



Gender, Work & Organization Conference

28-30 June 2023 | Stellenbosch | South Africa

GENDER, WORK & ORGANIZATION



Stellenbosch
Business School

SUPPORTED BY
PRME
an initiative of the
United Nations Global Compact



Gender, Work and Organization

13th International Interdisciplinary Conference

28-30 June 2023, Stellenbosch, South Africa

Conference theme

Marginalized gender identities - how can intellectual activism transform work and organization?

(Read more about the conference theme on the conference website).

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS/PAPER SUBMISSIONS

STREAM TITLE:

Gendered visible and invisible inequalities in the Middle East

STREAM LEADERS:

Maryam Aldossari, Royal Holloway, University of London

Faisal Alkadi, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia & University of Edinburgh Business School

Sara Chaudhry, Birkbeck, University of London, London

www.usb.ac.za/usb_events/gender-work-organization

International conference of 500+ people. Linked to the prestigious Gender, Work and Organization journal.



GWO2023Conference@sun.ac.za



[@GWO2023_CT](https://twitter.com/GWO2023_CT)



[GWO 2023](https://www.facebook.com/GWO2023)



[GWO2023-Conference](https://www.linkedin.com/company/GWO2023-Conference)

This stream aims to explore the specific socio-institutional context of the Middle East in relation to gender and gendered intersectional experiences by combining micro-level experiences with meso-level organisational adjustments/responses against the backdrop of enduring socio-institutional norms and more recent public policy agendas. The theoretical legacy of gender equality literature and how it informs work and organisations is well established. However, this debate remains relatively underexplored in the Middle East due to a range of reasons. First, this region offers a specific and distinctive landscape whereby the historical interaction of religious nationalism with tribal identity has reinforced the control and subordination of women in the Middle East (Al-Rasheed, 2013). For instance, Islamic ideologies have been proven to impact family structures, to inform the role of men as protectors of family honour and their female family members' purity and morality (Ali, 2016), and subsequently to reinforce gender segregation in the educational and work spheres (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Research has also emphasised how tribal traditions render women working in gender-mixed environments as taboo and therefore restrict women's entry to specific fields of study or professions (Alkhaled & Berglund, 2018; Hakiem, 2021). This distinctive socio-religious backdrop therefore continues to restrict the labour market choices of women, resulting in the pursuit of a limited range of educational and occupational choices that are considered 'suitable' for women (Samin, 2019; Sidani, 2005). Crucially, socio-religious norms may also act as inhibitors for macro-level institutional change(s) and discourage critical conversation(s) on this issue.

Related to this first point, macro-level imbalances persist with respect to women's employment across the region with far-reaching implications for labour markets and societies. While female participation rates in education are on the rise across the Middle East (World Bank, 2021), women's active engagement in formal employment remains low. For instance, the unemployment rate for young women in the Middle East is one of the highest in the world (51.9% unemployed women compared to 17.8% unemployed men - International Labour Organisation, 2020). Crucially, there are significant gender inequalities in the labour market whereby women are predominantly clustered in the traditional fields of education (specifically within the humanities), learning and training, and health care (Tlaiss & Dirani, 2015) with persistent underrepresentation in more vocational/technical fields such as engineering, computing, electronics and accountancy (Calvert & Al-Shetaiwi, 2002; Rutledge et al., 2011).

Additionally, there are methodological roadblocks with respect to research in the Middle East whereby the lower labour market representation of women as well as gender segregation in both personal and professional spheres limits real-life access to women. Therefore, in a practical sense, there is relatively limited data that helps to shed light on the degree of engagement of women in formal and informal employment, the ensuing implications for evolving gender identities, the degree and patterns of resistance in the workplace tied to marginal groups (such as women in this specific context) (see Aldossari & Calvard, 2021 as an exception) and the interaction of micro/individual, meso/organisational and macro/institutional levels of analyses in creating, maintaining and/or disrupting unequal conditions in workplaces in the Middle East.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, a range of reforms and public policy agendas have been introduced by respective governments across the Middle East region that have been specifically aimed at increasing women's labour force participation and challenging the prevailing patriarchal norms and customs that broadly characterise the Arab region as a whole (Koburtay et al., 2020). For example, recent Saudisation drives have a progressive gendered focus, aimed at increasing Saudi women's participation in previously male-dominant sectors such as retail (Varshney, 2019). Similarly, the Emiratisation programme is targeted at increasing national women's employment in the private sector (Rees et al., 2007). These governmental interventions (albeit top-down) are creating large-scale changes in regional labour markets and informing the labour market experiences of women specifically. Crucially, they engender more constructive conversations around women's potentially expanded roles in Middle Eastern societies. However, they may also result in gendered experiences of tokenism and marginalisation in the workplace (Aldossari et al., 2021).

In this stream, we hope to invite submissions that elaborate on (though not exclusively) some of the following key themes that remain unanswered in the specific regional context of the Middle East:

- The dynamic creation and interaction of visible and invisible inequalities for women and other marginalised groups in the Middle East.
- Variations in the micro-level work experiences of individual women and the manifestation of gender identities across a range of organisations, sectors and countries within the region.
- Meso-level organisational responses (or lack thereof) to the dual forces of slow-to-change socio-religious restrictions on women's employment alongside public policy agendas aimed at increasing female labour force participation in the Middle East.
- How and to what extent does the historical legacy of Islamic ideologies in the region shape the position of women in society? Do variations in these ideologies (for example Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia and Shiaism in Iran) have differential implications for gender marginalisation? More specifically, how does the social standing of women impact their experiences in workplaces?
- Does tribalism add another contextually unique layer of patriarchal influence on the position of Middle Eastern women? Are patriarchal norms undergoing piecemeal changes, and how are these changes being manifested in workplaces?
- What parallels can be drawn between experiences and outcomes for women in the Middle East and those in other parts of the world?

For stream enquiries, please contact Sara Chaudhry: s.chaudhry@bbk.ac.uk.

Abstracts of approximately 500 words should be submitted directly to the GWO2023 conference website in a ONE-page (A4-size, single-spaced, excluding references, with no headers, footers or track changes) Word document, NOT PDF. Abstracts are invited by the end of day 7 November 2022 (Central Africa Time - CAT), with decisions on acceptance to be made by stream leaders by December 2022. Prospective contributions will be independently refereed. Abstracts should include full contact details, including your name, institutional affiliation, mailing address and e-mail address. We are hoping to circulate abstracts prior to the 2023 GWO conference to those attending the conference.

Subject to full peer review, this stream may select suitable full papers for a special issue of the *Gender, Work and Organization* journal post the conference. If your abstract is accepted for this stream, you are encouraged to submit a full paper (5 000 to 7 000 words excluding references) by 28 February 2023, which may be considered for such a GWO journal special edition.

More information about the conference can be found at:

https://www.usb.ac.za/usb_events/gender-work-organization/

Follow us at:

Twitter: @GWO2023_CT

Facebook: GWO 2023

LinkedIn: GWO2023-Conference

More information about the *Gender, Work and Organization* journal can be found here:

Gender, Work and Organization is a scholarly journal published by Wiley and edited by Alison Pullen and Banu Ozkazanc-Pan. The journal has an Impact Factor of 5.428 (2021) ISI Journal Citation Reports and a ranking of 2/44 (Women's Studies); 95/226 (Management).

References

- Aldossari, M., & Calvard, T. (2021). The politics and ethics of resistance, feminism and gender equality in Saudi Arabian organizations. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1-18.
- Aldossari, M., Chaudhry, S., Tatli, A., & Seierstad, C. (2021). Catch-22: Token women trying to reconcile impossible contradictions between organisational and societal expectations. *Work, Employment and Society*, 1-19.
- Ali, A.H. (2015). *Heretic: Why Islam needs a reformation now*. Knopf Canada.
- Alkhaled, S., & Berglund, K. (2018). And now I'm free: Women's empowerment and emancipation through entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia and Sweden. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 30(8), 877-900.
- Al-Rasheed, M. (2013). *A most masculine state: Gender, politics and religion in Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Calvert, J.R., & Al-Shetaiwi, A.S. (2002). Exploring the mismatch between skills and jobs for women in Saudi Arabia in technical and vocational areas: The views of the Saudi Arabian private sector business managers. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 6(2), 112-124.
- Hakim, R.A.D. (2021). Advancement and subordination of women academics in Saudi Arabia's higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 1-14.
- International Labour Organisation (ILO). (2020). *World employment and social outlook trend 2020*, Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_734455.pdf [Accessed 12 August 2022].
- Koburtay, T., Syed, J., & Haloub, R. (2020). Implications of religion, culture, and legislation for gender equality at work: Qualitative insights from Jordan. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 164, 421-436.
- Rees, C.J., Mamman, A., & Braik, A.B. (2007). Emiratization as a strategic HRM change initiative: Case study evidence from a UAE petroleum company. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(1), 33-53.
- Rutledge, E., Al Shamsi, F., Bassioni, Y., & Al Sheikh, H. (2011). Women, labour market nationalization policies and human resource development in the Arab Gulf states. *Human Resource Development International*, 14(2), 183-198.
- Samin, N. (2019). *Of sand or soil: Genealogy and tribal belonging in Saudi Arabia*. Princeton University Press.
- Sidani, Y. (2005). Women, work, and Islam in Arab societies. *Women in Management Review*, 20(7), 498-512.
- Tlaiss, H.A., & Dirani, K.M. (2015). Women and training: An empirical investigation in the Arab Middle East. *Human Resource Development International*, 18(4), 366-386.
- Varshney, D. (2019). The strides of the Saudi female workforce: Overcoming constraints and contradictions in transition. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 20(2), 359-372.
- World Bank. (2021). Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate) - Middle East & North Africa. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=ZQ> [Accessed: 3 August 2022].