Emirati women leaders and offers a clear methodological direction to this study. Feminist qualitative research is based on the idea that all knowledge is situated in the subjectivities and bodies of individuals. Hence, focusing on a qualitative description and analysis of gendered constructs and experiences will allow the research to expand outside a traditional binary analysis of gender, enabling it to develop a more nuanced understanding of the myriad ways gender roles are negotiated in the UAE society (Freeman, 2019).

Erogul et al. (2016) also employ a contextual approach to understand the cultural and structural challenges that constrain female entrepreneurship in the Arab society and demonstrate the Emirati female entrepreneur's identity as multi-layered. They strategically construct opportunities by developing cooperation with men to achieve empowerment. In addition to this, Abdulkadir & Muller (2020) also argue that despite a substantial increase in women entering public life and obtaining senior positions in the UAE, women's leadership progress is still below what has already been achieved in other parts of the world. Therefore, it is crucial to account for the socio-cultural backgrounds of these Emirati women leaders and their respective social arenas to identify where and how they have been the most successful in attaining leadership positions.

Hallward & Bekdash Muellers (2019) interviewed thirty-two women in Oman to study how race, class, and generation determine women's opportunities for leadership from a

feminist intersectional lens. Contrary to expectations in previous literature, it is not religion and social norms that serve as the overarching challenges for women leaders in the Middle East, but other factors such as domestic responsibilities, family connections, and culture that shape their personalities. Furthermore, Ahmed et al. (2018) also analyzed the dynamics of women entrepreneurs in the UAE context by drawing evidence from data on personal characteristics and motivations for 178 UAE female entrepreneurs. They find that women entrepreneurs are not a monolithic category, and unique attributes like self-determination, family life balance, desire for change, work responsibility, independence, and occupational flexibility serve as key pull factors.

Research on gender and leadership has also heavily relied on the post-structuralist feminist theory to investigate how contextual challenges create impediments for women leaders and how women's experiences in different parts of the world are inherently different from one another, requiring unique, localized approaches to address them. The post-structuralist feminist theory prefers complexity over polarization. It challenges the binary strategy in modernist thinking, where subjects are situated as oppositional pairs, one over the other in a hierarchical manner. The aim is not to homogenize females as patriarchy victims but to understand that the study's female subject is complex, shifting, and multiply located. The post-structuralist feminist theory applies polyphony principles in terms of methodological techniques, where competing voices and accounts are collected and used to understand gendered behavior (Baxter, 2008).

In the UAE's case, it has become necessary to feminize the discourse on leadership and incorporate contextual factors in evaluating Emirati women leaders' gendered experiences. García & Welter (2011) argue that identity creation is an outcome of a contextual process, where other variables intersect with gender to determine how women construct their identities differently. Furthermore, Eroglu et al. (2016) also claim that the

study of gendered identity is underrepresented in organization and entrepreneurship theory, and feminist theories should be incorporated to investigate these multiple, co-existing identities, i.e., woman, Muslim, Emirati, leader, and entrepreneur. Hence, their study's contextual approach allows them to collect and analyze these Emirati women leaders' subjective experiences and how they construct opportunities and negotiate within their culture to become successful leaders or entrepreneurs. It is pertinent to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about gender neutrality regarding business behavior and entrepreneurship and develop more intersectional approaches to promote women's leadership.

A gendered approach to leadership is essential to feminize existing literature on leadership and decision-making and recognize the need for women's leadership as a prerequisite for social, economic, cultural, and political development. On top of that, this study's research finding would also be corroborated with existing literature on Emirati women leaders to discern the main challenges they encounter.

Social Role and Identity Theory

The social role and identity theory is often associated with 'the glass ceiling conundrum,' which focuses on how one gender is prevalent due to the roles assigned to them in the society based on class, race, and gender. Eagly (1987) suggests that the biosocial projection of men and women arises from their physical characteristics and social disposition, which has always dictated how labor roles are assigned. However, Eagly's research proposes that certain situations may require both genders to be non-conformity of stereotypical roles, and they may establish several organizational roles. For example, character traits like competitiveness, autonomy, and independence are often linked with leadership, and society expects men to entail these traits (Rudman & Glick 2001). These traits are also more desired in the organizational culture. On the other hand, women are characterized as compassionate, caring, and sensitive in interpersonal relationships (Fondas 1997; Ganiyu et al., 2013). These

traits have rarely been seen in the boardroom, but that does not mean that the organization will suffer by retaining these attributes (Daily et al. 2003). Applying the social identity theory to these examples can better understand why women are underrepresented in managerial positions (Singh & Vinnicombe 2004). Suppose the organization is underrepresented with female role models in the first place. In that case, it becomes exceptionally challenging for women to progress in a male-dominated system, where they have to 'first break that passive image of women holding diminutive power in a male-dominated domain' (Eagly, 2009).

The Role Congruity Theory

Eagly et al. (2000) developed the role congruity theory and borrowed its concept from the social role theory. The social role theory points towards the divergence in the position of men and women and how different gender roles arise concerning these positions. On the other hand, the role congruity theory focuses on managerial positions in particular and how genders catalyze the attainment of these positions (Eagly et al., 2000). This theory considers the gauging mechanisms employed for female executives because they are deemed unfit for leadership positions due to the tender nature ascribed to women (Eagly & Karau 2002). These researchers found that women have to endure certain stereotypes related to being feminine and believed to hinder effective leadership. This results in women being underrepresented in leadership positions and further encourages the notion that women lack the fundamental attributes required for successful leadership (Eagly & Karau 2002). Furthermore, women also suffer the effects of role congruity because feminine gender roles and leadership roles are deemed to contradict, thus reserving the managerial roles for the men in the organization.

The role congruity theory further focuses on how different factors in an organization affect the accomplishments of women. These include stereotypes, communal traits, and agentic characteristics. Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) describe agentic characteristics as specific attributes often associated and expected of men, like assertive behavior, the ability

to take charge, and self-assurance. In contrast, women often attribute communal traits, like a tender approach to matters and interpersonal sensitivity (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt 2001). Since these beliefs express women as void of authoritative propensity, they are deprived of opportunities to occupy managerial and leadership positions, and men are instead given preference (Eagly & Karau 2002).

Conclusion

The scope of this study requires a well-rounded analysis of the status of Emirati women leaders and the constraints that prevent them from attaining leadership positions. This analysis entails developing a deeper understanding of how studies in the past have employed the post-structuralist feminist theory, social role and identity theory, and the role congruity theory to facilitate intersectional analysis on leadership to fill the essential gaps in this research area. This study also involves a thorough investigation of the Emirati context, aided with mixed methodological tools for identifying the dynamics of work-life balance on successful women leadership among Emirati women in the UAE. In addition, the study intends to shed light on the role of the family culture and various challenges of Emirati women in influencing them to access senior leadership positions in the UAE. In the light of these theories and weighing the obstacles that women in UAE face in acquiring leadership positions, we derive that women in UAE are highly esteemed and provided equal opportunities prior to joining the workforce. The laws are also in place to ensure that their progress is not impeded. However, the struggles of women leaders and part of the reason for this dormancy are influenced by societal norms and the expectations that women hold of themselves because of the way they have been brought up. This study will address gaps in leadership and gender literature regarding women's leadership in the UAE context.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research methods and plans, particularly the strategies that are utilized to pursue the research objectives. Ontology is the researcher's belief about reality, while epistemology is the accurate, relevant body of existing knowledge. The different epistemological approaches include positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, and pragmatism (Saunders et al., 2012). This study follows the pragmatism paradigm, which is also called participatory research; qualitative and quantitative techniques will be appropriate for this philosophy. The researcher can combine different philosophies according to the research objectives. Often, pragmatists prefer the amalgamation of positivism and interpretivism to make the study credible, reliable, and relevant. The research ontology adopts a pragmatism research paradigm. The study aims to explore the issue of WLB on successful women leadership and uncover the constraints that impact women's leadership experiences in the Emirati workforce and the role of the family culture in attaining leadership positions.

Research Approach

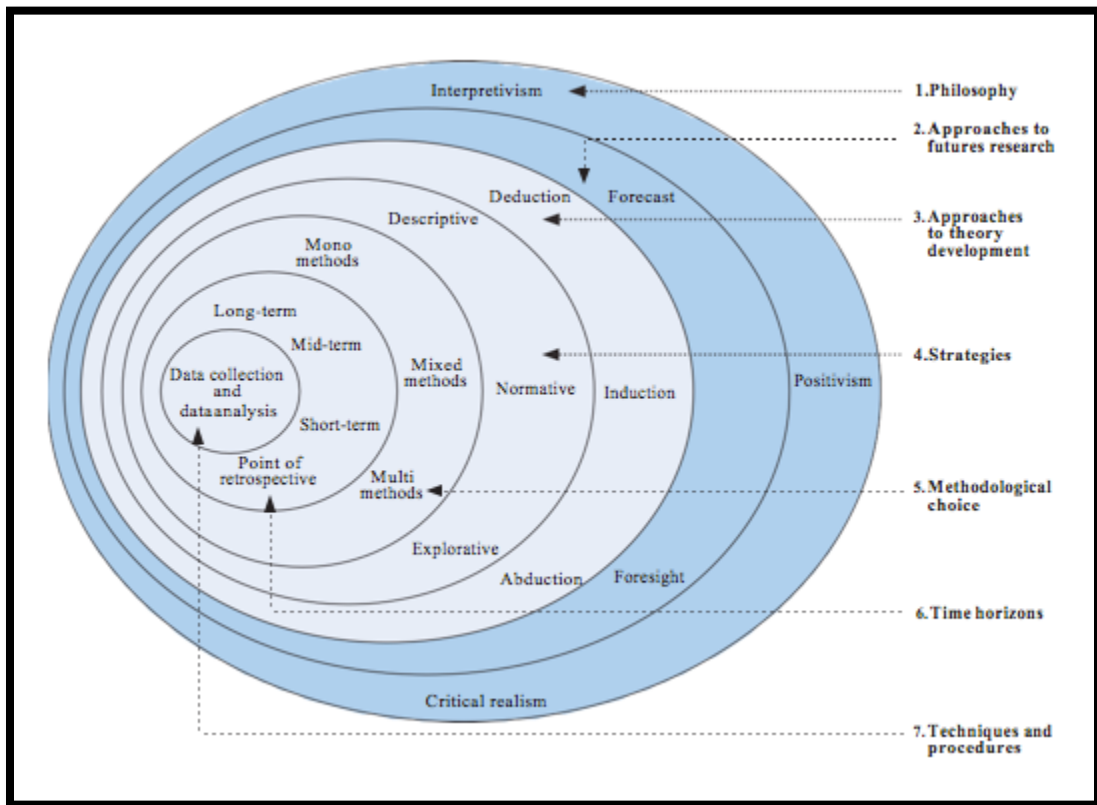
This study's theoretical framework is built on previous research on WLB and female leadership. It integrates several theoretical perspectives (i.e. poststructuralist feminist theory, social role and identity theory, and the role congruity theory) related to identity, career development, institutional structures, cultural socialization, business ethics, and feminist literature to explore this topic's complexity. The aim is to identify the issue of WLB on successful leadership, explore the challenges encountered by women leaders in the UAE, and explore the role of family culture in attaining leadership positions.

Positivism

According to the research process onion (see Figure 1) presented by Saunder et al. (2012, 2016), the researcher must first decide whether to follow the positivism paradigm, realism, or interpretivism paradigm. Positivism stands for social realism and adopts a deductive approach. Thus, quantitative research follows a deductive approach to developing theory (Saunder et al., 2012). In this study, the researcher follows both realism and constructivism research philosophies associated with quantitative and qualitative research.

Figure 1

The Research Process Onion



Constructivism

The interpretivism paradigm enables researchers to share their experiences and perceptions and helps the researcher gain an in-depth knowledge of the research problem and possible solutions (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). This paradigm helps the researcher to study the

target population and their mindset. In the present study, interpretivism is used to understand the main challenges faced by the women leaders in overcoming the barriers of imbalance between family life and career.

The conjunction of the above theories allows the study to develop a sound theoretical understanding and envision a clear methodological direction for further research. Although, it is essential to note that the overall epistemological approach employed in this study would be mainly centered around the poststructuralist feminist theory, and we will approach the critical concepts of gender, identity, and leadership in a manner that allows the incorporation of the distinct context of Emirati women leaders in this case.

Purpose Statement

This study analyzes Emirati women's mind-sets as they face many challenges to acquire and attain leadership positions in the United Arab Emirates' unique context. It aims to investigate the perspectives of Emirati women leaders (Entry/ Mid-level/ Senior-level women professionals) based on their experiences in terms of organizational and individual work-life balance in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This study also examines how their individual experiences differentiate them from other women leaders across the globe by focusing on the unique factor of family support in the context of the UAE.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the structure of the data collection methodology:

1. What is the nature of work-life balance (WLB) in Emirati women working in leadership positions?
2. How does the culture of Emirati families influence women's attainment of leadership

positions?

3. What are the factors that influence the work-life balance of Emirati women leaders?

The research questions will address the study's focal points and provide direction for the data collection and analysis and fulfill the study purpose. Further, the research questions help the researcher focus the study, develop and generate the survey, and interview questions. The first question aims to expound the issues of WLB on successful leadership quantitatively. The influence of family culture in molding Emirati women leaders is expounded in the second question. The third question qualitatively explicates the challenges that affect the professional journey of Emirati women leaders.

Research Design

This research adopts a mixed-method approach to the issues of WLB on successful Emirati women leadership in the UAE to understand the challenges and the family culture's role in attaining leadership positions. The multi-phased exploratory research design adopts both quantitative and qualitative data. Mixed methodology displays some effective advantages when scrutinizing complex topics of discussion (Driscoll et al, 2007). Both quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (interviews) data will be collected to cross-validate the data from both phases and to gain a greater comprehension of the research problem.

In the initial phase, a survey was developed to conduct a detailed examination of the WLB issues on Emirati women's leadership. The researcher selected items from validated scales from a review of related literature and segregated the scale according to the study's requirements. Many instruments have been developed in separate studies to investigate and measure organizational support, management practices, family support, and work-life balance, as shown in Table 1. Existing scales were combined and modified to create scales for this study. The items

were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 1

Sources of the Survey Variables

Variables	Primary Source of Initial Scales
Organizational Support	(Kundnani & Mehta, 2015)
Management Practices	(Njeri, 2014)
Family Support	(Sharma, Gangwani, & Al Fryan, 2019)
Work-Life Balance	(Muthu Kumarasamy et al., 2015)
Satisfaction with Work-Family Balance	(Muthu Kumarasamy et al., 2015)

Therefore, the items in the questionnaire were modified according to the suitability of the research. The questionnaire was divided into three parts: demographic information, employment history, and the challenges hindering Emirati women leaders' work-life balance. The questions were mostly multiple-choice.

In the second phase, the perceptions of Emirati women leaders were collected through in-depth qualitative interviews using a narrative-based intersectional approach. The interviews illuminated the challenges of Emirati women leaders in their professional journey, their unique experiences when working in different sectors, and the role of family culture in their professional journey. The goal was to explore a holistic examination of Emirati women's mindset in attaining and maintaining leadership positions in the UAE. According to Kvale & Brinkmann, semi-

structured interviews are portrayed as "a guide that will include an outline of topics to be covered with suggested questions" (2009, p.130). The second phase of the study aimed to collect data using semi-structured interviews since it allows the researcher to initiate with more generic questions and probe further to get detailed answers whenever possible. An interview guide was developed to direct the interviews (see Appendix E). The interview included questions on two broad themes: Emirati women's perceptions of work-life balance, challenges and family. The interview questions were open-ended to encourage disclosure and dialogue. Hence, more questions followed from conversations that allowed greater flexibility. Since each Emirati woman's experience will be unique, asking standardized questions will limit understanding of the context of their circumstances.

Although most of the studies on gendered leadership are focused on statistical data, this study used both the micro-experiences and mindset of these women, collating their ethnographic accounts and quantitative data to understand the role of the work-life balance. The survey was distributed first and used to attain prospective participants for the interviews. Doing so assisted in streamlining the data collection process as our participants' databases were available to choose from for the interviews. The collected qualitative perceptions following the quantitative data provide a narrative that, when combined, counterbalances prospective weaknesses from each form of data gathered and also helps with recommendations (Creswell, 2014).

Population

The target population for this study is Emirati women living in the UAE and working in public and private companies. The participants should be in entry-level, middle-level, or senior-level managerial positions. The questionnaires were sent to over 100 Emirati women professionals from different sectors. The professionals are working in the UAE in both private

and public organizations. They are in either entry-level, middle-level, or senior-level managerial positions. The researcher utilized snowball sampling-a non-probability sampling method to target and recruit potential participants. According to Saunders et al. (2009), snowball sampling is commonly used when it is difficult to identify members of the desired population. In this sampling technique, the researcher subjectively identifies and qualifies a small number of initial prospective participants and collects data from them (Robson, 2002). This method helps the researcher identify potential participants with similar characteristics to be included in the study.

The participants were identified through personal networks developed during the years the researcher lived and worked there. Members of the researcher's personal network (previous work colleagues, personal network) shared research study information with their network via a short advertisement. The researcher asked network members not to share information regarding any rewards for participation in this study so as not to coerce them into participating. The researcher addressed the study advert to mitigate any potential for coercion or power dynamics in the relationship between network members and participants. It also highlighted the voluntary and anonymous nature of participation.

Potential participants were provided with a link to the research study survey questionnaire and asked to contact the researchers directly if they were interested in interviews. Participants who indicated interest were sent the Participant Consent Form for completion. Participants who completed the survey only were completely anonymous. However, the responses of participants who entered their contact information in the survey were not anonymous. Prior to data analysis, this data was anonymized by removing the participant's personal details. The names of the participants who were interviewed were changed to maintain anonymity. Each interviewee's name was replaced by an interview number. On the other hand,

the survey was distributed to over 100 participants to ensure a sound and valid quantitative analysis. The reason for selecting a large number of participants for the survey is to guarantee the results' external validity. A sample of 12 such women was chosen for the interviews. This limited number is to streamline the research process; it will not affect the study's meaningfulness: "There are no rules for sample size in a qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 244).

Sample

For the interviews, the convenience sampling technique was used to attain twelve such women working in public and private sectors who reside in the UAE. Those 12 women are Emirati professionals working in public or private sectors, holding entry-level, mid-level, or senior-level managerial positions. Also, they have already participated in the survey and have chosen to participate voluntarily in the interview. The interviews assisted in having a more in-depth analysis and getting first-hand experience of how women can pave their way through the constraints that thrive in the Emirati workforce. This limited number is to streamline the research process; it will not affect the study's meaningfulness. "There are no rules for sample size in a qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 244). Furthermore, small sample sizes are preferred for such forms of qualitative studies (Huberman & Miles, 2002). More significant numbers can lead to a saturation of information that provides no additional knowledge (Robson, 2002). The criteria for selecting women for the interviews are:

- a) The professionals working in the UAE in both private and public organizations.
- b) They should be in an entry-level, middle-level, or senior-level managerial position.

It is just as important to uncover the stories of those women who tried to achieve leadership in their organizations as it is to interview successful women leaders. The survey had a

broader sample – it was distributed to over 100 Emirati women professionals working in the UAE through a convenience sampling technique. This method helped us roughly gauge the proportion of women in leadership positions in the workforce and outline the challenges they have faced in their professional careers.

A recruitment email was sent to all participants. The subjects were asked not to include their names. Upon responding, they were assigned a number and interview time. The researcher didn't keep any data on the participants. The recruitment letter stated that the participants are under no obligation to participate, that privacy will be protected during the interviews, and that no identifiable information will be collected. The recruitment script is found in Appendix A. The investigator also repeated the stated points at the beginning of each interview. Privacy through identity protection utilizing assigned codes rather than name identification was used during the recruitment and pre/post-interview process. All information was housed on a secure server, and no one other than the researcher's name in this IRB application had access to the data.

Instrumentation

Data Collection

Data distribution and collection took place virtually through online platforms. The survey was made and distributed on Qualtrics, as this software allows the data from the surveys to be collected and analyzed automatically. The survey was administered online through email. Participants had to click on the link that was sent to them in order to access the full questionnaire. This is where they were provided with an introduction to the study. The survey began with a demographic section, which transitioned into their employment history. The employment status, duration, and position in the organization were asked. The next section of the survey asked for their perceptions of the obstacles they faced while working in the organization.

After developing the list of prospective participants, the participants were sent an email to inform them that they met the criteria of our research study and had been selected to participate in a voluntary research study. The email contained an introduction that explained to them the purpose of the study. The introduction is: "You are being invited to take part in this research study because you have been identified as an Emirati woman professional working in the UAE, and you are either in an entry-level or middle-level managerial position. This study is being conducted by Samar Bokaii, a doctoral student in the business department at California Baptist University (CBU) in the United States." They were also informed that it is an anonymous online survey that should take no more than ten minutes to complete. They were notified that their participation in this study was completely voluntary. The prospective participants were requested to click on the survey link and complete the self-administered survey. To mitigate potential research-participant complications, a third-party survey tool collected the responses and tabulated the data. Once the survey was completed, the participants were asked if they were interested in an interview. Only those who indicated that they wished to participate in the interview were advanced to the interview. Before beginning each interview, the participants were notified that the sessions would be audio-recorded and that everyone electronically signed the consent form. Participants were also notified that the interviews would be securely protected, with access limited to the project's researcher.

System-generated reminders were sent to participants every three days reminding them to complete the survey. The participants were emailed three times in total. The survey was administered in English and distributed to the stakeholder group's work individual email addresses. The targeted participants are English-educated and expected to understand English very well. Most of the participants were fluent in English; however, the researcher is bilingual

and was able to explain the meaning of some terms in Arabic to a few participants who needed the information in Arabic.

An online survey was the most viable option for this dissertation due to the geographical location of the participants. Sending the survey to over 100 participants guaranteed the volume of responses received from our stakeholder group is statistically rigorous. Quantitative data were cleaned, and incomplete survey responses were not considered in the data analysis. The final product of the quantitative data collection was 58 complete responses.

Incomplete surveys not having responses to all questions were not included in the final results used for this dissertation. They didn't have to disclose their identity or their organization's name, and their information was kept with the researcher only. As stated before, the survey first consisted of demographic information such as age, education level, and employment status. It then moved into employment history, which consists of questions revolving around their years of work experience, the type and sector of the organization, and their position in the organization they are currently employed in. Lastly, it contained questions regarding any barriers they might have faced while working in their organization or any barrier they might have faced in their overall work experience. At the very end, the survey also included an optional consent form for those participants who wished to be contacted for the interview.

The participant's responses were totally anonymous and were charted using a software application. The researcher stored two copies of the responses and kept them for backup purposes using a password-protected laptop and archived them through a cloud-based service. The survey didn't collect any recognizable demographic data. The collected data will be destroyed to further protect the participants' responses once this research study is accomplished. The survey questions can be found in Appendix B.

Those who filled this out were shortlisted and contacted for the interview. The interviews were held virtually. The participants' consent was obtained before beginning the interview and recorded to be watched later on. As stated above, the interviews have been deliberately structured to encourage open discussion and disclosure, as each experience and story will be unique.

Each participant received a thank-you note for their time and participation once they completed the survey. The unselected participants received an automatic thank you letter, ‘‘Thank you for showing interest to be interviewed. However, the system has selected some other participants. We thank you for supporting this research.’’

Data Analysis

Data collected through Qualtrics were analyzed on SPSS to determine any trends that signify that the identified factors influence women leadership in the UAE. The interviews were conducted virtually and recorded so they could be viewed later for a more in-depth analysis. Transcriptions of these interviews were generated, checking whether they conformed correctly with the interviews' audio. The Template Analysis method was used, whereby a coding mechanism was set up to code these transcripts. The Template Analysis in this study was performed with the assistance of qualitative analysis software (Nvivo). These codes were viewed holistically to represent any theories or concepts that stand out from the data that has been collected. Research on Template Analysis (King, 2004) suggests adopting any one route out of the three that constitute this type of analysis. These routes are a priori, a predefined code based on a predetermined theory, codes set up during data analysis, and a combination of the two routes mentioned above. For this study, the first route has opted: priori codes were generated

based on the relation of WLB, challenges, and family culture's role in the success of Emirati women in attaining leadership positions.

The exploratory and qualitative nature of the interviews posed restrictions on the structure of the interviews. The organization of the interview questions has deliberately been kept loose to allow the interviewers to establish a comfortable rapport with the interviewees. A casual conversation, rather than an interview, is likely to generate more informative and truthful accounts of each Emirati woman's personal experiences. Instead of restricting the interview to a format, general themes have been set to guide the rapport. These themes are demographic information, family background, and culture. The first theme inquired about the interviewee's demographic background to serve as an icebreaker and ease them into the following conversation. This helped in transitioning into their early family life experiences and whether the family has supported their careers. For married women, this included the family they have married into and whether any constraints prevented them from attaining leadership positions at their organization.

Internal Validity

It is critical to have valid and reliable data to ensure the overall success of the research study. In the first phase, the researcher surveyed with a well-structured research instrument to conduct a detailed examination of the impact of the factors of WLB on Emirati women's leadership. The researcher selected validated scales from the review of related literature and segregated the scale according to the requirements of the study. Therefore, the items in the questionnaire were modified according to the suitability of the research. The questions were divided into three parts: demographic information, employment history, and measurement of the impact of the factors on work-life balance. The use of pre-existing survey questions from

previous studies ensures the overall validity and reliability of this project. One benefit of using the pre-existing survey questions is that they have been comprehensively tested at the time of first use. The researcher found out that the selected recycled questions are accurate measures of the concept of interest of this research study. Most of the survey questions were adopted from previous studies and dissertations. The survey questions related to organizational support were borrowed from Muthu Kumarasamy et al. (2015) and tailored according to the purpose of this study. The questions related to management practices were borrowed from the study of Njeri (2014). The questions related to family support were borrowed from the study of Sharma et al. (2019). Questions related to work-life balance were taken from the research of Muthu Kumarasamy et al. (2015). All the borrowed questions were tailored according to the nature of this research study. The pre-tested questions will ensure a high degree of validity, resulting in obtaining high-quality data. Also, the researcher selected validated scales from a review of related literature and segregated the scale according to the study's requirements. Therefore, the items in the questionnaire were modified according to the suitability of the research. The questionnaire was divided into three parts: demographic information, employment history, and the challenges that hinder the work-life balance of Emirati women leaders. At the very end, the survey included an optional consent form for those participants who wished to be contacted for the interview.

To ensure the reliability of this study, the data collection methods that are utilized must be consistent in their internal validity. To guarantee the internal validity of the interviews, the researcher took a strategic approach in structuring the questions, choosing the number of questions in the interview and how each question was worded. Further, the phrasing and the tone of the questions were appropriately designed to ensure a proper understanding of the language.

Having my committee members review the questions in advance ensures the overall validity and reliability of the interview questions. The researcher developed an interview guide that was followed during all the interviews. Such relevant measures were taken to resolve any issues and to ensure consistency with all the interviewees. Jargon and acronyms are removed from the questions to decrease internal and external validity threats.

Summary

In this chapter, I described my approach to undertaking the study, including the rationale for the choice of epistemological and philosophical approaches. The research design of this study and the corresponding methods to collect the data was also explored. The interview and survey questions answered our research questions, which defined the purpose of this study. The adopted population and sampling methods were also discussed

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will explain the results of the quantitative study. The data collection for this quantitative study was based on the opinions and beliefs of respondents regarding the research topic. In total, 90 questionnaires were returned. However, among the returned questionnaire, 32 responses were discarded because four of them were returned completely blank or were partially answered (i.e. some questions were left blank). Therefore, the remaining 58 questionnaires were used for further data analysis. The second section will present and discuss the findings from the exploratory study. Based on the recommendation of (Dubé & Paré, 2003) to support content data analysis and the formulation of opinions, a study database was developed. In this study, we used NVivo (v.12) program for coding the interviews. The main variables related to the objectives of this study discussed in each interview were identified and coded. The study results are discussed in the chapter.

Purpose Statement

This study analyses Emirati women's mind-sets as they face many challenges to acquire and attain leadership positions in the United Arab Emirates' unique context. It aims to investigate the perspectives of Emirati women leaders based on their experiences in terms of organizational and individual work-life balance in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This study also examines how their individual experiences differentiate them from other women leaders across the globe by focusing on the unique factor of family support in the context of the UAE. The study is guided by the following questions.

1. What is the nature of work-life balance (WLB) in Emirati women working in leadership positions?

2. How does the culture of Emirati families influence women's attainment of leadership positions?
3. What are the factors that influence the work-life balance of Emirati women leaders?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

This research adopts a mixed-method approach to the issues of WLB on successful Emirati women leadership in the UAE to understand the challenges and the family culture's role in attaining leadership positions. The multi-phased exploratory research design adopts both quantitative and qualitative data.

In the initial phase, the researcher surveys with a well-structured research instrument to conduct a detailed examination of the WLB issues on Emirati women leadership. In the second phase, the researcher explores the perceptions of the Emirati women leaders using qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews using a narrative-based intersectional approach. The interviews illuminate the challenges of Emirati women leaders in their professional journey, their unique experiences when working in different sectors, the role of family culture in their professional journey. The research tries to bring out a holistic examination of Emirati women's mindset in attaining and maintaining leadership positions in the UAE.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

This section will present and analyze the data of both the quantitative project and the qualitative project.

Quantitative Project: Survey

The data collection for this study was based on the opinions and beliefs of respondents regarding the research topic. In total, 90 questionnaires were returned. However, among those returned questionnaires, 32 responses were discarded because four of them were returned

completely blank or were partially answered (i.e., some questions were left blank). Therefore, the remaining 58 questionnaires were used for further data analysis.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants.

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents to the survey questionnaire.

Employment Status.

The results of participants' Employment status are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Employment Status

Items	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Full-time employed (40 hours weekly)	49	84.5	84.5	84.5
Part-time employed (20 hours weekly)	5	8.6	8.6	93.1
Self-employed	2	3.4	3.4	96.6
Unemployed	2	3.4	3.4	100.0

As seen in Table 2, 84.5% (n=49) of the respondents are Full-time employed, whereas 8.6% are reported as Part-time employed. About 3.4 % of the respondents are Self-employed, and 3.4% of participants in this study are Unemployed.

Employment Level.

The results of participants' Employment level are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Employment Level

Items	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Entry Level Manager (3 years or less experience).	14	24.1	24.1	24.1
Middle Level Manager (7+ year's relevant experience).	27	46.6	46.6	70.7
Senior Level Manager (12+ year's relevant experience).	17	29.3	29.3	100.0

From the descriptive analysis, 46.6% of the respondents are Middle-Level Managers, 29.3% of the respondents are Senior Level Managers, and 24.1% are Entry Level Managers.

Work Experience.

The results of participants' Work experience are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Work Experience

Items	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 1 year	4	6.9	6.9	6.9
1-2 years	3	5.2	5.2	12.1
3-5 years	3	5.2	5.2	17.2
6-10 years	18	31.0	31.0	48.3
11-20 years	26	44.8	44.8	93.1
More than 21 years	4	6.9	6.9	100.0

38.5 % of the respondents had 11-20 years of work experience, whereas 31 % had 6-10 years of work experience. 6.9 % had Less than one year or More than 21 years of work experience. However, out of 58 respondents, 5.2% had 1 to 5 years of work experience.

Employment Sector.

The results of participants’ Employment sector are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Employment Sector

Items	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Private sector – multinational company	1	1.7	1.7	1.7
Private sector – national company	7	12.1	12.1	13.8
Public or government sector	19	32.8	32.8	46.6
Semi government sector	27	46.6	46.6	93.1
Other sectors	4	6.9	6.9	100.0

The response analysis based on the participants’ Employment sector shows that the majority of (69.3 %) participants are Employed in Semi government sector, followed by the Public or government sector (32.8 %), Private sector – national company (12.1 %), Other sectors (6.9 %) and Private sector – multinational company (1.7 %).

Descriptive Statistics.

This section presents the descriptive Statistics of the items of the survey questionnaire. A 5-point Likert rating scale was attached to each statement ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Organizational Support (OS).

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of the Items of Organizational Support

Items	Statistics	Highly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree	Highly Disagree
Positive Working Environment makes working easy.	N	42.0	14.0	1.0	1.0	0.0
	%	72.4	24.1	1.7	1.7	0.0
Flexible working hours help me to manage my work and life.	N	47.0	11.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	%	81.0	19.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Deadlines/Schedules/Targets must be so set that they can be achieved in prescribed time frame.	N	33.0	21.0	3.0	1.0	0.0
	%	56.9	36.2	5.2	1.7	0.0
My organization take any initiative to support work life of its female employees.	N	14	18	16	8	2
	%	24.1	31.0	27.6	13.8	3.4
My organization provide flexible work timings.	N	13	24	10	8	3
	%	22.4	41.4	17.2	13.8	5.2
Working overtime hinders in personal life.	N	17	28	10	3	0
	%	29.3	48.3	17.2	5.2	0.0

My organization fails to appreciate any	N	7	13	15	18	5
extra effort from me.	%	12.1	22.4	25.9	31.0	8.6
My organization would ignore any	N	2	10	15	24	7
complaint from me.	%	3.4	17.2	25.9	41.4	12.1
Even if I did the best job possible, my	N	4	7	12	29	6
organization would fail to notice.	%	6.9	12.1	20.7	50	10.3
My organization shows very little	N	5	9	11	26	7
concern for me.	%	8.6	15.5	19	44.8	12.1

As seen in Table 6, 72.2% of participants highly agree that a “Positive Working Environment makes working easy,” while 1.7% Disagree with the statement. All respondents highly agree (81%) or agree (19%) with “Flexible working hours help me to manage my work and life.” The respondent’s opinion that “Deadlines/Schedules/Targets must be so set that they can be achieved in the prescribed time frame”. Table 5, shows that none of the respondents highly disagree with this item, while 56.9% and 36.2% highly agree and agree with this item, respectively. Moreover, the results from the sample show that 24.1% and 41.4% of respondents highly agreed and agree with “My organization take any initiative to support the work life of its female employees,” respectively. Similarly, most respondents agreed (41.4%) and highly agree (22.4%) that their organization provides flexible work timings. 48.3% reported they agree that “Working overtime hinders in personal life.” While 12.1% agree with “My organization would ignore any complaint from me,” the results show that the majority of respondents Disagree (31%). With this statement. In addition, the respondents did not agree (50%) that “Even if I did the best job possible,

my organization would fail to notice.” Finally, 44.4% (Disagree) and 12.1% (Highly disagree) of respondents agreed with “My organization shows very little concern for me.”

Management Practices.

To measure Management Practices, we applied the 12-item scale.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of the Items of Management Practices

Items	Statistics	Agree	Highly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree	Highly
The management provides feedback to staff concerns on work-life balance.	N	6	19	22	9	2		
	%	10.3	32.8	37.9	15.5	3.4		
The management demonstrates an understanding of employee work-life balance.	N	3	24	20	9	2		
	%	5.2	41.4	34.5	15.5	3.4		
The management provides convenient working hours.	N	6	28	17	6	1		
	%	10.3	48.3	29.3	10.3	1.7		
Management provision of work-life benefits me.	N	6	26	21	4	1		
	%	10.3	44.8	36.2	6.9	1.7		
Detailed management explanation of work	N	4	23	23	7	1		
	%	6.9	39.7	39.7	12.1	1.7		

assignments and non-work assignments.						
Management communicates with employees on issues affecting their work-life balance.	N	3	18	21	12	4
	%	5.2	31	36.2	20.7	6.9
There is a lack of management policy for encouraging work-life balance.	N	7	24	13	12	2
	%	12.1	41.4	22.4	20.7	3.4
There is a lack of management support in encouraging work-life balance.	N	9	22	13	11	3
	%	15.5	37.9	22.4	19	5.2
There is a lack of management respect to work-life balance.	N	7	22	13	14	2
	%	12.1	37.9	22.4	24.1	3.4
There is a lack of management appreciation to work-life balance.	N	4	21	17	13	3
	%	6.9	36.2	29.3	22.4	5.2
There is difficulties with administrators in implementing work-life balance.	N	4	27	14	11	2
	%	6.9	46.6	24.1	19	3.4
There is difficulties with work colleagues in promoting work-life balance.	N	5	23	10	17	3
	%	8.6	39.7	17.2	29.3	5.2

Table 7 shows that the majority of the respondents "Neither agree nor disagree" (37.9%) with "The management provides feedback to staff concerns on work-life balance." However, 32.8% (agree) and 10.3% (Highly Agree) with mentioned statement. Results revealed that the majority, i.e., 41.4% of respondents, agree with "The management demonstrates an understanding of employee work-life balance." Most of the participants in this survey agreed (48.3%) that "the management provides convenient working hours." Similarly, 44.8% of participants agree with "Management provision of work-life benefits me." In addition, when asked about "Detailed management explanation of work assignments and non-work assignments", 46.6% (6.6 +39.7) of respondents agreed with this statement. Similar to item MP1, the majority of the respondents "Neither agree nor disagree" (36.2%) with "Management communicates with employees on issues affecting their work-life balance," but 31% reported they agree with the statement. The study found that 41.4 percent of respondents agreed, and 12.1% highly agreed with the statement, "There is a lack of management policy for encouraging work-life balance." As can be seen in Table 6, 37.9% of participants agree that a "Positive Working Environment makes working easy." Furthermore, the results from the sample show that 37.9% and 12.1% of respondents agree and highly agree with "There is a lack of management respect to work-life balance," respectively. The majority of respondents agreed (46.6%) and highly agreed (6.9%) with "There are difficulties with administrators in implementing work-life balance." Likewise, 39.7% of respondents agree with "There are difficulties with work colleagues in promoting work-life balance."

Family Support.

In order to determine the Family Support, three-item scales were used.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of the Items of Family Support

Family Support	Statistics	Highly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Highly Disagree
My family gives me support for my job.	N	22	28	7	1	0
	%	37.9	48.3	12.1	1.7	0
My family members listen to my job related problems.	N	11	33	11	2	1
	%	19	56.9	19	3.4	1.7
I am satisfied with the amount of time for non-work activities.	N	3	25	18	8	4
	%	5.2	43.1	31	13.8	6.9

Table 8 reports the descriptive Statistics of measured items of the Family Support construct. As indicated in Table 8, the majority of the respondents agree (48.3%) and Highly Agree (37.9%) with "My family gives me support for my job." Likewise, 56.9% of respondents agree with "My family members listen to my job-related problems." Finally, 43.1 of the respondents agreed, "I am satisfied with the amount of time for non-work activities."

Work Life Balance.

Work-Life Balance construct was measured by four items. Table 8 presents the descriptive results of measured items of this construct.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics of the Items of Work Life Balance

Items	Statistics	Highly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Highly Disagree
I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities.	N	4	21	16	15	2
	%	6.9	36.2	27.6	25.9	3.4
I have difficulty balancing my work and non-work activities.	N	5	26	14	11	2
	%	8.6	44.8	24.1	19	3.4
I feel that the balance between my work demands and non-work activities is currently about right.	N	4	19	23	11	1
	%	6.9	32.8	39.7	19	1.7
Overall, I believe that my work and non-work life are balanced.	N	6	18	17	13	4
	%	10.3	31	29.3	22.4	6.9

Results revealed that 36.2% of respondents agree, "I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities." In addition, we asked the opinion of respondents about "I have difficulty balancing my work and non-work activities." 44.8% of respondents agreed with this statement. Moreover, Table 9 shows that the majority of the respondents "Neither agree nor disagree" (39.7%) with "I feel that the balance between my work demands and non-work activities is currently about right"; however, 32.8% (agree) and 6.9% (Highly Agree) with mentioned statement. Finally, 31% agree, and 10.3% highly agree with "Overall, I believe that my work and non-work life are balanced."

Satisfaction with Work-Family Balance.

A five-item scale was used to measure the Satisfaction with Work-Family Balance construct, and Table 10 presents descriptive results of measured items of this construct.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics of the Items of Satisfaction with Work-Family Balance

Items	Statistics	Highly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Highly Disagree
I am satisfied with the way I divide my time between work and personal or family life.	N	6	22	16	12	2
	%	10.3	37.9	27.6	20.7	3.4
I am satisfied with the way I divide my attention between work and home.	N	6	21	18	10	3
	%	10.3	36.2	31	17.2	5.2
I am satisfied with how well my work life and my personal or family life fit together	N	6	25	15	10	2
	%	10.3	43.1	25.9	17.2	3.4
I am satisfied with my ability to balance the needs of my job with those of my personal or family life.	N	5	26	15	11	1
	%	8.6	44.8	25.9	19	1.7
I am satisfied with the opportunity I have to perform my job well and yet be able to perform home-related duties adequately.	N	3	29	17	7	2
	%	5.2	50	29.3	12.1	3.4

As seen in Table 10, 37.9% of participants highly agree that “I am satisfied with the way I divide my time between work and personal or family life.” while 20.7% Disagree with the statement. Moreover, results revealed that 36.2% of respondents agree with “I am satisfied with

the way I divide my attention between work and home.” In addition, the majority of the respondents agree (10.3%) and Highly Agree (43.1%) with “I am satisfied with how well my work life and my personal or family life fit together.” Likewise, 44.8% of respondents agree with “I am satisfied with my ability to balance the needs of my job with those of my personal or family life.” Finally, 50% (agree) and 5.2% (Highly agree) of respondents agreed, “I am satisfied with the opportunity I have to perform my job well and yet be able to perform home-related duties adequately.”

Qualitative Project: Interviews

Based on the recommendation of (Dubé & Paré, 2003) to support content data analysis and the formulation of opinions, a study database was developed. In this study, we used the NVivo (v.12) program to code the interviews. The main variables related to the objectives of this study discussed in each interview were identified and coded. The study results are discussed in the chapter.

Profile of the Participants in the Interview.

The profile of the 12 interviewees is presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Profile of the Participants in the Interview

Participants	Age Group	Education Level	Marital Status
Participant 1	30-35	Bachelor's Degree	Married
Participant 2	30-35	Bachelor's Degree	Single
Participant 3	36-40	Master's Degree	Single

Participant 4	30-35	Master's Degree	Married
Participant 5	41-45	Doctoral Degree	Divorced
Participant 6	30-35	Master's Degree	Single
Participant 7	30-35	Master's Degree	Single
Participant 8	30-35	Master's Degree	Married
Participant 9	30-35	Master's Degree	Single
Participant 10	30-35	Master's Degree	Married
Participant 11	30-35	Master's Degree	Single
Participant 12	36-40	Master's Degree	Single

As seen in Table 11, the majority (n=9) of the participants are between 30 and 35 years old; similarly, 8 had a Master's degree. Of the total individual respondents that reported their marital status, 7 participants are single, whereas 4 are married.

Overview of Dimensions, Themes, and Subthemes.

The interview transcripts were subjected to a series of coding procedures. Emerson et al., (2011) stated that “qualitative coding is a way of opening up avenues of inquiry” (p. 151) which means that a researcher identifies and develops concepts and analytic insights through close examination of and reflection on data (Aspers & Corte, 2019). This study classified the codes (nodes) into hierarchical axial coding. Axial coding is the process of relating categories to their sub-categories, and it identifies the primary process in what is being observed and deals with concepts that fall between open coding and theoretically sophisticated core category (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Some nodes created initially were later excluded or renamed. Three major themes

were identified across all the cases: 1) Challenges faced by women leaders in the UAE, 2) Solving challenges and overcome to barriers, 3) Influence of family values on women’s attainment of leadership positions, and 4) Work-life balance (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
Nodes Developed during Data Analysis

Name	Files	References	Created By	Created On	Modified By	Modified On
Challenges faced by women leaders in the UAE	12	57	AS	8/26/2022 12:36 AM	AS	9/9/2022 1:05 AM
Cultural norms and sociocultural beliefs	7	12	AS	8/26/2022 1:03 AM	AS	9/9/2022 2:02 AM
Gender bias	12	26	AS	8/26/2022 3:20 AM	AS	9/9/2022 2:02 AM
Lack of support (family and organizational)	4	4	AS	9/9/2022 12:04 AM	AS	9/9/2022 2:01 AM
Male-dominated occupations	6	9	AS	8/26/2022 3:28 AM	AS	9/9/2022 2:02 AM
Wasta	2	3	AS	8/27/2022 1:40 AM	AS	9/9/2022 2:01 AM
Influence of family values	8	21	AS	8/26/2022 1:14 AM	AS	9/9/2022 12:57 AM
Negative role of family and husband	7	15	AS	8/26/2022 1:06 AM	AS	9/9/2022 12:57 AM
Positive role of Parental and husband	0	0	AS	9/7/2022 2:28 AM	AS	9/9/2022 12:57 AM
UAE Family culture	4	6	AS	8/26/2022 1:44 AM	AS	9/9/2022 12:57 AM
Solving challenges and overcome to barriers	7	8	AS	9/9/2022 12:06 AM	AS	9/9/2022 1:03 AM
Familial and organizational support	6	8	AS	8/26/2022 1:12 AM	AS	9/9/2022 1:04 AM
Government support	7	9	AS	8/26/2022 4:06 AM	AS	9/9/2022 1:04 AM
Improving leadership skills	3	4	AS	8/26/2022 12:48 AM	AS	9/9/2022 1:15 AM
Training	10	13	AS	8/26/2022 3:20 AM	AS	9/9/2022 1:04 AM
Work-Life Balance	12	43	AS	8/26/2022 3:08 AM	AS	9/9/2022 12:56 AM
Consequences of Work-Life Imbalance	6	7	AS	8/26/2022 3:17 AM	AS	9/9/2022 12:50 AM
Importance of work-life balance	9	12	AS	8/26/2022 10:42 PM	AS	9/8/2022 3:58 AM
Organizations role on WLB	3	3	AS	8/26/2022 3:19 AM	AS	9/8/2022 3:13 AM
Strategies to improve work life balance	11	20	AS	8/26/2022 3:16 AM	AS	9/8/2022 3:48 AM

Challenges Faced by Women Leaders in the UAE.

Women's challenges with work-life balance have been marked by increased frustration and pressure regarding the women's roles of balancing the work and non-work domains (Donnelly et al., 2015). This section of the chapter illustrates the participants' interviews and observations about challenges faced by women leaders in the UAE. Figure 2 visualized the nodes or strategies created by NVivo 12 from participants’ responses.

From the perspective of the interview with twelve participants, we have identified four major factors that directly or indirectly prevent women from advancing their careers in the UAE, as follows:

Gender Bias.

The findings of this study show that gender bias has been mentioned as one of the major challenges for the disparity in leadership roles between men and women. Some excerpts of the participants' responses are stated below.

“The benefits should be distributed depending on the employee's role and qualification of the employee and not on his /her gender. For example, when the men get a new child, he gets a bonus, while the ladies don't.” (Participant 10).

“Gender bias could be one of the main barriers.” (Participant 11).

“Females sometimes are facing a lot of obstacles...The obstacles came from both organizations as a whole and men colleagues. They don't want to see females in a more senior position than their positions.” (Participant 12).

“Gender bias is very discouraging and could hamper the professional growth of women. Gender inequality will drag women down as well...Gender Bias-No Discrimination in my organization. (I am in a governmental entity). But we can't deny that, in general, in our Arab society, gender bias is still there, even though I didn't experience it during my work journey.” (Participant 2).

Male-Dominated Occupations.

Based on the opinions of experts in this study, male-dominated occupations are particularly vulnerable to reinforcing harmful stereotypes and creating unfavorable environments that make it

even more difficult for women to excel. Some excerpts of the participants' responses are stated below.

“As per their expectations, an engineer should be a man. To be there as a woman, it was hard for me to be taken seriously in principle...They thought I was in this position because I am Emirati first and a woman, not because I am qualified enough. Limiting the women and specifying the jobs they can do, and the jobs they can't do is very disappointing.” (Participant 10).

“My organization mainly supports Males. I don't know why but this is the situation. It is surprising! Maybe because it is a male-dominated field... They believe men should be promoted because he is the breadwinner they will marry, and they should be in a senior role to help them financially settle.... In general, IT is a male-dominated section, but it has nothing to do with management preferences. It is rare to see a very strong female on the technical side. However, in my organization, I would say that the females are greater in number than the males. In our organizations, females are everywhere on the board, management, directors, section heads, etc.” (Participant 12).

“But when you are in opposition, you see all the CEOs and VPs are males, and the female percentage doesn't exceed 10% in the whole organization.” (Participant 6).

“I believe there should be inclusion and no differentiation. For example, if I were to send a team to attend a conference abroad, I will look for the qualifications, not the gender. Oh, I am going to send the men because it is easier for them to travel.” (Participant 9).

“Some men still believe that IT is for me; women are less skillful.” (Participant 1).

Cultural Norms and Socio-Cultural Beliefs.

Participants stated that ‘cultural norms’ and ‘sociocultural beliefs’ significantly affect leadership roles. Participants indicated that sociocultural beliefs are blamed for women's failure to participate in leadership. Some excerpts of the participants' responses are stated below.

“We live in a society with its norms, values, and culture. We should follow our passion and dreams without ignoring our culture or traditions. We must accept and recognize that there is something acceptable /appropriate in our culture and other things that are not.” (Participant 10).

“The culture and traditions also sometimes could hinder women’s growth” (Participant 3).

“Cultural norms and traditions hinder women's career advancement. But women should not fall into this trap. They should face their fears and express their interests and prove themselves... Working in this field was challenging because it is not acceptable in our culture for a woman to work in the addiction field. That was something out of the nature of our culture.” (Participant 4).

“The culture and traditional views influence the role of women in their career advancement...some men still now believe women should stay home with their kids. If you want your rights, they might bully you. They also might say that you are giving excuses.” (Participant 5).

“Wasta” in Procuring Jobs.

Wasta (Arabic term for pull or connection) describes the phenomenon of using "connections" to find jobs. Participants argued that the "Wasta" is one of the challenges that negatively impact women's leadership roles. Some managers use personalistic links based on close friendships and family relationships to obtain higher-level job positions. Some of the interview excerpts regarding "Wasta" are stated below.

“Further, connections will help u take senior positions. If u have ‘Wasta’, then you have the chance to prove yourself. If u don’t have Wasta, you have to wait for them to call you if they

do ...I don't like to get the job because of the "Wasta"; later on, they will say we are the reason why you are here. We brought you here, not the qualification that brought you here" (Participant 7).

[To professional growth] "...You also have to have Wasta" (Participant 4).

Lack of Support (Family and Organizational).

This section describes the lack of family and organizational support that affected women's career and leadership development.

"The heavy load each woman bear, is a challenge. Taking care of the family and kids and developing herself while attempting to hold senior roles is not easy. It is challenging when you are a working mother and have to be at the top of your game." (Participant 9).

"Mainly the heavy load and responsibilities hamper the professional growth of working moms." (Participant 5).

According to the opinions of experts in this study, the key barriers are as follows:

Lack of Organizational Support.

Based on the opinions of participants, a lack of organizational support can seriously affect leadership development.

"The lack of organizational support would hamper the professional growth of women." (Participant 6).

Similarly,

"Lack of organizational support hamper the professional growth and leadership journey of Emirati women." (Participant 9).

"The lack of organizational support will hamper the professional growth of women." (Participant 7).

Lack of Family Support.

According to our findings, lack of family support is one of the main five barriers to women's leadership development.

“Lack of support from her family ... I believe women should receive a lot of help from their families.” (Participant 1).

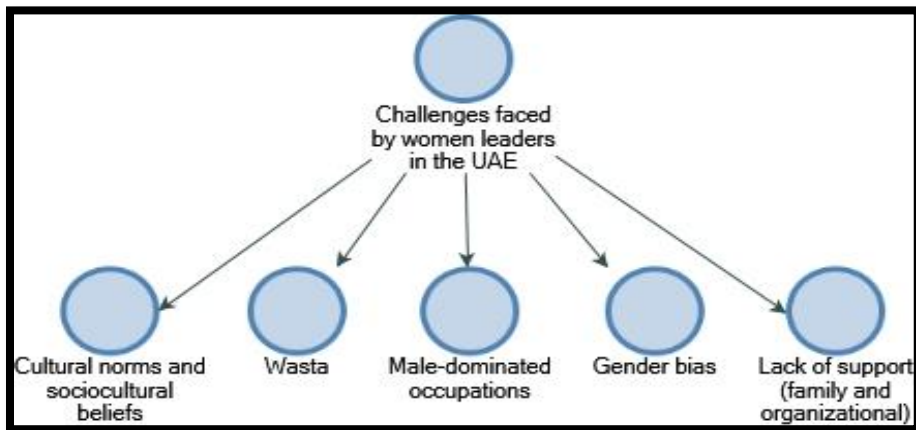
“The lack of familial support will hinder the professional growth and leadership journey of Emirati women... Not all women receive immense family support.” (Participant 3).

“Many women depend on nannies to raise their kids or their mothers or aunties, you know, and I know this is what is happening with many women. But there are mothers like myself who want to raise their kids.” (Participant 5).

“The negative vibes from men can drag the women back regardless if these men are husbands, cousins, brothers, or colleagues.” (Participant 10).

Figure 3

Challenges Faced by Women Leaders in the UAE



Solving Challenges and Overcoming Barriers.

In addition to identifying the factors (challenges) that prevent women from advancing their careers in the UAE, participants accounted for their particular contributions concerning solving challenges and overcoming barriers. The following section is some of the opinions of interviewees regarding solving challenges and overcoming barriers.

Improving Leadership Skills.

This study defined leadership skills as "the abilities of a person to lead and deliver projects, encourage initiatives, build a sense of common purpose, and empower others." The following are some excerpts from the interview regarding creating leadership skills.”

You need to prove yourself. Employers care more about the skills than the academic degree.” (Participant 2).

“Hands-on operational skills and focus on what the job needs.” (Participant 2).

“Time management and prioritizing tasks were essential skills.... Women should have the competencies that make them qualified to hold senior roles and be leaders, not only managers, to flourish.” (Participant 3).

Based on participants' feedback, the most in-demand leadership skills required in the workplace are as follows:

Personality.

“A woman interested in holding senior roles should have a strong personality” (Participant 1).

“Women should recognize their fears and get out of their comfort zones” (Participant 10).

“Character and personality are significant” (Participant 2).

“Don’t let the toxic people at work negatively affect your productivity” (Participant 8).

Self-Confidence.

According to participants' feedback, self-confidence is an essential part of leadership. This shows that the lack of Self-confidence is one of the challenges and negatively affects females' leadership roles.

“Women should work on being confident enough” (Participant 8).

“Work on your self-development and be knowledgeable... [Woman leaders] should be patient and able to work under pressure” (Participant 3).

“Woman leadership should show your talent, show them that she can, show them that she knows, and prove herself. She needs to show managers her capabilities” (Participant 6).

“Confident enough, and [Woman leaders] shouldn't stop trying, especially when [Woman leaders] get demotivated. I think that's the key. I know some girls with no content, but they are confident and get their image” (Participant 4).

Education and Knowledge.

Participants believed that education and knowledge are essential to assume leadership positions. Some of the interview excerpts regarding education and knowledge are stated below.

“The most important skills, in my opinion, are commitment and education” (Participant 1).

“You [woman] need to prove yourself. Employers care more about the skills than the academic degree.... women should have some vital skills such as time management-proper communication, technical skills, solid and advanced foundation in their major” (Participant 2).

“Some skills [woman] gain with life experience, some from school, some from work. They need to know how to express themselves ...You [woman] should be fluent in English. Also, you should be knowledgeable and up to date with the information” (Participant 4).

“They [woman] should be confident and have the proper communication skills”
(Participant 7).

Decision-Making.

According to participants' opinions, leaders with well-developed decision-making can make quality, informed choices from several options.

“All leaderships are required to make decisions.” (Participant 2).

“Making decisions is the most crucial part of any leadership activity.” (Participant 10).

“Rational decision making is taken as the primary function of leadership.” (Participant 4).

Familial and Organizational Support.

“I expect familial support and organizational support.” (Participant 1).

“My organization sets a great example of employee satisfaction and women empowerment.” (Participant 2).

“Organizational support gives excellent opportunities for women to grow in their careers. If organizations didn't respect the woman and her capabilities, she wouldn't be able to shine.”
(Participant 2).

“I see organizational support as a game changer. For example, in our organization, the employment of Emirati women is an additional KPI. Women empowerment is a KPI. You may find female employees who don't perform well, but they keep us just because of the required quota...I do believe that organizations should push more to have people in senior positions. Because this helps the next female generations to see females hold senior roles.” (Participant 6).

“I believe [Organization] should be inclusion and no differentiation.” (Participant 9).

Government Support.

“As a government, we are receiving a lot of support.” (Participant 12).

“The UAE government specified percentage of females who should hold senior roles in the companies.... only the government is supporting.” (Participant 11).

“... governmental support is very important for a senior leadership position.” (Participant 7).

“Women can hold high leadership positions, and the government empowers us.” (Participant 4).

Training.

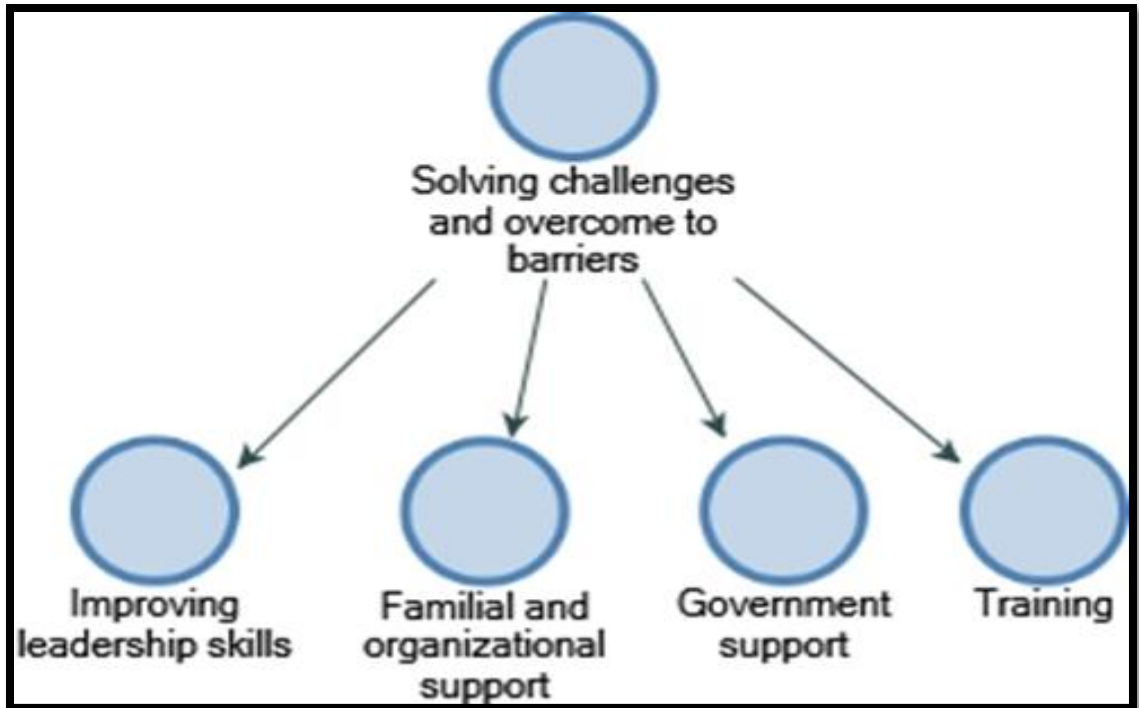
“We receive a lot of training programs in my organization which able women to formulate and implement effective leadership strategies.” (Participant 2).

“Training creates an opportunity for woman leadership to achieve set goals. My organization opened a training institution with international trainers.” (Participant 4).

“Training develops the skills I learned a lot and gained a lot of knowledge from the programs they offer us” (Participant 3).

Figure 4

Solving Challenges and Overcoming Barriers



Influence of Family Values on Women’s Attainment of Leadership

Positions.

The interview questions were asked the participants to find out the influence of family values on women’s attainment of leadership positions. In this chapter, the participant’s opinions on family roles will be discussed. In addition, by consideration of women’s attainment of leadership, this section will discuss participants' perspectives on the family culture of the United Arab Emirates.

The Positive Role of Parental and Husband.

The participant argued that the family support (parents and husband) led them to better organizational performance and helped them to achieve their professional goals. The excerpts of interviews regarding the positive role of family (parents) and husband on women's attainment of leadership are given below:

Role of Parental Support.

Women's leadership can receive unique encouragement and guidance from parents that can impact the success of women in leadership.

“The family [parents] history and culture inside the house play an important role in women's empowerment.” (Participant 5).

“It depends on the parent's culture, level of education, and mentality. Some families are aware of female empowerment. Some are not, and they still hold the old mindset. The family culture directly impacts the occupation of women in senior roles.” (Participant 9).

“Emirati culture and traditional views: parents (Parents) are very supportive, and when we as girls succeed, they get so proud of us...If the family [parents] is supportive, they will empower their daughters and improve their occupation to senior roles. If the parents are not supportive, they will hinder the women's occupation in leadership roles.” (Participant 12).

“We have a lot of open-minded families in the UAE nowadays. Some families are flexible about this matter, and some don't accept it.” (Participant 1).

“My dad is a lawyer and a judge, pushing me to pursue my education and study. He applied for visas to the UK, states, and Australia to go and visit the world. He kept pushing me to finish my PhD. He wanted to make sure I could stand alone on my feet. I have very supportive parents. My mom and dad were very supportive of the education part.” (Participant 5).

“Although my dad is from the old generation, he is hugely supportive. I am proud of him because he is an old man who is very supportive and understanding of everything I choose to do.” (Participant 6).

“Family should be your side because you need them by your side and till now there is a wrong and right thing as per our culture and traditions. So the family and the culture can hinder

and support women in their career advancement. It depends on the situation of each one.”
(Participant 9).

“Our families were not open-minded and aware, but things have changed. Closed-minded families are open now because the new generation forced them to be open...My parents were very supportive. They offered to babysit during my stay in the states.” (Participant 4).

“... [Women] needed significant support from my family and my husband because some [Women] have kids, home duties, classes, and studying when coming back home and preparing for work the next day as a teacher. So without continued support, [Women] could have done nothing. [Women] able to face all the barriers with their family's support. I see it is the number one support any women need.” (Participant 3).

“My parents were by my side with everything. They were extremely caring and supporting throughout my leadership journey.... They wanted me to be a leader and successful. Because they believe in me.” (Participant 2).

Role of Husband.

This sub-section will discuss the positive role of husband influence on leadership in a female-dominated field.

“Another barrier could be the spouse. Their spouses don’t want them to hold more senior positions than him. Some men are selfish and fear their wives growing in their careers, especially if they don’t have senior leadership roles. In this case, the spouse hinders his wife’s ambition and professional growth. ...Dealing with my husband is more sensitive now. Because I hold a more senior position than he holds, he tends to be jealous. He is happy and proud of me, but sometimes he gets jealous. So I have to be extra careful while communicating with him so I don’t hurt his feeling.” (Participant 3).

“You need the spouse's support. Without his support, you can do nothing. My environment is very different from my husband's. So for him to accept that I could work in such a field and travel abroad alone was not his nature” (Participant 4).

Negative Role of Family and Husband.

“Some families are still strict about it and don't accept even raising such an idea. They believe it's not appropriate to travel and live alone, even for a short period. I don't want to generalize.” (Participant 1).

“Some families or spouses don't like their wives working and dealing with men or having male colleagues.” (Participant 3).

“The lack of family and husband support hamper the professional growth of women. ...They [Women] first need the right support system from family, parents, brothers, sisters, and friends.... many families don't like their girls to work.” (Participant 4).

“My husband pushed me forward. He believes in me as a leader. He played a very positive role in my journey with his continuous words of encouragement... My family supported all of my decisions regarding my career. Without their efforts and continued support, I could have done nothing.” (Participant 3).

UAE Family Culture.

Family is seen as one of the most important factors in UAE society; therefore, in this study, UAE Family Culture has been investigated.

“My parents have said as long as you and your husband are fine with it then go ahead...I would say that a long time ago, the family culture used to hinder Emirati women's occupation in senior leadership roles. But nowadays, with the openness in the UAE, the family culture is improving Emirati Women's access to senior positions.” (Participant 1).

“I can see nowadays a lot of women holding senior management positions, and I know a lot of women empowering women, but there is still a kind of men who say women can't do this and this.” (Participant 4).

“Some families are aware of female empowerment. Some are not, and they still hold the old mindset. The family culture directly impacts the occupation of women in senior roles.” (Participant 9).

“I see the family culture doesn't have the powerful influence it used to have. Nowadays, women are capable of making independent decisions.” (Participant 7).

Work-Life Balance.

In this section, based on the participant's opinions, the role of the work-life balance in Emirati women leaders will be explained.

Importance of Work-Life Balance.

According to participants, maintaining a work-life balance is essential for health and relationships and can also improve your employee's productivity. The following section is some of the opinions of interviewees regarding the importance of work-life balance.

“Work-life balance is the key. Without it, you can't be successful.” (Participant 11).

“Work-life balance is the fuel that will keep you going. Without balance, you won't be able to succeed and flourish. It is either you will suffer in your work or your personal life. That's why every one of us should do her best to achieve work-life balance.” (Participant 2).

“Work-life balance is crucial.... You should have the ability to maintain a work-life balance. This will help you stay focused and ascend your career ladder...if there is no balance, so my personal life suffered greatly.” (Participant 5).

“I think it is essential to have a work-life balance to maintain your [Woman leaders] career. Work-life balance will make you [Woman leaders] more satisfied and motivated to give more. Eventually, when [Woman leaders] work harder and more intelligently, will stay focused and attain leadership positions.” (Participant 1).

“It is super important. Otherwise, you can’t function, and you can’t be productive. As a result, you will not be able to advance in your career.” (Participant 12).

“I see that work-life balance is a significant component behind women’s success.”
(Participant 3).

“WLB is extremely significant in attaining leadership positions.” (Participant 9).

“Women can’t attain leadership positions if they don’t ensure proper work-life balance.”
(Participant 7).

Consequences of Work-Life Imbalance.

The effect of work-life imbalance will be described in this subsection.

“Sometimes woman leaders have challenging balancing work and home, and it is stressful and it reduces any productivity.” (Participant 1).

“Poor work-life balance can lead to exhaustion and fatigue.” (Participant 12).

“Lack WLB could make the unhealthy level of stress. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed, and I miss many things on the home chores.” (Participant 10).

“Poor WLB affects work performance, absenteeism and poor physical and mental health.”
(Participant 3).

“Unhealthy work-life balance has an impact on productivity levels and motivation.”
(Participant 2).

"Without work-life balance might miss important family events or milestones...Many incidents touched me and alarmed me that I should focus on my well-being, prioritize my family, and attain WLB. I had a miscarriage. When I came from the states, I missed my children. I felt they grew up, and I missed that stage." (Participant 4).

Strategies to Improve Work-Life Balance.

This sub-section will discuss the strategies that can be implemented to support work-life balance.

"Woman leaders should try to focus during work, and when they go back to home, they should focus on the family, kids, and home chores. However, sometimes they still need to work when they get home to finish some tasks." (Participant 1).

"Time management, task prioritization, and putting schedules to balance the work responsibilities and home duties help to improve the balance between personal life and work responsibilities... Take care of yourself (your well-being and your mental health). Stay focused and work on your developing your skills." (Participant 10).

"Women should make time for themselves and their loved ones. For example, I follow a certain rule in my life which is: eight three times. 8 hours for work and I don't add any extra time to it and eight hours to sleep and have a good rest and eight hours to my family commitments...Time management is important, write down everything you need to accomplish in your to-do list and stick to it, then prioritize things, assign a time for each task, and start with the most important thing" (Participant 8).

"Women have to work with passion. Without passion, you will not be recognized, and you will never get the position you want. Work with consistency...I learned how to say No. I learned how to express my opinion with respect regardless if they say- this is rude." (Participant 4).

"They [Woman leaders] can avoid multitasking and focus on the task at hand." (Participant 5).

"If you [Woman leaders] are a workaholic, then it will affect your personal life negatively." (Participant 2).

"Maintaining a healthy balance between work and life is very important. It also affects your health...Women leaders should try to organize themselves and their plans...Planning is key. If you don't plan then don't blame your organization for not giving you the WLB," (Participant 6).

Organizational Role in WLB.

In addition, the role of employers in promoting work-life balance is discussed.

"In my organization, we have a separate team that takes care of the WLB of the employees. They provide us with sessions, workshops, mental health, and tips about maintaining a healthy work-life balance. It is a very well-structured organization. I am not telling you this because it is my organization. However, my organization is taking care of many aspects. They are ahead of their game, honestly. I believe it is one of the most substantial companies in the UAE or the Middle East." (Participant 6).

"I think organizations can tailor work hours and their expectations per employee needs that are a powerful contributor to a better work-life balance." (Participant 11).

"One of the key tactics that can be used by employers is flexible working practices for work-life balance approach." (Participant 2).

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose Statement

Corporate interest and scholarship in WLB initiatives and work-life interference are on the rise, particularly when women's desire to advance into leadership positions is concerned (Adame et al., 2016). This research aims to investigate the perspectives of Emirati women leaders based on their experiences in terms of organizational and individual work-life balance in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The study also aims to explore the role of family culture and the challenges Emirati women leaders face in their successful professional journey and to detect why more Emirati women are not advancing in leadership roles within the UAE.

The non-work and work role obligations that impact UAE women's success as business leaders have distinct importance. Women's challenges in their leadership roles often involve extensive personal costs linked to their senior leadership positions (Loeffen, 2016). Emirati women's WLB challenges involve the juggling of conflicting priorities between lifestyle, family, and job. Loeffen (2016) has argued that women leaders can maintain successful careers, although not without a system of support and not without sacrifices. Also, women in leadership frequently have a feeling that they must justify their leadership role with a demonstration of proving competency, and technical mastery, sustaining a work level more remarkable than their male counterparts (Ely et al., 2011), which leads to an often greater need for WLB. The leadership experiences of Emirati women are not explored thoroughly (Rapanta & Badran, 2016). Erogul & McCrohan (2008) identified the limited support offered by the friends and family members of Emirati entrepreneurs and encouraged the necessity of a further study concentrated on non-entrepreneurs. Even though (Al Khayyal et al., 2020) reported a growing trend in the Emirati women workforce in the UAE, the personal, social, and organizational initiatives in supporting

the Emirati women leaders in the UAE are yet to be explored further. The study analyses Emirati women's mindsets as they face many challenges in acquiring and attaining leadership positions in the United Arab Emirates' unique context. This study also examines how their individual experiences differentiate them from other women leaders across the globe by focusing on the unique factor of family support in the context of the UAE. This study is guided by the following questions.

- What is the nature of work-life balance (WLB) in Emirati women working in leadership positions?
- How does the culture of Emirati families influence women's attainment of leadership positions?
- What are the factors that influence the work-life balance of Emirati women leaders?

Based on the research questions we were applied the quantitative and qualitative methods.

Major Findings

In this section, we will describe the major findings of the quantitative study, and then the findings of the qualitative study will be discussed.

Major Findings of the Quantitative Inquiry

The main purpose of the quantitative study was to understand the status of the perceived organizational support, management practices, family support, work-life balance and satisfaction of Emirati women working in leadership positions.

Based on the findings of demographic characteristics of participants, the majority of the respondents are full-time employed, and mostly were senior level managers or middle-level

managers. Most of the respondents reported having more than 6-years of work experience and being employed in semi government sector.

All items of questionnaires were rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. Of the 90 returned questionnaires, 58 questionnaires were used for data analysis. In this study, the data gathered from the quantitative study was analyzed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS.v.25).

Organizational Support (OS)

In this study, organizational support (OS) was measured by ten items. The findings of organizational support showed participants highly agreed that a “Positive Working Environment makes working easy”. All respondents highly agreed or agreed with “Flexible working hours help me to manage my work and life” and “Deadlines / Schedules / Targets must be so set that they can be achieved in the prescribed time frame”. In addition, the findings indicated, the majority of respondents agreed with “My organization take any initiative to support the work life of its female employees”, and their organization provides flexible work timings, “Working overtime hinders in personal life”. The respondents disagreed with “My organization would ignore any complaint from me”, “Even if I did the best job possible, my organization would fail to notice”, and “My organization shows very little concern for me”.

Management Practices

Management practices was measured by twelve items. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents have chosen a neutral option for “The management provides feedback to staff concerns on work-life balance”, but still they agreed with mentioned statement. Results demonstrated that the majority of respondents agreed with “The management demonstrates an understanding of employee work-life balance”. Most of the participants in this survey agreed that

“the management provides convenient working hours”. Similarly, the respondents disagreed with “Management provision of work-life benefits me”. In addition, we asked the opinion of respondents about “Detailed management explanation of work assignments and non-work assignments.”, and the respondents agreed with this statement. The majority of the respondents have chosen a neutral option for “Management communicates with employees on issues affecting their work-life balance”. The study found that the respondents agreed and highly agreed with the statement “There is a lack of management policy for encouraging work-life balance.”

Moreover, the participants agreed that a “Positive Working Environment makes working easy”. Furthermore, the results from the sample showed that the respondents agreed and highly agreed with “There is a lack of management respect to work-life balance”. The majority of respondents agreed with “There are difficulties with administrators in implementing work-life balance”. Likewise, the respondents agreed with “There are difficulties with work colleagues in promoting work-life balance”.

Family Support

To determine the family support, three-item scales were used. The findings confirmed that the majority of the respondents agreed with “My family gives me support for my job”. Likewise, the respondents agreed with “My family members listen to my job-related problems”. The respondents further agreed with “I am satisfied with the amount of time for non-work activities.”

Work-Life Balance

The work-life balance construct was measured by four items. The findings indicated that the respondents agreed with “I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities”. In addition, we asked the opinion of respondents about “I have difficulty balancing my work and non-work activities” and the

respondents agreed with this statement. Moreover, findings showed that the majority of the respondents “Neither agree nor disagree” with “I feel that the balance between my work demands and non-work activities is currently about right”. Finally, the respondents agreed with “Overall, I believe that my work and non-work life are balanced.”

Satisfaction with Work-Family Balance

A five-item scale was used to measure the Satisfaction with Work-Family Balance construct. The participants highly agreed that “I am satisfied with the way I divide my time between work and personal or family life.” Moreover, results revealed that the respondents agreed with “I am satisfied with the way I divide my attention between work and home.” In addition, the majority of respondents agreed with “I am satisfied with how well my work life and my personal or family life fit together”. Similarly, the most of respondents agreed with “I am satisfied with my ability to balance the needs of my job with those of my personal or family life”. Finally, the respondents agreed “I am satisfied with the opportunity I have to perform my job well and yet be able to perform home-related duties adequately”.

Major Findings of the Qualitative Inquiry

In this study, the researcher interviewed twelve Emirati female managers in UAE. The researcher used NVivo (v.12) program for coding the interviews. According to the interview, the majority of the participants were between 30 and 35 years old, 8 of the participants had a Master's degree and 7 participants were single whereas 4 participants were married.

Three major themes were identified across all the cases: 1) Challenges faced by women leaders in the UAE, 2) Solving challenges and overcoming barriers, 3) Influence of family values on women’s attainment of leadership positions, and 4) Work-life balance.

Influence of Family Values on Women's Attainment of Leadership Positions

In this section, the findings of the positive and negative influence of family values on women's attainment of leadership positions will be discussed.

The Positive Role of Parental and Husband

The findings showed that family support (parents and husbands) lead them to better organizational performance and helped them to achieve their professional goals. Receiving unique encouragement and guidance from parents can impact the success of women in leadership. Specifically, the findings demonstrated that the support of husbands is very important; husbands facilitate effective leadership processes.

The Negative Role of Parental and Husband

While findings on the positive role of parents and husbands have been confirmed, the results highlighted the negative role of parents and husbands that harms the success of women in leadership. From the findings, some families or spouses don't like their wives working and dealing with men or having male colleagues in UAE.

Work-Life Balance

According to participants maintaining a work-life balance is not only important for health and relationships, but it can also improve your employee's productivity. The findings indicated that poor work-life balance can lead to exhaustion and fatigue. Poor work-life balance affects work performance, absenteeism and poor physical and mental health. In addition, the findings showed that time management, task prioritization, and putting schedules to balance work responsibilities and home duties help to improve the balance between personal life and work responsibilities. Our findings also highlighted the role of organizations in the work-life balance approach.

Other Findings

While this study explores various driving forces and challenges faced by working women, and we were not aimed to study solving challenges and overcoming barriers, the findings of the qualitative study showed women have adopted several strategies and techniques in pursuit of enriching their work-family obligations, participants accounted for their particular contributions concerning solving challenges and overcoming barriers.

Working women face various challenges regarding the work-family balance due to societal, cultural, family, and gender norms. Since there are many challenges that a woman must overcome to get career success, however, this study focused on the challenges that women leaders faced in their professional life. In this study, we defined the term challenges of women leaders as "anything that inhibits women's ability to get senior- or top-level positions or keep a senior- or top-level positions". Therefore, the challenges faced by women leaders in the UAE are as follows:

Gender Bias

The findings of this study show that gender bias has been mentioned as one of the major challenges for the disparity in leadership roles between men and women. Gender bias against women leaders is high. A significant body of our findings confirmed that for women, the subtle gender bias that persists in organizations disrupts the woman's motivation to become a leader.

Male-Dominated Occupations

Male-dominated occupations are particularly vulnerable to reinforcing harmful stereotypes and creating unfavorable environments that make it even more difficult for women to excel. Findings indicated that women working in male-dominated businesses (i.e. IT sector) face a variety of challenges.

Cultural Norms and Sociocultural Beliefs

Participants stated that cultural norms and sociocultural beliefs significantly affect leadership roles. Participants indicated that sociocultural beliefs are blamed for women's failure to participate in leadership.

“Wasta” in Procuring Jobs

Wasta (Arabic term for pull or connection) describes the phenomenon of using “connections” to find jobs. Participants agreed that the “Wasta” is one of the challenges that impacts negatively women's leadership roles where some managers are using personalistic links based on close friendships, and family relationships to obtain higher-level job positions.

Lack of Support (Familial and Organizational)

The findings showed that the lack of support from family and organizations hurts women's careers (senior or top-level positions) in professional life, despite gains in education and employment.

Solving Challenges and Overcoming Barriers

Based on the findings, solving challenges and overcoming barriers to success involves improving leadership skills, perceived familial and organizational support, government support, and training.

Improving Leadership Skills

In this study, we defined leadership skills as "the abilities of a person to lead and deliver projects, encourage initiatives, build a sense of common purpose, and empower others". The findings indicated that the most in-demand leadership skills required in the workplace are as follows:

Personality

According to findings, the personality of woman leaders certainly plays the main role in excelling in top-level positions. The findings indicated that not having the great personality of a woman leader that is no match for managing a particular work and team can negatively impact their effectiveness and careers. Thus personality traits play a vital role in being a successful and strong leader for your team.

Self-Confidence

Findings demonstrated that overcoming these barriers, women leaders should act with confidence and assurance to inspire others. Self-confidence helps the woman to execute ideas or make decisions, and to foster the most effective leadership in their position.

Education and Knowledge

Education and knowledge is a significant thing in all fields. According to the findings of this study, education and knowledge play a pivotal role in solving challenges and overcoming barriers. Participants believed that education and knowledge are essential to assume leadership positions and they believe better-educated woman leaders are better at making decisions.

Decision-Making

According to the opinion of participant's leaders with a well-developed decision-making ability can make quality, informed choices from several options.

Perceived Familial and Organizational Support

While in the previous section we discussed that the lack of support from family and organizations has a negative impact on women's careers in their professional life, the respondents agreed that perceived familial and organizational support would lead them to better overcome the challenges of woman leadership.

Government Support

The findings in the qualitative study concerning government support provided to women indicate that participants are broadly satisfied with the level of support provided by the government. The participants reported government support and policies and programs acknowledged as essential to advance gender equality and allow women to take better advantage of career development.

Training

Likewise, it was found that training provides opportunities to strengthen and improve women leaders' performance, leading them to better overcome the challenges of women leadership.

Marmenout & Lirio's (2014) study suggests that organizations should provide additional training and opportunities for further education to national women, thereby encouraging women to remain in the workforce.

Conclusions

The aim of this research was twofold: to answer the research questions: 1) What is the nature of work-life balance (WLB) in Emirati women working in leadership positions? 2) How does the culture of Emirati families influence women's attainment of leadership positions? 3) What are the factors that influence the work-life balance of Emirati women leaders? and to identify research gaps. In order to do so, a mixed methodology of the survey followed by semi-structured interviews was conducted. The findings provide the evidence to answer the review questions and identify the research gaps. This section will discuss the conclusions based on the above-mentioned findings.

Perceived Organizational Support and Managerial Support

Organizational support (OS) was one of the major factors discussed in both quantitative and qualitative studies.

Previous studies show that organizational assistance and support influence affective outcomes and career satisfaction perceptions, and both women and men need active organizational assistance and support in managing their professional careers (Burke et al., 2006). Zumrah & Boyle (2015) argued that perceived organizational support directly affects satisfaction. Similarly, Allen et al. (2003); Perry-Smith & Blum (2000) noted that organizations with more extensive work-family policies and employees who perceive support from their organization are more likely to have a greater affective commitment to their organization and have higher perceived firm-level performance. Armstrong-Stassen (2008) argued that perceived organizational support negatively relates to job content plateauing. The findings of this study show that participants strongly agree with the items of organizational support. Likewise, the qualitative study showed that the lack of support from organizations is one of the challenges women leaders face in the UAE, hurting women's careers (senior- or top-level positions) in their professional life. The respondents agreed that perceived organizational support would lead them to better overcome the challenges of woman leadership. A study by Gupta & Srivastava (2020) shows organizational support mediates the relationship between work-life conflict and burnout.

UAE Family Culture of Emirati Families

In the UAE's context, there is a belief that work-family responsibilities are primarily shaped by conventional gender norms. According to (RQ2) "How does the culture of Emirati families influence women's attainment of leadership positions" this study attempted to understand

the influence of family values on women's attainment of leadership positions. The role of family was studied in both quantitative and qualitative studies. The findings of the quantitative study confirmed the significant role of family support and the majority of the respondents agreed with all items of family support.

Perceived Familial and Spousal Support

Many researchers have underscored the importance of conceptualizing studies that examine the interface between work and relationships (Guan et al., 2016; Keller & Whiston, 2008; Leung et al., 2011). According to Fathy & Youssif (2020), to create optimistic and positive glass ceiling beliefs, women employees had to seek support, particularly social support from their family, parents, and husband, and organizational support. Ayuni & Haryadi (2018) conducted that support from the husband is substantial in moderating the relationship between work roles with family responsibilities and women's career development (Rincon et al., 2020). So, husband's support helps women reduce work-family conflicts (Ezzedeen & Ritchey, 2009). Fouad et al., 2008; Wang & Heppner, 2002) highlighted that woman's career development is often influenced by family and parental expectations.

A substantial number of researchers have discussed the clash between a female's family and career (Eikhof & York, 2015; Wani, 2022). The under-representation of women in high-level positions within the work, social and political environments demonstrates the difficulties of combining multiple roles for women (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2016). Adisa et al. (2021) calmed that "for women, the natural role consists of the responsibilities of being wives and mothers, while the unnatural role is associated with being employees." As far as working women are concerned, the role husband plays in this context has been researched to some extent.

Women, on average, still have more responsibility for the home, family life, and childcare than men (Gordon & Whelan-Berry, 2004). It becomes difficult for a woman to juggle between career and home because of absent spousal support (Gupta & Srivastava, 2020). Research studies in the field of the support of husbands toward their wives identified an array of male spousal support conducts, ranging from behavioral to emotional support (Coverman, 1985; Wani, 2022). Seierstad & Kirton (2015) argue that it is very challenging for women to "have it all" – to be committed to their careers, spouses and children. According to (Wani, 2022), spousal support is a remarkable factor in a woman's career success. The husband's cooperation is extremely important in facilitating the wife's well-being in the workplace (Karapinar et al., 2019).

In summary, husband's and family support is pivotal in helping women attain a role balance (Uddin, 2021).

Work-Life Balance

Based on the last research question of this study (What are the factors that influence the work-life balance of Emirati women leaders?), the items of work-life balance were examined in the quantitative study. Then, participants' opinions about work-life balance were explored in the qualitative part.

According to participants, maintaining a work-life balance is essential for health and relationships and can also improve employee productivity. The findings indicated that poor work-life balance could lead to exhaustion and fatigue. Poor work-life balance affects work performance, absenteeism, and physical and mental health. In addition, the findings showed that time management, task prioritization, and putting schedules to balance work responsibilities and

home duties help to improve the balance between personal life and work responsibilities. Our findings also highlighted the role of organizations in the work-life balance approach.

Men and women both strive to acquire work-life balance, but sometimes, the burden of work eclipses an individual's family life (Fapohunda, 2014). Many studies have highlighted female employee and their work-life balance (Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Gordon & Whelan-Berry, 2004; Susanto et al., 2022). Studies suggest that women who receive spousal support in terms of interpersonal support, household management, family finances, career support, etc., can better manage the work-life balance equation (Gordon & Whelan-Berry, 2004). Carlson & Perrewé (1999) claimed that a supportive spouse of a working woman acts as an effective coping mechanism by reducing work-family conflict and spousal support is instrumental in helping women to avail themselves (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000).

Challenges Faced by Women Leaders in the UAE and Strategies to Overcome Barriers

Women are globally under-represented in government, education, and the labor force (Fathima et al., 2020). Generally, abilities associated with work that women traditionally carry out are valued less than those associated with work that is traditionally carried out by men or are not considered skills at all (Rigby & Sanchis, 2006). According to the findings of this study, women leaders in the UAE face various challenges, including gender bias, male-dominated occupations, cultural norms, sociocultural beliefs, "wasta" in procuring jobs, and lack of support (family and organizational).

As discussed in the finding section, gender bias impacts Emirati women in the workplace. The top barriers to women's leadership enable highly skilled women to advance into leadership positions. Gender bias or gender equality compares opportunities and treatment available to both men and women in different ways (Davies, 2016). Gender equality is "the extent to which

national cultures support women's development and achievements" (Lyness & Kropf, 2005, p. 34). Blackstone (2003) used gender roles to refer to different expectations that people, groups, and societies have of individuals based on their sex and each society's values and beliefs about gender. Studies of the number of women in top positions at academic institutions show that unintentional and unconscious gender bias is common and can lead to barriers to promotion, credit for women's achievements, being nominated for leadership positions, or being considered leaders (Angulo et al., 2013).

Likewise, the finding confirmed that male-dominated occupations are holding women back. Studies show that the ascension of females into top leadership roles in male-dominated occupations not only in the UAE but also in developed countries (i.e., the United States) remains significantly low despite the inroads women have made over the past two decades (Campuzano, 2019). Hatch (2004) claimed that women leading in male-dominated organizational cultures are arguably deviations from the established norm and a form of cultural reinterpretation.

In an increasingly globalized world, Arab-Middle Eastern countries face challenges regarding social justice (or the lack thereof) and discrimination against females (Metcalf, 2008). Abuhussein & Koburtay (2021); Karam & Afiouni (2017) emphasized that the situation of women is related to significant cultural barriers inhibiting their growth and advancement. Arab culture, in general, seems to have accepted the notion that women have a social role that should be distinct from men (Koburtay et al., 2022). Many scholarly contributions approached the issue of women's leadership regarding what it means for their career ascension. Females in this region are usually expected to balance their gender role (as mothers and wives) with their social role (as workers/leaders) (Grünenfelder, 2012; Mulvaney et al., 2007). Thus, the findings are in line with

previous studies where cultural norms and sociocultural beliefs had negatively influenced women's leadership.

Researchers identify *wasta* as a significant form of social capital in the Arab world (El-Said & Harrigan, 2009). The word "wasta" in Arab countries refers to receiving preferential treatment from relatives, friends, or other acquaintances in positions of power or authority to achieve gains such as getting a job or promotion (Loewe et al., 2007). "Wasta" is similar to "pulling strings" in the United Kingdom (Smith et al., 2012), *guanxi* in China (Chen, 2016), *jinmyaku* in Japan (Horak, 2020), *compadrazgo* in Latin America (Velez-Calle et al., 2015), *yongo*, *yonjul*, and *inmaek* in South Korea (Horak, 2017). *Wasta* is entrenched in society because it enhances people's social status and improves their chances of success (Ta'Amnha et al., 2016). As indicated in the finding section, the culture of *wasta* is deeply, functionally, normatively, and politically embedded in UAE society. *Wasta* appears to be the primary way for women to succeed in their professional careers and leadership.

To address above mentioned challenges, women have adopted several strategies and techniques to solve challenges and overcome barriers.

Improving leadership skills (including personality, self-confidence, education and knowledge, and decision-making skill) highlighted by participants positively affect the development of high-level female leadership. Women with great leadership skills empower teams to achieve their full potential, make decisions, and strategize well to help organizations thrive. Learning and honing these skills and styles, and using them at the right time, at the right level, will help leaders on their path to success (Kumaran, 2012). As discussed, the findings suggest that perceived familial and organizational support is vital in developing a woman's leadership. Consequently, these findings support the assumption that family and husband's

support is pivotal in helping women attain a role balance (solving challenges and overcoming barriers) (Uddin, 2021).

Governments can play an essential role in helping women maintain paid work and stay in full-time employment. Al-Manasra (2013) argues that the UAE government has initiated fundamental steps to encourage women to advance their careers to leadership and top management positions. Similar to previous studies (Barrios et al., 2020), the findings showed that the government's support is one of the empowering factors mentioned by women leaders.

The findings showed that all employees in their organization (men and women) are offered various professional development and training opportunities. Training programs accelerate women's career advancement, as company-led initiatives to sponsor rising women or as public and private sector-led initiatives to address unconscious biases in organizations (OECD, 2020).

Satisfaction with Work-Family Balance

Satisfaction with work-family balance was examined in the quantitative part. According to Valcour (2007), satisfaction with work-family balance, which refers to "the overall level of contentment resulting from an assessment of one's degree of success at meeting work and family role demands" (p.1512), involves both an affective component (i.e., emotional reaction to those perceptions) and a cognitive component (i.e., perceptions of work-family balance). Results from existing literature suggest that work-family balance positively predicts satisfaction (Allen et al., 2000). González et al., (2018) argued that couples' satisfaction with their work-life balance is a key indicator of family well-being. McNamara et al., (2013) showed that hours worked per week are negatively related to satisfaction with work-family balance.

Implications for Action

This study examined the UAE women's perceptions of women's career progression to leadership positions. The quantitative and qualitative approaches used questionnaires and in-depth interviews with women managers working in UAE. This examination takes the complexity of UAE culture into account to provide a rich understanding of the nature of work-life balance (WLB), the culture of Emirati families, and the factors that influence the work-life balance of Emirati women that influence women's leadership positions. From the theoretical perspective, the findings of this study add to the discourse on work-life balance by substantiating the preceding evidence that WLB depends on demands from family, work, and government support. The findings of this study confirm that “Wasta” in procuring jobs does matter when studying UAE women’s experience in management. In particular, the study explored the impact of familial and spousal support (positively and negatively) on woman’s work-life balance.

There are several practical implications of the findings. In practice, an open-minded spouse enables a woman to better manage her career and household (Wani, 2022). Thus, spousal support for woman leaders should be considered. Although the UAE government has initiated fundamental steps to encourage women to advance their careers to leadership (Al-Manasra, 2013), gender bias and male-dominated occupations remain the most challenging problems women face in their professional lives. Thus, the UAE government and other related institutions should formulate effective policies and appropriate strategies to help women access leadership posts. In addition, organizations may play an important role in obtaining gender equality by creating awareness among employees about contemporary gender roles. Organizations may organize training programs for employees on the importance of gender equality in the UAE. Moreover, based on stereotypes associated with men’s and women’s differing work and family responsibilities,

managers may be more inclined to form negative perceptions of women's than men's promo ability based on their integrating behaviors (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2016).

Given the centrality of Islam and family in UAE, any attempt to affect social change will have to take the cultural norms and values about women into consideration. The findings show that when women are not receiving adequate organizational and managerial support, they may hamper their professional growth. Therefore, organizations may provide supportive interventions such as childcare opportunities, alternative working arrangements, and catering services for employees to enable work-life balance (Karapinar et al., 2019).

Based on the findings, enhancing leadership skills (including personality, self-confidence, education and knowledge, and decision-making skill) can help women to improve their leadership abilities and overcome challenges. The findings of this study provide insights into how women leaders understand prejudicial stereotypes and discrimination in Arab society (UAE), explaining how those are linked to patriarchal socio-cultural traditions emphasizing male control. Work-life balance is an important concern for women leaders since it can affect their personal and professional lives.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This section discusses the limitations of the study as well as any gaps identified for future research from a theoretical, practical, and methodological perspective.

Firstly, since the cross-sectional approach was used in this study; thus, future studies could employ longitudinal research. The second limitation concerns that the current study was not inferred any causal relationships among variables. Thus, examining the causal relationships among variables may increase the generalizability of the findings. In addition, based on men's and women's stereotypes, future researchers may study how the relationships between gender

and work-life balance are affected. Few studies have studied satisfaction with work-family balance specifically or perceptions of work-family balance in general (McNamara et al., 2013). Thus, future research may investigate how to achieve a high level of satisfaction with one's work-life balance. The current study is based on only 58 respondents for quantitative and 12 interviews for qualitative studies with female participants; consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to other nations, for example, Africa, Europe, etc. However, according to Malterud et al.'s (2016) argument about information power, "the more information the sample holds relevant for the actual study, the lower the number of participants that is required" (Adisa et al., 2021). We believe this was a sufficient sample size. It would also be helpful if a future study could consider changing the survey design, such as making it shorter and less time-consuming.

Furthermore, future research could consider investigating the work-life balance experiences of married and single women to find out if there are any significant distinctions. In addition, all of the variables in the present study were measured using self-reporting instruments. Such measures may have introduced common method variance, inflating the relationship among the study variables. While the study identified the relationship between work-family balance and satisfaction, statistically, such a relationship was not examined. Thus, it is important to study the impact of work-family balance on the satisfaction of women leaders. While the study sample is heterogeneous (women leaders from public and private sectors), it may be valuable to narrow it down in future studies to specific groups, such as women leaders in the IT sector. Also, future research could incorporate an initiative focused on Emirati women in the corporate arena. It would be beneficial since most of the participants in this study were employed in governmental or semi-governmental entities that focused more on employing women than in other arenas.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of Emirati women leaders in terms of organizational and individual work-life balance in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The study also aimed to explore the role of family culture and the challenges Emirati women leaders face in their successful professional journey and to understand why more Emirati women are not advancing in leadership roles within the UAE. Key findings were identified according to the conducted quantitative and qualitative studies. Working women face various challenges regarding the work-family balance due to societal, cultural, family, and gender norms. Family and spousal support for woman leaders should be considered. Gender bias and male-dominated occupations remain the most challenging problems women face in their professional lives despite the UAE government's fundamental steps to encourage women to advance their careers to leadership. The evidence proposes that organizations are required to offer supportive interventions for the support of women in the national workforce. By executing flexible working programs that enable work-life balance, more women will be motivated to enter and remain in the workforce.

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITING SCRIPT

Dear Participants:

My name is Samar Bokaii, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Business School at California Baptist University in the United States. I am conducting a research study as part of my dissertation, examining the work-life balance, family culture and women's leadership in the UAE. This research study has been approved by IRB and California Baptist University. IRB is the Institutional Review Board is a governing board that convenes regularly to review proposals and to ensure specific regulations and guidelines are adhered to.

You are cordially invited to participate in a voluntary research study.

If you agree, you are invited to:

- Complete an anonymous online survey that should take no more than ten minutes to complete.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your identity as a participant will remain confidential at all times during and after the study.

If you would like to participate in the survey, please begin the survey via the link below.

If you would like to participate in the interview, please visit the link below.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at

SamarM.Bokaii@calbaptist.edu or (949) 542-2217.

Thank you very much

Sincerely,

Samar Bokaii, Doctoral Candidate – Business School

California Baptist University

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM (signature required):

This consent form will be used for the purpose of conducting the individual interviews.

Participant Research Information Sheet

Title of Study: WORK-LIFE BALANCE, FAMILY CULTURE AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN THE UAE.

Principal Investigator (PI): Samar Bokaii

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Cammy Purper

Introduction

You are being invited to take part in this research study because you have been identified as an Emirati women professionals working in the UAE and you are either in an entry-level or middle-level managerial position. This study is being conducted by Samar Bokaii, doctoral student in the business department at California Baptist University (CBU) in the United States.

Purpose

This research is being conducted to study the dynamics of work-life balance on successful women leadership among Emirati women in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Besides, the study anticipates throwing light on the role of the family culture and various challenges of Emirati women in influencing them to access senior leadership positions in the UAE. The research findings will be utilized to aid and benefit organizations and HR managers to implement best HR practices and to design gender-balanced human resource strategies.

Study Procedures

If you take part in the study, you will be asked questions regarding your lived experience as an Emirati women leader through a semi-structured virtual interviews. If you decide to participate in the interview, you will be scheduled for a Zoom interview to be held. This virtual interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes. You will be assigned an interview number.

Benefits

As a participant in this research study, there may not be direct benefit for you; though, your input and information may benefit other Emirati women professionals now and/or in the future.

Risks

A prospective risk for the participant would come from a potential loss of confidentiality. To diminish this minimal probable risk for loss of confidentiality, the collected data will be coded and securely stored so that only the authorized PI may access it. The

participant's responses are totally anonymous and will be charted using a software application. The researcher will store two copies of the responses, keep them for backup using a password-protected laptop, and archive them through a cloud-based service. The collected data will be destroyed to further protect the participants' responses once this research study is accomplished. As the PI will not have access to the participants and their respective employers' names, the risk of any harmful information that could damage an individual's financial standing, employability, or reputation becomes minimal. Further, there is a minimal possible psychological risk for participation in the study. It is possible participants could experience some discomfort from answering the questions. The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

Costs

There will be no costs to you for participation in this research study.

Compensation

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality

Your information will maintain confidentiality to the extent of laws and university policies. All information collected during this research study will be stored with a number to match you to your answers. Only the primary researcher will have access to the collected data.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal

Accepting to taking part in this study is totally voluntary. You are completely free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. You may choose not to take part in this study, or if you decide to take part, you can change your mind at a later date and withdraw from the study. If the decision is made to withdraw after data has been collected, the data will be disposed of leaving no trace between you and the research conducted.

Questions

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Samar Bokaii at 949.542.2217; or SamarM.Bokaii@calbaptist.edu.

Participation

Your participation is voluntary, and you may reject to participate without penalty or discrimination at any time.

Consent

I have read, and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Please print this information sheet for your records before continuing

APPENDIX C

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Please select your gender:

- A. Male
- B. Female
- C. I choose to not identify.

What is your employment status?

- A. Full-time employed (40 hours weekly)
- B. Part-time employed (20 hours weekly)
- C. Self-employed
- D. Freelancer
- E. Student
- F. Unemployed

What is your employment level?

- A. Entry Level Manager (3 years or less experience).
- B. Middle Level Manager (7+ years relevant experience).
- C. Senior Level Manager (12+ years relevant experience).

For how long have you been employed by your current employer?

- A. Less than 1 year

- B. 1-2 years
- C. 3-5 years
- D. 6-10 years
- E. 11-20 years
- F. More than 21 years

How many years of work experience do you have in total?

- A. Less than 1 year
- B. 1-2 years
- C. 3-5 years
- D. 6-10 years
- E. 11-20 years
- F. More than 21 years

How many times have you changed your employer?

- A. Never
- B. Once
- C. 2-3 times
- D. 4-5 times
- E. 6-10 times
- F. More than 10 times

In which industry are you employed?

- A. Transportation & Logistics
- B. Finance & Insurance
- C. Construction
- D. Wholesale, Retail & Trade
- E. IT and Telecommunication
- F. Tech Industry
- G. Conglomerate of companies
- H. Business Services
- I. Power & Utilities
- J. Education
- K. Government
- L. Entertainment, Tourism & Hospitality
- M. Manufacturing
- N. Health Services
- O. Other, please specify

Please select your employment sector

- A. Private sector – multinational company
- B. Private sector – national company
- C. Public or government sector
- D. Semi government sector
- E. Other, please specify

Have you ever taken a break (i.e. more than 2 weeks off) other than your entitled leaves?

- A. Yes
- B. No

If so, please indicate your reason behind this break. (Select all that apply)

- A. Childbirth and childcare
- B. Spouse's job requirements
- C. Other family obligations
- D. Just to take a career break
- E. To continue my education
- F. To explore other career options
- G. Lack of support at work
- H. Other, please specify

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements

Name of the factor	Indicators	Highly agree	Agree	Neutral
Organizational support	Positive Working Environment makes working easy.			

	Flexible working hours help me to manage my work and life.			
	Deadlines/Schedules/Targets must be so set that they can be achieved in prescribed time frame.			
	My organization take any initiative to support work life of its female employees.			
	My organization provide flexible work timings.			
	Working overtime hinders in personal life.			
Organisational support	My organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me.			
	My organization would ignore any complaint from me.			
	Even if I did the best job possible, my organization would fail to notice.			
	My organization shows very little concern for me.			
Management Practices	The management provides feedback to staff concerns on work-life balance.			
	The management demonstrates an understanding of employee work-life balance.			

The management provides convenient working hours.			
Management provision of work-life benefits me.			
Detailed management explanation of work assignments and non-work assignments.			
Management communicates with employees on issues affecting their work-life balance.			
There is a lack of management policy for encouraging work-life balance.			
There is a lack of management support in encouraging work-life balance.			
There is a lack of management respect to work-life balance.			
There is a lack of management appreciation to work-life balance.			
There is difficulties with administrators in implementing work-life balance.			
There is difficulties with work colleagues in promoting work-life balance.			

Family Support	My family gives me support for my job.			
	My family members listen to my job related problems.			
	I am satisfied with the amount of time for non-work activities.			
Work Life Balance	I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities.			
	I have difficulty balancing my work and non-work activities.			
	I feel that the balance between my work demands and non-work activities is currently about right.			
	Overall, I believe that my work and non-work life are balanced.			

Satisfaction with Work-Family Balance	I am satisfied with the way I divide my time between work and personal or family life.					
	I am satisfied with the way I divide my attention between work and home.					
	I am satisfied with how well my work life and my personal or family life fit together.					

	<p>I am satisfied with my ability to balance the needs of my job with those of my personal or family life.</p>					
	<p>I am satisfied with the opportunity I have to perform my job well and yet be able to perform home-related duties adequately.</p>					

- The researcher will be conducting individual interviews with 12 participants who completed the above survey. The names will be selected randomly by the system. If you would like to be contacted for the follow-up interviews, kindly visit the link below.

The link includes a letter of consent that must be signed electronically before proceeding further with the interviews. The letter of consent includes information on the interview process. It also addresses the ways to maintain confidentiality and privacy. Informed consent consists of a document describing the purpose of this project, description of participant involvement, alternatives to participation, method of confidentiality, and the researcher's contact information. The consent document will ensure participants are aware that their involvement is voluntary and that they are free to stop their participation at any time throughout the project. Information collected during the project will be securely stored with access to the data only available to the project researcher. In order to protect the participants from any potential harm related to their involvement in this study, the researcher will replace their names with referenced numbers in all reports. This is important because the researcher has an ethical and fiduciary responsibility to protect the participants.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

The questions below will be presented to 12 interview participant who already participated in the survey:

Demographics

1.	Can you give me a background about yourself ?
2.	Age
3.	Race / Ethnicity
4.	What is your marital status?
5.	Who do you live with?
6.	How many (if any) children do you have? What are the ages of these children?
Challenges	
1.	Tell me about your career, the progress of your career till now. Please bring in the information in a chronological order.
2.	Have you experienced any barriers in your access to leadership opportunities? If so, what was that?
3.	If so, how did you overcome that? If not, why?
4.	In your opinion, what are the challenges that hamper the professional growth and leadership journey of Emirati women?
5.	What do you think the needed skills that help you in ascending to a senior management position?
6.	Do you think whether Emirati cultural and traditional views influence the role of women in the Middle East in terms of their career advancement?

7.	What sort of support would you expect to attain a senior leadership position?
Could you please tell me some more details about your family?	
1.	How many members are there in your family?
2.	Are you married? Do you have children? If yes, how many kids? What are their ages?
3	Who take care of the children while you are working?
4	If no kids, how many siblings are there for you? With whom are you staying?
5	Could you reveal your role in family decision making regarding your career?
6	Are you allowed to make independent decisions regarding your career?
7	What are your spouse's thoughts and opinion on your career?
8	What are your parents' thoughts and opinion on your career?
9.	What is/was their preferred choice of career for you?
10	Have they supported your decisions regarding your career? Please narrate a few circumstances.
11.	Has your family influenced your career choices? Anyone in particular?

12	Describe what role the family culture plays in hindering or improving Emirati women's occupation to senior leadership roles?
13	Are you satisfied by the level support your family extends to you in attaining leadership position? If not, where aren't they able to meet with your expectation.
14.	Any additional information that you want to share?
WLB	
1.	Describe how do you manage to balance the work responsibilities with the home duties?
2.	Did you ever come across any difficulty in managing work and family life? If so, explain.
3.	In your opinion, what is the role of work life balance in attaining leadership position?
4.	Explain the changes you would like to see in your company that will allow more Emirati women influx to senior leadership positions while achieving a satisfactory level of WLB?
5.	Did you ever experience gender bias in your organization? If so, please narrate it.
6.	Did you ever experience lack of training and mentoring in your organization? If so, please narrate it.

7.	What advice would you like to give for other women managers who are striving to acquire work life balance?
8.	Describe the effects of your professional work on your personal life.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Welcome and thank you for your participation.

Last week, each of you were sent the questions that we'll be discussing today and also signed a voluntary participant form.

I'm also going to record this conversation to help ensure I take accurate notes and I will be the only one with access to this recording. The recordings will be securely stored and the identity of the participants will not be disclosed. All information mentioned will not be repeated; for this reason, a nondisclosure form will be signed by the interviewee and the interviewer. Your thoughts and experiences are appreciated so please feel free to share throughout our discussion. Let's get started!

1. Tell me about your yourself.
2. How many members are there in your family?
3. Are you married? Do you have children? If yes, how many kids? What are their ages?
4. Who take care of the children while you are working?
5. If no kids, how many siblings are there for you? With whom are you staying?
6. Could you reveal your role in family decision making regarding your career?
7. Are you allowed to make independent decisions regarding your career?
8. What are your spouse's thoughts and opinion on your career?
9. What are your parents' thoughts and opinion on your career?
10. What is/was their preferred choice of career for you?
11. Have they supported your decisions regarding your career? Please narrate a few circumstances.
12. Has your family influenced your career choices? Anyone in particular?
13. Describe what role the family culture plays in hindering or improving Emirati women's occupation to senior leadership roles?

14. Are you satisfied by the level support your family extends to you in attaining leadership position? If not, where aren't they able to meet with your expectation.

Why or why not?

15. Any additional information that you want to share?

Now I would like to ask you some questions about career advancement.

1. How long each have been working?
2. What is the longest and shortest time with a single company and why?

Now I would like to ask you a few questions about the challenges you have encountered while advancing the career ladder.

1. Tell me about your career, the progress of your career till now. Please bring in the information in a chronological order.
2. Did you ever face any sorts of challenges or barriers in attaining leadership? If so, what was that?
3. If so, how did you overcome that? If not, why?
4. According to you, what are challenges that hamper the professional growth and leadership journey of Emirati women?
5. What do you think the needed skills that help you in ascending to a senior management position?
6. Do you think whether Emirati cultural and traditional views influence the role of women in the Middle East in terms of their career advancement? Why or why not?
7. What sort of support would you expect to attain a senior leadership position?

Lastly, let's discuss work-life balance dynamics.

1. Describe how do you manage to balance the work responsibilities with the home duties?
2. Did you ever come across any difficulty in managing work and family life? If so, explain.
3. According to you, what is the role of work life balance in attaining leadership position? Is it different for Emirati men compared to Emirati women?
4. Explain the changes you would like to see in your company that will allow more Emirati women influx to senior leadership positions while achieving a satisfactory level of WLB?
5. Did you ever experience gender bias in your organization? If so, please narrate it.
6. Did you ever experience lack of training and mentoring in your organization? If so, please narrate it.
7. What advice would you like to give for other women managers who are striving to acquire work life balance?
8. Describe the effects of your professional work on your personal life.

This concludes our interview today.

Thank you again for your feedback and as a reminder, responses are completely anonymous.

