Management research in the Arab World: What is now and what is next?☆

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ABSTRACT

Given the significant political and socio-economic transformations occurring in the challenging yet under-researched Arab world nowadays, this study seeks to (1) systematically review the literature in the leading mainstream management journals; and (2) develop a future research agenda that would enhance our understanding of the region. To do this, we conducted a systematic review of 176 published management studies (2000–2016). Our thematic analysis revealed three overarching themes. These were (1) avenues for economic development and improved performance, (2) leveraging and adapting to changing local institutional contexts and (3) overcoming legitimacy concerns/barriers in the Arab world. Our recommendations on the future research agenda of these themes were intended to provide key insights for researchers and managers interested in proactively contributing to the development of a timely research agenda for these promising markets.

1. Introduction

The Arab world, despite often featured as a "buzz" phrase in the daily news headlines, offers a unique and rich research context that has been underworked. It is engulfed with managerial and organizational dilemmas, which, if adequately investigated, would profoundly enlighten practitioners and management scholars. Despite its uniqueness, notable scholars report that the Arab world has not received significant research attention among management scholars (e.g., Mellahi et al., 2011; Zahra, 2011; Balakrishnan, 2013; Kalliny and Benmamoun, 2014). While some scholars have attributed the scarcity of the research to certain barriers that directly limit the variety and quality of the research methods available in the Arab world (Balakrishnan, 2013), it still does not change the fact that management challenges there continue to exacerbate and warrant research inquiry, particularly in light of the associated institutional transformations currently taking place. It has been argued that the developmental needs and major changes that the Arab world has witnessed are fertile grounds for extending our theoretical assumptions and raising the research questions that would encourage the development of conceptual models (Zahra, 2011). It is on this basis that accepting such an obvious scholarly research gap could be described as disappointing and rather passive, to say the least.

The obvious question is 'How can this change?' To address it, we explore (1) the state of the present research dialogue on

management in the Arab world; and (2) a future research agenda to be proposed in light of our review and the ongoing political, social and economic transformation in the Arab world. In so doing, we reveal key themes thrown up by a quantitative and a qualitative review of the published literature about the Arab world and put forward an issue-based research agenda that is relevant for newly entering multinational corporations as well as domestic firms in these markets.

The 22 countries that are members of the Arab League (formed in 1945) are generally acknowledged to comprise the Arab world (see Table 1) whose first language is Arabic. Building on this categorization, we argue that the religious, linguistic and geographical connotation inherent in the term "Arab" is the driver of a regional identity, which in turn influences its cultural characteristics. Hence, the Arab world can be broadly defined by religion, language and geography. In terms of geography, the region stretches from the Mediterranean Sea in the north to the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean in the southeast and from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Arabian Sea in the east.

Our motivation for writing this paper is threefold. First, the state of the countries in the Arab world suggests that their institutions at the macro, *meso* and micro levels are aspiring to or undergoing varying degrees of reform, as manifested in such events as the Arab Spring, the oil and gas crisis and political and economic instability. These events are not only of a macro economic or socio-political nature but they also change the fabric of institutions in the Arab world and leave a shadow on the different levels and types of organization; public or private, local or foreign, mature or starting up. In addition, many countries in the Arab world have unique institutional voids at various levels (e.g., Narooz and Child, 2017; Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher, 2017). Very often institutional challenges can be linked to a weak understanding of effective management in all its manifestations and what this might imply. This makes it necessary to gauge what management knowledge we already have before embarking on an evidence-based development agenda for the Arab world.

Second, the magnitude of foreign investment interest in the Arab world cannot be overlooked, with FDI net inflows of $30.06 billion in 2017.[1] The Arab world has a GDP of $2.59 trillion (World Bank, 2017) and a population of about 406.45 million; 60% of whom are under 30 years of age (United Nations Development Program, 2016). MNCs are continuing to engage in FDI in these markets and can benefit from researchers' efforts to unlock key insights, trends and information about management practices and challenges in these markets. The world development indicators in 2017 showed that the annual growth rate of GDP in the Arab countries was actually −0.8%, compared to 2% for the world as a whole (World Bank, 2017), indicating the potential for economic development. With the paucity of management research in the Arab world, such a level of economic activity combined with so many institutional reforms would probably leave many institutions, businesses and organizations with a foggy vision of the way forward.

Furthermore, from an academic perspective, the Arab world has also witnessed a surge of leading business schools seeking to develop management knowledge in the market. This is evidenced by the proliferation of accredited business schools and research institutions currently operating in or aiming to enter the market, which are committed to the rubric of enhancing high-impact research productivity in that part of the world.

Third, the impact that a unique cultural context plays in shaping the managerial choices of the firm is well established in the academic literature (Child and Marinova, 2014; Child et al., 2017) and is reported to significantly impact micro and macro managerial phenomena (e.g., Bruton and Lau, 2008; Elbanna and Child, 2007a; Zoogah et al., 2015). Therefore, a study of the Arab world with its unique transformations and cultural traits can raise serious theoretical and empirical questions that could be critical for understanding the necessary research dialogue.

The paper is organized as follows; we begin by an overview of the features of the Arab world. Next, we discuss the methodology for the review. We then present our review of the current literature as revealed in some of its major themes, namely 1) studies that highlight avenues for enhancing the performance of firms and individuals; (2) studies that focus on leveraging and adaptation to changing local institutional contexts, mainly those influenced by Arab culture and Islam; and (3) studies that focus on firms' overcoming of legitimacy challenges in the Arab world. For each theme, we propose a research agenda. Finally, the last section of the paper discusses the conclusions arising from the study.

2. The Arab world at a glance

An important question raises here is how the Arab world differs from (or resembles) other emerging markets. If all emerging markets were similar, there would be no need to single out the Arab world for further theoretical advancement and research. However, evidence from other emerging markets suggests that they are not uniform (e.g., Meyer et al., 2009; Bruton and Lau, 2008; Zoogah et al., 2015); this is in spite of claims that globalization and the advances in communication technology have eroded differences between countries and regions (Bruton and Lau, 2008). We agree with Meyer and Peng (2016) on the importance of using the institutional-based view to explain how and why contextual variations in the Arab world matter; such variations being "global meta trends" or "micro-behavioral differences".

There are many commonalities among the Arab countries, documented in multiple studies that warrant their inclusion in a single review. Some of these include the commitment to the religious teachings and practices of Islam, devotion to the group, resistance to change, recognition of hierarchical order and a sense of pride (Al-Kandari and Gaither, 2011; Elbanna et al., 2011). The Arab world's key characteristics include unique cultural norms with many Arab countries are influenced by a Bedouin tribal cultural heritage and the profound role of kinship and Wasta (known in other cultures as personal connections, networking, or Guanxi). Game-changing

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[1] Retrieved on 07 August 2018, from https://data.worldbank.org/https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.KLT.DINV.CD.WD?locations=1A&name_desc=true.

Table 1

Article count by major areas, methods, time scope, unit of analysis and country.

	Frequency (%)
Areas[a]	
International business and area studies	66 (38%)
General management, ethics and social responsibility	59 (34%)
Human resources management and employment studies	44 (25%)
Organization studies	23 (13%)
Strategy	22 (13%)
Entrepreneurship and small business management	15 (9%)
Innovation	9 (5%)
Other specialized areas, e.g., sector studies, public sector, health care, …etc.	31 (18%)
Methods[b]	
Quantitative	94 (53%)
Qualitative	52 (30%)
Conceptual	22 (12%)
Mixed methods (combine qualitative and quantitative methods)	8 (5%)
Time scope	
Cross sectional	133 (76%)
Longitudinal	21 (12%)
Not applicable (conceptual papers)	22 (12%)
Unit of analysis	
Individual	76 (43%)
Firm	56 (32%)
Country	29 (16%)
Team	5 (3%)
Others	10 (6%)
Country[c]	
Egypt	42 (23.9%)
UAE	34 (19.3%)
Saudi Arabia	24 (13.6%)
Lebanon	20 (11.4%)
Palestine	18 (10.2)%
Kuwait	18 (10.2%)
Other countries	96 (54.4%)
Morocco, 14 (8%); Jordan, 13 (7.4%); Oman, Tunisia, 12 (6.8%) for each; Syria, 9 (5.1%); Qatar, 8 (4.5%); Algeria, 7 (4%); Bahrain, 6 (3.4%); Iraq, Libya and Sudan, 4 (2.3%) for each; Mauritania, Somalia and Yemen, 1 (0.6%) for each; Comoros and Djibouti, 0%	
Region	17 (9.7%)

[a] The total is more than 100% and 176 studies since it was allowed to code a study under more than one area of management.

[b] The definition is based on the work of Johnson et al. (2007); Gilson and Goldberg (2015); and Cropanzano (2009).

[c] The total adds up to more than 100% since many studies used multi-country samples.

informal and social ties have been instrumental in their unique context of institutional voids and multifaceted developmental needs. Furthermore, the common political concerns at the macro and micro levels (Ali, 1998), as well as the high percentage of aspiring young people who are pressing for political, economic and socio-cultural change, work together to unite these markets.

The ongoing waves of revolution that have swept through the Arab world have also become one of its unique features. The domino effect of these revolutions indicates a strong bond or uniformity across the markets of this world, which is worth understanding more deeply, not only for the purpose of policy-making but also for regional expansion by organizations that seek it. Furthermore, the dependence of many of these countries on a potentially unsustainable oil-based economy unites them in another way. We believe that such commonalities make this region unique and worth being studied together.

As potential sources for political instability, the oil crisis, terrorism, the migration of refugees, authoritarian regimes, Gulf Wars I and II, the Arab Spring, socio-economic transformations in some countries such as Saudi Arabia (see: The Economist Report, 2018; England and Al Omran, 2019) and the more recent ramifications of the Iran nuclear agreement have all shaped institutions and business within and with the Arab world. They all merit in-depth scholarly investigation that would enrich management research into these markets. Saudi Arabia, for example, has recently adopted a new economic reform policy according to its 2030 Vision reducing its dependence on oil returns and increasing the role of the private sector. The high tariffs imposed on foreign workers (who previously took up more than 90% of the private sector jobs) resulted in the exodus of 1.7 million foreign workers (England and Al Omran, 2019). In addition, the social changes in Saudi Arabia, particularly those related to gender segregation, and the higher participation of women in the job market are expected to have a range of implications for management practices and for foreign investment in the region but inevitably carry political risk. Finally, while the impact of these recent reforms is yet to be determined, it raises multiple research questions pertaining to the literature on management and international business, with especial reference to women's participation in the job market, returning expatriates and MNCs management of political risk.

From a different angle, political and economic frustrations were definite sources of the urge to revolt referred to as the Arab Spring (Kanbur, 2013); they included stagnant periods of joblessness, escalating inflation and the suppression by nondemocratic

regimes of other voices. But also, without a doubt, the increasing political and economic turbulence in the Arab world and its consequences, such as millions of immigrants, has impacted several economies elsewhere around the globe. For the participating countries, the economic effects have ranged from lower levels of GDP, foreign direct investment and stock market stability (Messen and Benhamida, 2013; Abumustafa, 2016) to the closing of businesses and turmoil in such strategic sectors as tourism in the cases of Egypt and Syria (AL Suwailem et al., 2014).

The uphill struggle for democracy in some countries, such as Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt, the civil wars in other countries, such as Libya, Yemen and Syria, cosmetic reforms in a third group of countries, such as Morocco, as a response to the upheaval in their neighbourhoods along with the attempts of a fourth group of countries to shape the future of the Arab world to suit themselves, have revealed a much darker outlook for reform. This has indeed left its mark not only on its internal and external political relations, but also on its cultural, social and economic conditions; surfacing several organizational implications. For example, cultural changes among young people since the uprising in Egypt of 25th of January are claimed to have noticeable implications on the growing entrepreneurial activities occurring in the country (see, Ismail et al., 2017).

The proliferation of change in the last decade has attracted the interest of more academics to the Arab world. Zahra's (2011) article, for example, struck the first spark with his proposed broad themes for future research following the Arab Spring. In response, many researchers have indeed picked up from several angles on the effects of ongoing changes on business. Elzarka's (2013), to cite one, revealed the vulnerabilities of supply chains that became evident during the Arab Spring. Hsiao et al. (2016) reported that, overall, US oil and gas firms engaged in income-decreasing earnings management during the Arab Spring. Messen and Benhamida (2013) found that changing governments and legislation directly impacted human resource management in the Arab world in terms of job shifts across sectors and labor migrations across market boundaries. Birhanu (2014) found that the impact of the Arab Spring on organizations was not uniform; behind the reform some that are "in-network" with the new regime benefited more than other firms, which overnight found themselves in the disadvantaged "out-group".

Furthermore, Abdelzaher et al. (2017) drew attention to the importance of leveraging local spiritual values to enhance employees' resilience in such turbulent times, while others specifically called for more inclusive leadership for public sector organizations, which had been particularly hard hit by the revolution (Mameli, 2013) and for improved programs of executive education to equip leaders with suitable skills to handle the ongoing changes in the region (Wafa, 2015). This growing research stream, although rather fragmented, highlights the questions now being asked and the need to develop a future research agenda for the Arab world.

In the next section, we discuss the methodology adopted for the present review article.

3. Scope of the review

Based on the Academic Journal Guide (AJG) 2015 of the UK's Association of Business Schools, it was decided that the sampling frame of the review should include journals which score at least three stars in relevant management research areas, namely, entrepreneurship and small business management; general management, ethics and social responsibility; innovation; human resources management and employment studies; international business and area studies; organization studies; and strategy. In order to consider the papers published in specialized and rather less closely-related areas, as the purposes of this study require (e.g., Mostafa et al., 2015; Sabella et al., 2014), we reviewed journals ranked as four-star in the following areas: sector studies; public sector and health care; psychology (organizational); operations research and management science; operations and technology management; management development and education. This decision allowed us to provide readers with a wider view of management research in the Arab world within the space limitations of our paper. In accordance with the purpose of this study, other specialized areas such as accounting, economics, finance and marketing were not included. Targeting journals ranked as three- or four-star reflected the high quality of the selected journals and their impact in the domain of management research.

Our review eventually covered a period of 17 years, 2000–2016. Our start date reminds us that the vast majority of studies on the Arab world in leading journals have appeared since 2000. To develop the list of articles for the review, in our search of the journal databases we identified relevant articles by using various keywords, including "Arab Middle East", "Middle East", "Arab world", "Arab Nation" and individual Arab countries. We also screened the references from the articles that were identified to detect whether a relevant study could have eluded capture by the above keywords. To ensure the robustness of our sampling procedure, the authors reached agreement regarding each paper's field of study before including it in the sample.

In order to address the two objectives of this study, namely, (1) to describe the current research landscape of the Arab world and (2) to develop a future research agenda, we followed a two-stage approach that combined quantitative and qualitative content analysis. In stage 1, the quantitative review sought to describe and summarize the current research productivity based on key descriptive factors in accordance with a predesigned coding frame. Most factors were coded as dichotomous variables with 0 or 1. We included the scope of each study, theory application, sample (size, focus country) and based our definition for coding the methods (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods and conceptual papers) on the work of Johnson et al. (2007), Gilson and Goldberg (2015) and Cropanzano (2009). Other factors included method design (source of data, data collection method, time horizons and data analysis techniques), author profile (nationality, affiliation), abstract and the key findings of each study. Table 1 below summarizes some important aspects of the factors analyzed in this stage.

The purpose of stage 2, the qualitative review, was to use thematic analysis to answer two questions: (1) what research themes were studied and (2) "what's next" by proposing a research agenda concerning unanswered research questions for both MNCs and local firms in the Arab world. Thematic analysis is a qualitative technique useful for understanding trends and patterns in the data. This stage involved reading the gathered articles and drawing from the multistep process of a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The thematic qualitative analysis was conducted in two steps. Step 1 involved categorizing the studies by topic or issue, using

an inductive approach to arrive at trends in the data. Step 2 involved a more analytical attempt to categorize the studies by their main research questions in order to understand better the current research dialogue and future research agenda. In this section, we summarize the literature under each theme by discussing the research questions raised and the findings from these studies and then propose avenues for future research.

4. Overview of the current literature

Our investigation revealed 176 articles addressing management research on the Arab world identified in our 92 journals for the 17-year period 2000–2016. This represents only 1.91 papers per journal over 17 years. Out of the sample of 92 journals, we were able to find research on Arab management in 48 journals (52%). Four journals accounted for approximately 39% of the articles focused on the Arab world, namely, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of World Business, Journal of Business Research and International Business Review. The top tier journals, such as Journal of International Business Studies ($N = 4$), Strategic Management Journal ($N = 3$) and Journal of Management ($N = 1$) published very few papers.

As shown in Table 1, eight areas of management are examined in the various articles. Most of the studies belong to the first three areas, namely, international business and area studies; general management, ethics and social responsibility; and human resources management and employment studies. Most of the studies (78%) did not involve any comparison; while about 12% of the studies involved comparisons within the Arab world and 10% involved comparisons outside the Arab world. Most of the studies adopted quantitative methods (53%), while 30% used qualitative methods. Fewer studies were either conceptual (12%) or used mixed methods (5%).

For the empirical studies, surveys were the dominant data collection method (44%) followed by interviews (31%) and secondary data (23%) and finally observation and experiment (3% each). The most frequent unit of analysis was that of the individual (43%) followed by firm (32%) and then country (16%), but very little research (3%) was done at the team level of analysis.

In terms of the countries studied, scholarly attention seems to have been well dispersed across markets. As shown in Table 1, every Arab country, except for Comoros and Djibouti, was represented in the articles that we reviewed. Egypt received the largest number of studies (24%), followed by the UAE (19%) and Saudi Arabia (16%). This is not surprising, since these are the three largest economies in the Arab world, according to their GDPs (the World Bank, 2017), which may present several opportunities for academic research. About 43% of the papers (76) had not even one author of Arab origin, as surmised from their last name, and as many as 62% of studies (109) were by scholars who are not affiliated to an institution located in the Arab world. These figures should be considered by policy makers when planning to enhance the role of both local institutions and researchers in conducting management research in the Arab world, taking into account the evident interest of non-Arab researchers and institutions in the region.

About 76% of the reviewed studies (e.g., Elbanna and Child, 2007a, 2007b; Shaw et al., 2000) were cross sectional and only 12% were longitudinal. Overall, the use of grand theories in the reviewed studies was somewhat weak. Some examples of the common theories used are institutional theory (e.g., Forstenlechner and Mellahi, 2011) and stakeholder theory (e.g., Al-Bassam et al., 2015). Other theories, such as the resource-based view (e.g., Brik et al., 2011) and the theory of planned behavior (e.g., Dawkins et al., 2016) were much less frequently used. Overall, we observed in our sample a significant increase after 2008 in the reliance on grand theories.

## 5. Thematic analysis and research agenda

The thematic qualitative analysis revealed that the published studies can be classified under three main themes/orientations, as follows: (1) studies that highlight avenues for economic development and improved performance; (2) studies that focus on leveraging and adapting to changing local institutional contexts, mainly those originating in Arab culture and Islam; and (3) studies that focus on firms' overcoming legitimacy concerns/barriers in the Arab world, which might hinder business operations there. Fig. 1 summarizes the share of the total occupied by each thematic group of studies.

5.1. Highlighting avenues for economic development and enhanced performance

We discuss below the five sub-themes of studies under this theme that our analysis revealed, namely, potential entry into the Arab world; developing and managing a diverse labor force; enhancing women's leadership, developing our understanding of strategic management in the Arab world and leveraging the potential of R&D and strategic industries.

5.1.1. Potential entry into Arab markets

Our review revealed very few studies with research questions pertaining to entry modes for foreign firms into the Arab markets, related decisions and processes. Demirbag et al. (2011) maintained that the risks faced by foreign firms continue to deter them from expanding into the Arab world. They reported that, since 9/11, the UAE is the only Arab market to be listed as an attractive FDI location. Furthermore, other scholars noted an increased number of Japanese firms leaving the Arab world (Makino et al., 2004). In an attempt to help us understand why, a single study reported factors such as economic distance, variations between home and host market in economic freedom and subsidiary density impacted the survival rates of Japanese subsidiaries in the Arab world (Demirbag et al., 2011). Within the scope of our sample in both time frame and journal quality, no other studies looked at the entry or exit rates of firms in the Arab world, despite the anecdotal evidence of shifts in foreign investment activity and increased exits by firms, particularly since the Arab Spring. Although entry mode decisions can be divided into three main categories – export, contractual and investment (Bradley, 2004; Meyer and Nguyen, 2005) – Mellahi et al. (2011) report that in Arab countries international firms mostly
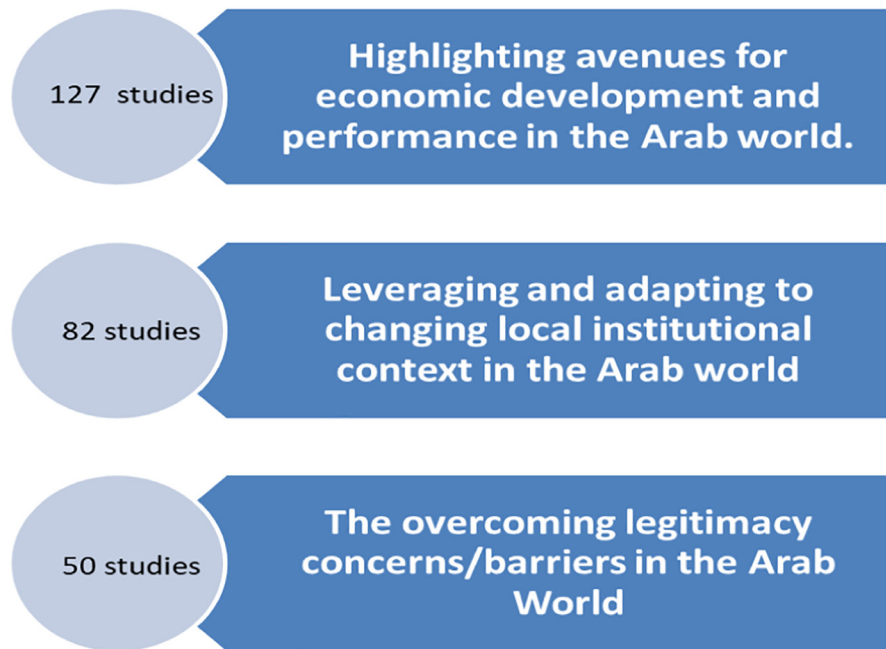
*** The numbers of studies is an indication of the research interest under each theme. It is not m
number of studies since some studies can be counted twice when falling under more than one the

Fig. 1. Emerging themes of management literature in the Arab world (176 articles – 2000–2016).

used franchising and joint ventures, with fully owned affiliates being the least popular.

Regarding future research avenues, to date, more questions than answers remain in this key area of management literature. Entry mode research can be divided into two main streams: pre-entry decisions (e.g. reasons for entry, timing of entry and choice of entry mode) and post-entry dynamics (e.g. survival, performance and the exit strategies of international operations). Future studies can examine the impact of ongoing social, demographic, political and economic transformations on the choice of entry modes and international strategy (Child and Marinova, 2014; Child et al., 2017; Demirbag et al., 2011). Using longitudinal analysis, we can assess how such drivers changed or developed over time. This seems interesting because it also generates insights into FDI flows and the effectiveness of FDI attraction policies (Sadik and Bolbol, 2001) that have been adopted by many Arab governments to reveal if in fact these FDI attraction policies are being recognized and appreciated by MNCs or if the degree of variation in the countries' risk levels is still a key barrier. Finally, it is worth asking what trends can be revealed about the firms which are leaving these markets and whether such exits are limited to specific type of firms or sectors (Makino et al., 2004).

A second interesting research question focuses on the impact of diaspora in facilitating increased internationalization initiatives in these markets (Schotter and Abdelzaher, 2013). As the developed world witnesses an increased number of migrants from Arab markets, many of them are also trying to establish economic partnerships in their home markets. What role do the current formal and informal institutions play in determining the success or failure of the dispersed people who seek to build new business partnerships and in facilitating market entry strategies?

Third, we need to pay closer attention to local Arab SMEs which want to internationalize. In particular, what unique opportunities and challenges do they face (Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher, 2017) and how are these likely to shape their model of internationalization? Case studies and qualitative methods can be instrumental in understanding these unexplored insights. Furthermore, seeing the interplay between firm and context from an institutional-based and resource-based perspective (Meyer et al., 2009) is likely to make things clearer.

5.1.2. Developing the local workforce and localization

The great diversity of the Arab world (Budhwar and Mellahi, 2007) is mirrored in their HRM research, which is rather fragmented, conceptual and descriptive in nature (Afiouni et al., 2013; Zahra, 2011). Our review revealed that the number and quality of publications on HRM related topics are increasing; and recent publications have begun to gain more theoretical depth and methodological rigor as well as a clearer focus on key themes (Afiouni et al., 2013). However, while researchers have started to conduct multi-country research (e.g., Karam and Afouni, 2013), the sampled studies so far leave out most Arab countries, and the countries of the GCC, above all the UAE, occupy a central position in the research on HRM.

Scholarly works covered such topics as labor inspections (Almeida and Ronconi, 2016), employee creativity (Wongtada and Rice, 2008), social networks and Wasta (Berger et al., 2015), performance appraisal systems (Giangreco et al., 2010; Pichler et al., 2016), work values and beliefs (Abdelzaher et al., 2017; Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2005; Robertson et al., 2001; Sidani and Jamali, 2010), work stress (Gould-Williams et al., 2015), work autonomy (Sadler-Smith et al., 2003) and leadership (e.g., Javidan et al., 2006; Kabasakal et al., 2012; Alexander, 2010; Neal and Tansey, 2010; Lin and Rababah, 2014). Wasta sums up a way of life found at all levels of Arab society. It can be defined as the use of social capital in networking, e.g., links with extended family, friends and key people, in order to achieve one's goals, which can range from cutting through red tape or getting a job or a scholarship, to securing a huge business contract (for more information on Wasta, see Berger et al., 2015; Ramady, 2016; Smith et al., 2012).

The reviews of HRM research (e.g., Afiouni et al., 2013; Afiouni et al., 2014; Budhwar and Mellahi, 2007), along with the relevant research, show certain HRM research themes to be currently emerging. First, there are continued queries about why and to what extent there are differences in HRM practices across countries (e.g., Leat and El-Kot, 2007) and how these practices impact organizational outcomes (e.g., Darwish et al., 2016; Mitchell et al., 2013). A second research stream that is currently gaining momentum pertains to various aspects of nationalization in the GCC region, with a particular focus on the function of the institutional context in supporting this strategy. GCC countries are 'capital rich but labor poor' markets (Goby, 2015). Given the comparatively low numbers of nationals in the current workforce, as opposed to the increasing population of expatriates, labor nationalization initiatives are increasingly taken up in the GCC countries (Waxin et al., 2019), but their effectiveness is little researched. The public sector has been more compliant than the private sector in fulfilling nationalization targets (Waxin et al., 2019), in that public organizations set lower job-entry requirements for nationals than private ones do (Salih, 2010) and tend more to modify selection criteria to ensure the appointment of nationals (Swailes and Al Fahdi, 2012).

Examining "nationalization now" is a pre-requisite for guaranteeing "nationalization tomorrow". This view signifies the importance of institutional changes in the labor market to enable the demand and supply mechanisms to function. In this regard, topics of interest for future research include the examination of localization policies and local employees' views on expatriate managers. Researchers can, for example, open up the debate on the work of Forstenlechner et al. (2012a, 2012b) in the UAE to examine the quota system in more representative samples of GCC organizations. They can also explore the role of different aspects of workplace diversity management and tackle the issue of motivating the younger generation to explore a wider range of career options in the private sector (Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner, 2014). Ways for policy makers to develop a new and relevant social contract to govern the relationships between the rulers of the GCC countries and their citizens and workforce after the oil era is another vital research avenue that should be taken before the development of sustainable economies (Sultan, 2012). Another pressing research dilemma is the tension between the government pressure in the GCC countries to increase the share of citizens working in the private sector and the organizational preference for employing expatriates (Goby, 2015).

Moreover, when we analyse the design and instrumentation of the localization strategy, we must include the institutional environment (Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner, 2014). In other words, evaluating public policies requires us to examine their institutional context at the same time because organizations are affected by the institutional framework which sets the rules of their game and the boundaries within which human and economic interactions take place. Given the above, it would be helpful if future researchers emphasized the effective implementation of localization initiatives such as incentive structures, labor regulations and gender roles. Finally, additional essential research questions on localization might cover the determinants, e.g., age, gender, marital status, ethnicity and level of education, of local labor force participation in the GCC labor market. They might ask what theories can help explain the underlying differences between locals and expatriates in the labor market of the GCC countries and what the impact is of various individual and labor market characteristics on the likelihood of expatriates dropping out of the GCC labor market.

Third, job creation and the reduction of high unemployment levels is another critical priority for future research in many Arab countries, notably Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and the Palestinian Authority. Although the key elements of human resource management (HRM) revolve around the recruitment, development and retention of employees, it is vital to take into account the social, economic and political contexts of different countries (Dewettinck and Remue, 2011). At present, the rate of unemployment, in particular among young people and women, is often above 25% (Afiouni et al., 2014). Further research is seriously needed that would suggest how both local and international firms can contribute to lowering this rate. Moreover, researchers who look at the ways that social relationships, particularly those focusing on the role of "Wasta", affect HRM-related issues such as employability and promotion opportunities, should be guided by theory and should use their empirical research to create a coherent body of knowledge (Berger et al., 2015). Given the strong informal institution of the Arab world and the evidently weak formal/institutional context, we need to examine the profound impact of Wasta on other business transactions (e.g., speeding up governmental procedures, tax exemptions and securing funds) and assess how far it can legalize illegal action and spread unethical behaviors.

5.1.3. Managing immigrants/expatriates and a diverse labor force

The recent Middle Eastern situation suggests that more immigrants are entering the developed countries more quickly, with varying cultures, levels of skill, and perhaps ideology. Therefore, research at both individual and organizational levels into the motivation, processes and determinants of (dis)integration in the labor markets is both practically and theoretically pressing (Cerdin et al., 2014).

The expatriation and diversity management issues facing both MNCs and local firms have emerged as a distinct stream of research, yet again noticeably fragmented. Important topics covered include information sharing between host nationals and expatriates (Toh and Srinivas, 2012) and job satisfaction/turnover intentions of self-initiated expatriates outside the boundaries of MNCs (Bozionelos, 2009). Studies show that Arab immigrant workers mobilized different forms of capital (e.g., social, cultural, economic and symbolic) and have taken on international mobility (Al-Ariss and Syed, 2011). Their motivation to migrate and

integrate was found to have an impact on their success as immigrants with qualifications (Cerdin et al., 2014). Other studies stressed the positive effect of social support from social networks, spouses, or even cooperating peers or seniors on the psychological well-being of expatriates, job outcomes and job satisfaction (Bozionelos, 2009; Lauring and Selmer, 2010; Bader and Schuster, 2015).

The research priorities in this stream need to leverage the recent changes in the Arab world. First, scholars are encouraged to adopt a longitudinal approach to monitoring different stages of expatriation/migration and the role of social and work relations (Toh and Srinivas, 2012; Hutchings et al., 2013; Bader and Schuster, 2015), which is particularly insightful when it incorporates the impact of political and sociocultural changes affecting the Arab world, for example in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Syria, Algeria and Sudan. Second, we need to compare the factors affecting the success and failure of skilled vs. unskilled immigrants and temporary vs. permanent immigrants (e.g., Al-Ariss and Syed, 2011). MNCs will be able to refine their foreign hiring policies if they approach such topics with a multilevel and interdisciplinary perspective.

5.1.4. Enhancing women's leadership

Studies on women in the Arab world have focused mostly on them as subjects of gender inequality and on their constrained social or public rights, including their limited advancement in the public and private spheres (Metcalfe, 2008). These studies depict the Arab society as one with very well-defined gender roles, in which the primary role of a woman is that of a mother and wife, any other interests being secondary (Welsh et al., 2014). For example, Al-Dajani and Marlow (2010), who investigated the family dynamics of women operating a home-based enterprise, found that, although these women made significant contributions to their family's income, they could not challenge further their patriarchal context or their traditional family and gender roles.

The debate on women as change agents vs. victims of passive shaping and constraint by their social structure can be found in another group of studies. Many studies in this area highlighted the view that women can challenge pre-established cultural norms and find ways to do so without overt resistance, thanks to their strong informal role in such contexts. For example, the study of Tlaiss (2015a) on the ways in which Islamic business ethics affect women entrepreneurs found that women project Islamic values such as success (falah), excellence (itqan), good and hard work (amal salih), honesty and truthfulness (sidik and amanah), fairness and justice (haqq and adl) and benevolence (ihsaan) as key values that would ensure the success/survival of their enterprises; the study stresses what they have done to challenge the inaccuracy of restrictive interpretations of Islamic teachings. With reference to the patriarchal society and the constraining socio-cultural traditions, Tlaiss (2015b) found that Emirati women entrepreneurs are motivated by the need for independence, a sense of accomplishment and control over their lives, reflecting the achievement of these women in challenging their socio-cultural expectations. Pely (2010) found that even in a highly patriarchal setting such as the "Sulha" process, women tend to play a very significant informal role at each stage and their involvement is acknowledged by both genders. "Sulha" is a common process of conflict resolution adopted by Arabs (Muslims, Christians and Druze) (Pely, 2010). A study of Western women living in the Arab world, the ethnographic investigation of Lauring and Selmer (2010), found that Danish spouses of male expatriates in Saudi Arabia who were not allowed to do paid work took on new gender roles. Using informal social channels women played a major part in the advancement and repatriation opportunities of their expatriate husbands (Lauring and Selmer, 2010). The vast majority of these studies of women were qualitative in nature and more than two-thirds of them focused mainly on women from Palestine, UAE and Saudi Arabia.

In the future research agenda for studies on women in the Arab world, we should adopt a more local lens to look at the issues faced by women, instead of comparing Arab women to their Western counterparts (Abdelzaher and Bullough, 2013). First, although researchers portray Arab women as subject to constrained socio-cultural conditions, it should be remembered that the patriarchal society entails benefits for women too. For example, in this cultural context, women have no or limited financial obligations and it is their family's/husband's responsibility to financially provide for them (Tlaiss, 2015b), which can raise interesting questions about the traditional notion of "empowering women" (Abdelzaher and Bullough, 2013). This leaves women with a significant informal role (Pely, 2010; Lauring and Selmer, 2010) and raises a question about the relevance of Western-based models of women's empowerment and entrepreneurship in the Arab context (Metcalfe, 2008; Syed, 2008). Metcalfe (2008) suggests a 'sharia-sensitive' framework offering government, organizations and individual strategies to advance women's position in the Arab world. Interestingly, exploring women's roles in non-profit social organizations can also be insightful.

Second, it is important to acknowledge that women across the Arab world are not all subject to the same restrictions or structural conditions, or even similar interpretations of Islamic teachings (see Syed, 2008). This applies even to different regions of the same country. Women's motivations, work culture, philosophy, support, challenges, eco-system and whether and how they view their capacity to change their lives are probably very different and should be investigated. For example, Syrian refugees as entrepreneurs will be very different from women in the more affluent Gulf States and women in partially and patchily modernized contexts, such as in Egypt or Tunisia. Extending the line of women's agency (Tlaiss, 2015a, 2015b) to explore how women challenge their different contexts as entrepreneurs and employees is an interesting research line and since agency is a concept that is contextually determined, adopting a qualitative research approach is likely to yield more insights than quantitative research would.

Third, the scarcity of studies on mixed-gender work relations, with reference to women in leadership roles, is noteworthy. In several Arab countries such as Egypt, UAE and Tunisia, women have gained very senior leadership roles in some institutions (Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher, 2019), yet the implications of this remain almost absent from the body of research. It is also timely to address the impact of the political volatility and socio-economic pressures for change in the Arab world on women's leadership status (see, Tlaiss, 2015a, 2015b; Al-Dajani et al., 2015).

5.1.5. Developing strategic management and R&D understanding

Our systematic examination of the literature identified 15 articles that addressed strategic management issues such as decision-

making (10 studies) and strategic planning (five studies). In the decision-making research, there were six articles on the strategic decision process (e.g., Al-Yahya, 2009; Elbanna, 2012; Elbanna and Child, 2007a, 2007b) and three articles on ethical decision-making (e.g., Beekun et al., 2008). We identified five studies that addressed corporate governance and board structure (Robertson et al., 2013; Rossouw, 2005). The identified studies sought to provide a better understanding of the strategic management practices in the Arab world and the ways in which they differed from other contexts. For example, Elbanna and Child (2007a) argued that Arab managers seem to have less regard for environmental contingencies when making important decisions. The current research has highlighted the need to revisit our earlier assumptions on decision-making in the Arab world with its high centralization and high power distance because of the potential impacts of its political and economic challenges (Elbanna et al., 2013).

How can we make strategic planning a standard practice in Arab organizations, as it is in countries such as the US, New Zealand and the UK (Mintzberg et al., 1998). One possible solution in this area of study is to increase accountability and compliance, as public organizations in the UAE (Elbanna et al., 2013) and the US (Bryson et al., 2018) have done. Some writers have sought to learn more about the conditions needed to effectively practice strategic management in Arab organizations. In this regard, it was argued that slack resources, formal planning, participation, autonomy and minimizing political behavior positively contributed to organizational and strategy outcomes (e.g., Elbanna, 2012, 2016).

The research dialogue on strategic management can be extended by (1) exploring how we can make sure that the practice of strategic management in Arab organizations is actually 'strategic'. This would require studies that focus on the strategic management process (asking *how* questions), which is less examined (Bryson et al., 2018). Here, clarity is important because many organizations have inaccurately asserted that they practice strategic management. The strategic management literature can be further extended by (2) exploring how we can enhance the practice of strategic management, to make firms more capable of strategic learning, thinking and acting and to develop new operation capabilities, thus moving towards a dynamic capabilities model (Wolf and Floyd, 2017). Future research might distinguish between what are perceived to be the preferable styles of decision-making/planning and what is actually practiced among Arab organizations, i.e. participative vs. consultative styles (Al-Yahya, 2009). Finally, given the lack of adequate theorizing in the articles studied, the incorporation of relevant theories, such as contemporary institutional theory, might offer a powerful analytical lens with which to examine the link between social context and strategic management practices (Wolf and Floyd, 2017).

Regarding R&D-focused research, our review revealed that there are two streams: (1) creativity and innovation (Wongtada and Rice, 2008; Gelfand et al., 2015; Rice, 2003, 2006; Eiadat et al., 2008); and (2) information technology (Palmer, 2000; Daghfous and Barkhi, 2009; Al-Somali et al., 2009; Fahmy, 2005). In addition to being rare, research on R&D in the Arab world is exploratory in nature but not empirically supported.

The understanding of how to better leverage local R&D potential can yield interesting insights for the future development of the Arab world (Gelfand et al., 2015; Eiadat et al., 2008; Daghfous and Barkhi, 2009). For example, how can information technology contribute to reducing widespread corruption and encouraging innovation? And what are the determinants of Internet/social media/ mobile-based applications and their impacts on organizations? Moreover, we should not underestimate the role of cross-cultural differences in exploring how the sociocultural context affects R&D practices and their performance outcomes. The above questions call for more empirical investigations using more representative samples to determine whether the issues examined are 'context-free/ etic' or 'context-specific/emic' (Bruton and Lau, 2008).

5.1.6. Leveraging the potential of strategic industries

A number of studies focused on the progress of strategic industries in the Arab world over the last two decades. We found most interest in the tourism industry (e.g., Elbanna, 2016), which furnished two key areas of research. First, a growing number of scholars have been trying to understand selected aspects of Islam and their impact on the tourism industry, given that Islamic tourism merges religious and leisure tourism (Jafari and Scott, 2014). For example, Eid and El-Gohary (2015) sought to assemble a theoretical basis for considering Islamic tourism in relation to modern tourism paradigms. They also drew attention to the importance of Islamic religiosity in understanding Muslim tourists' behaviors. Similarly, Jafari and Scott (2014) showed that the study of tourism in the Arab world involves many more religious topics than the pilgrimage alone, such as the different interpretations of tourism, travel patterns, prayer requirements, dress codes, *halal* food and separate swimming pools and recreational facilities. To conclude, Islam has a major impact on the tourism decisions made by both individuals and governments (Jafari and Scott, 2014) which is still a less researched topic.

The second topic of interest examined the impact of the high level of turbulence and increasing poverty levels on several aspects of the tourism industry, including tourist experiences in conflict zones in Jordan, e.g., blurred lines: crossing fun/fear and life/death boundaries (Buda, 2015; Buda et al., 2014), facing the extreme crisis in the Lebanese tourism sector after its prime minister's assassination (Jallat and Shultz, 2011) and the role of "slum tourism" in improving living conditions in the slums of Egypt (Mekawy, 2012).

Third, we found only four studies on the education industry (e.g., Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2014; Wilkins and Huisman, 2014) and three studies, which were mainly exploratory in nature, on the health care sector (e.g., Ramanathan, 2005; Sabella et al., 2014); these do little to capture the importance of such strategic sectors.

The above review suggests that there are several potential research avenues on strategic industries (e.g., Buda, 2015; Mekawy, 2012; Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2014; Sabella et al., 2014). First, from the perspectives of danger-zone and dark tourism, a likely research question can investigate the impact of the current turmoil in traditional Arab tourism destinations, such as Egypt, Tunisia and Syria and the 2017–19 GCC crisis on tourists, tourism, the economy and the workforce. Moreover, how does tourism in these contexts differ from that in non-conflict contexts? The understanding of this impact can yield key insights for policy development in the tourism

industry, in addition to its scholarly value. Second, we still need to stimulate research into so far under-studied and fast-growing tourism locations, e.g., the UAE and Qatar, as well as traditional Arab destinations, e.g., Lebanon and Morocco. For example: "How did the UAE develop its tourism industry and attract mega events such as Expo 2020?", "How does the tourism industry contribute to maintain the growth momentum of the UAE economy?", "How can other countries learn from the UAE case?" Third, we need to investigate how the current formal and informal institutions impact the development of other strategic industries, such as education, health care and oil and gas, to alleviate the downward pressure on Arab economies and enhance their economic recovery. This problem is further compounded by the fact that many strategic industries have not yet been studied (at least, not as reported in our sampled journals), such as energy-saving and environmental protection, next-generation information technology (e.g., Artificial Intelligence), biotechnology and new energy.

5.2. Leveraging and adapting to changing local institutional context in the Arab world

We discuss below the two areas of study that were revealed from our analysis under this second theme: These are (1) the influence of the institutional context, culture and Islam in management (approximately one-fifth of our total of reviewed studies) and (2) understanding ethics and their implications in the Arab world.

5.2.1. Influence of institutions, culture and Islam

5.2.1.1. *Institutions*. The studies that focused on institutions were ten in number and dealt either with the way in which institutional factors shape the practices/behavior of firms, or how actors can bring about an institutional change in an established institutional setting. Three of the studies actually offered context-specific theoretical propositions or frameworks (Nasra and Dacin, 2010; Kshetri and Ajami, 2008; Sidani and Al Ariss, 2014). Some studies suggested a hybrid institutional model reflecting the influence of both global and local forces in the Arab world (Sidani and Thornberry, 2013; Jamali and Neville, 2011; Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014). For example, Jamali and Neville (2011) found that the CSR practices of Lebanese firms reflect a global convergence to the explicit CSR model but at the same time are path-dependent and greatly affected by the local context. Sidani and Al Ariss (2014) examined how institutional pressures and corporate drivers moulded the talent management practices in the Gulf countries, suggesting that talent management practice is being influenced by both local and global forces. Similarly, Sidani and Thornberry (2013) used the institutional theory perspective to explain why nepotism in the Arab world predominates over the rational-legal organizational form. They also highlighted how and when institutional entrepreneurs can initiate a transition towards a hybrid form of nepotism (Sidani and Thornberry, 2013). Other studies investigated the implications of the existing institutional voids in the Arab world. For example, Chari and Acikgoz (2016) analyzed the motives of international acquisitions by firms from emerging economies, suggesting that the institutional weakness in the home country of these firms and the attraction of tax advantages in their chosen host countries are strong motives that have been ignored in the common international business literature.

Studies focusing on institutional change analyzed patterns of institutional change in the GCC countries (Kshetri and Ajami, 2008), the role of the state as institutional entrepreneur (Nasra and Dacin, 2010) and how CSR activities can effect a developmental institutional change in the established gender institutions in the Arab world through purposeful institutional work (Karam and Jamali, 2013). These studies highlighted the fact that governments and social networks, in many cases, remain as anti-reform powers (Kshetri and Ajami, 2008) and showed evidence of institutional entrepreneurship, calling for purposeful action against the established socio-cultural norms of nepotism (Sidani and Thornberry, 2013), gender inequality (Karam and Jamali, 2013) and other macro structural reforms (Kshetri and Ajami, 2008; Nasra and Dacin, 2010). It is worth mentioning that only five studies in our review analyzed the need for change in general or its implications in the Arab world, which highlights the need for more research.

5.2.1.2. *Culture*. While culture is a sub-component of the general institutional framework, studies that explicitly focused on cultural traits explored (1) the characteristics of Arab culture itself and (2) the impact of culture on work-related outcomes. The first set of reviewed studies reports that Arab countries adopted a relationship-based culture that is centred on group orientation, hierarchy and submission to authority, masculinity and short-termism (Akaah, 1990; Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002; Al-Khatib et al., 2004; Ralston et al., 2012). In addition to being shaped by Western influence (Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2005) and Islamic teachings, the Arab work culture is also strongly influenced by the tribal Bedouin glorification of loyalty and honour, resulting in a remarkable top-down authoritarian management system, third-party conflict resolution techniques (Robertson et al., 2002) and low employee involvement (Al-Khatib et al., 2004). Being collectivistic, employees in the Arab culture also revere team-oriented, charismatic leaders (Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002), who combine having a vision with a heightened sense of integrity (Kabasakal et al., 2012). However, the significant intergroup variation among the Arab countries should be noted, suggesting that there is no single Arab culture; heterogeneous cultural values prevail across the countries of the Middle East (Robertson et al., 2002; Ralston et al., 2012), resulting in many sub-clusters of countries according to preferences and values (see: Kabasakal et al., 2012; Robertson et al., 2002; Buda and Elsayed-Elkhouly, 1998).

Several authors noted that organizations in the Arabic cluster also have cultural dualism reflecting both traditional and Western values (e.g., Elbanna et al., 2011; Kabasakal and Bodur (2002)). A similar conclusion is suggested by Robertson et al. (2001), who reported some convergence in the Arab culture towards that of the West, with more convergence in Kuwait and Oman than in Saudi Arabia. Similarly, Ali and Al-Kazemi (2005) examined the work values and loyalty of Kuwaiti managers in comparison to those of their expatriate peers and reported that managers in Kuwait are highly committed to modern work values and deeply loyal (Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2005).

The second set of cultural studies examined how cultural traits predicted work-related outcomes. Although highly fragmented,

these studies highlighted the varying values of the Arab culture in different contexts. Such studies included the impact of culture on employees' perception of ethically challenging behaviors (Al-Khatib et al., 2004), employees' ethical beliefs, ideology, the degree of Machiavellianism (Al-Khatib et al., 2002) and negotiation behavior among Arab and non-Arab managers (Khakhar and Rammal, 2013). These studies had mixed results again, confirming both convergence and divergence in the values of the West and the Middle East. While Al-Khatib et al. (2002) found that ethical judgements and beliefs in the Arab world were consistent with the norms of the West, in 2008 they also found significant differences between the individual characteristics of Saudi and US managers in terms of idealism, relativism and Machiavellianism. Al-Khatib et al. (2008) found in addition that these characteristics led to significantly different negotiation tactics in the two groups. Khakhar and Rammal's (2013) study of negotiation behaviors found that Arabs rely heavily on relationship building (Wasta) and that the political volatility in the Arab world affected the use of time during negotiations.

Some studies also highlighted the possibility that certain cultural values and contexts will result in work-related dysfunctionality. For example, Elbanna et al. (2011) found that Egyptian managers, unlike their Western counterparts, did not differentiate between the task and affective conflict and that conflict in general was associated with negative decision effectiveness. They attributed this to the relationship-based culture where "personalism is positively viewed" (Elbanna et al., 2011: 289). Al Ariss and Guo's (2016) study found that cultural stereotypes and biases were the basis of job allocation rather than skills or competence, in the context of a culturally diverse UAE workplace. They reported that cultural diversity in such a context was detrimental to management efficiency and interpersonal communications.

5.2.1.3. Islam. Islam is a core part of the Arab culture as reflected in most culture-related studies. While the studies on culture generally brought out some implications related to Islam, only seven studies in our review explicitly focused on the implications of Islamic teachings as the main factor/variable with rampant behavioral and attitudinal implications (e.g., on pro-environmental behavior (Rice, 2006; Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher, 2017) and also on work ethics (Yousef, 2000). These studies suggest that the values of Islam can be leveraged to support positive work-related attitudes and behavior. For example, Abdelzaher et al. (2017) developed an Islamic based value framework to enhance employees' resilience in times of turbulence. Other studies maintained that Western-based models of women's empowerment should become sensitive to the essence of modesty as well as to local values related to gender mixing (Metcalfe, 2008; Syed, 2008), as reflected in Islamic jurisprudence. Nonetheless, several studies also noted the gap between teachings and actual practice, for instance in the case of nepotism (Sidani and Thornberry, 2013; Tsalikis and Lassar, 2009; Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher, 2017), which can be challenging for a foreign firm to address.

Taken together, the findings of the reviewed studies discussing institutions, culture and Islam in the Arab world suggest three main avenues for future research. First, there is a need for further understanding of the hybrid institutional models in the Arab world to identify what aspects reflect a global convergence and which aspects are local, and for assessing the implications of these for management practices. Moreover, the impact of institutions and institutional voids on firms' behavior and practices ought to be further studied. More importantly, institutional change, and change in general, remains an under-researched area, particularly the topic of change (or lack of change) after the Arab Spring (Sidani and Thornberry, 2013), political transformations in the Gulf and Sudan and the current socio-economic changes in Saudi Arabia. Change in the region seems to be both ongoing and pressing, but what role might be played by institutional entrepreneurs in light of possible resistance from powerful stakeholders? Change processes and their implications, whether exogenous or resulting from institutional entrepreneurship or improvised change (see, Micelotta et al., 2017), need to be further studied. From a methodological angle, using non-traditional methods to develop this promising stream of research, including experimental design and multi-level institutional analysis, is likely to yield interesting insights (Darendeli and Hill, 2016; Jamali and Neville, 2011).

Second, the cultural implications for countries within the Arab world are myriad, given their unique, varying and infused Western-traditional values. According to the discussed findings, the Arab culture seems to have some general tendencies, but also seems to have significant variations (represented in clusters of countries or regions or groups) which depart from these general tendencies (Ralston et al., 2012). Future studies could investigate these variations further and question if the traditionally established cultural categorizations remain valid, particularly now that many recent events (e.g., uprisings and political instability) have cast doubt on some long-established generalizations (Elbanna et al., 2013, see also: BBC Report, 2019 on the results of the Arab Barometer Survey). Moreover, with its Western and traditional elements, the Arab work culture looks like a confusing mosaic that is continuously evolving. This raises the question of how the Arab culture or Arab sub-clusters of culture are evolving while such volatility spreads through the Arab world (Khakhar and Rammal, 2013) and what aspects of the culture conform to or differ from Western values. In addition, what are the implications of this for management outcomes and other work-related areas of dysfunctionality?

Third, while Islamic teachings have significant implications in the Arab world, they are subject to various context-driven interpretations (Syed, 2008). This becomes particularly relevant with the migration shifts of different Arab nationalities across borders since the Arab Spring. Management research has not yet shown how the different interpretations of Islamic teachings are evolving and the likely implications of this in the workplace. Moreover, while the study by Abdelzaher et al. (2017) suggested that Islamic teachings can be leveraged to effect positive change in times of turbulence, how can they be leveraged to promote organizational citizenship behaviors and other major organizational outcomes? In addition, the inconsistency between many work-related practices and Islamic teachings (Sidani and Thornberry, 2013; Tsalikis and Lassar, 2009; Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher, 2017) needs to be further studied to determine which practices are more commonly associated with it and its implications for work outcomes.

5.2.2. Understanding ethics and its implications in the Arab world

In total, nineteen studies analyzed ethics and three more studies focused on corruption. Studies analyzing ethics focused on ethical

attitudes or behaviors as either outcomes or antecedents to other workplace attitudes/behaviors. This has resulted in two overlapping sub-groups of studies. The first evaluated the status of ethical practices in general in Arab countries (Al-Khatib et al., 2002; Al-Khatib et al., 2004; Tsalikis and Lassar, 2009; Sidani and Thornberry, 2010) and the impact of the cultural context on the perception of ethicality and moral judgement in comparison to other countries (Ahmed et al., 2003; Beekun et al., 2008; Oumlil and Balloun, 2009; Tang et al., 2008; Al-Khatib et al., 2008). The second group of studies raised ethics-related research questions in various business contexts.

The first group of studies included exploratory studies about the status of ethics in the Arab world. For example, Sidani and Thornberry (2010) argued that the societal institutions and relationships in the Arab world have a potentially negative impact on those positive work ethics that are conducive to development and growth. Similarly, Tsalikis and Lassar (2009) found that Egyptian workers scored negatively in the business ethics index and that there was a wide gap between their self-perceptions of personal ethics and the ethics of others. Moreover, Al-Khatib et al. (2004) found no uniform ethical code of ethics for Gulf country managers and subordinates; they judged ethical situations involving the organization differently from the way that they judged interpersonal situations.

Other studies in this group highlight some ideological, cultural, attitudinal and behavioral similarities and sometimes differences between Arab and non-Arab countries (mostly Western). For example, Al-Khatib et al. (2002) found that the ethical judgements and beliefs in the Arab world were consistent with Western norms. Beekun et al. (2008) found that while both US and the Egyptian managers rely on justice, utilitarianism and relativism as references for behaving ethically, they tend to judge ethical decisions differently. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2003) found that, although different cultures agree on what constitutes an ethical business practice, they differ in their tolerance of the consequences of unethical practices. Other studies reported some cross-cultural differences between practitioners. For example, Al-Khatib et al. (2008) reported that individual characteristics among both US and Saudi managers (idealism, relativism and Machiavellianism) are significantly different, as manifested by differences in their perceptions of unethical negotiation tactics. Similarly, Oumlil and Balloun (2009) demonstrated that Moroccan decision-makers tend to be more idealistic than their counterparts in the US, which they attribute to a strong positive relationship between religiosity and idealism.

The second group of studies raised the question of ethics around some of the business practices taking place in the Arab world, with particular reference to multinational firms' exploitation of their host countries and their weak institutional context. For example, Hauser and Hogenacker (2014) found that multinational firms implement anti-corruption measures only if they have been confronted by the issue. Brammer et al. (2009) investigated the relationship between firms' internationalization and their engagement in charitable acts, reporting an insignificant relationship between firms' multinationality and charitable giving but a significant relationship between a firm's presence in a controversial country and its charitable giving, mainly for reputational reasons. Jeong and Weiner (2012) analyzed the reasons behind international companies' engagement in cross-border bribery, reporting that firms engaged in paying larger bribes when there was a high managerial and financial incentive to do so and it was their home-country's conventions that shaped their behaviors. They also reported a weak relationship between the corruption perception index and firms' actual engagement in bribery (Jeong and Weiner, 2012).

Weak institutional contexts and institutional voids also impacted ethical attitudes and the behavior of locals in the Arab world. For example, Sidani et al. (2014) examined the relationship between personal moral ideologies and attitudes to tax evasion in weak institutional contexts. They found that while idealism is negatively related to self-interested tax evasion, it is positively linked to tax evasion when the tax institution is considered unfair. Similarly, Goby (2015) analyzed the ethical issues surrounding work-force nationalization in the UAE, highlighting an ethical dilemma caused by the marginalization of the local workforce due to the economic benefit of hiring non-locals. While the issues discussed are not rare in other emerging markets, the exploitation of the weak institutional context could be one of the reasons behind a heightened sense of corruption in these markets.

In summary, the findings of these studies raise interesting questions that are key to advancing our understanding of the impact of ethics in management in the Arab world. These studies note that while the Arab culture has some similarities to other cultures, assessment of the status of its ethics is challenged by the fragmentation of the studies and the variations of ethical judgements from one Arab country to another. It can also be argued that research examining the role of culture in ethical decision-making faces several limitations, such as reliance on self-reporting techniques and skewed samples, including the common over-dependence on business students and male respondents, which can raise external validity concerns (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2003; Beekun et al., 2008; Oumlil and Balloun, 2009).

To develop this research agenda further, we need to explore more the relationships between ethical behavior and institutional factors, including cultural traits and religiosity (Oumlil and Balloun, 2009; Beekun et al., 2008). With the exception of the study of Sidani and Thornberry (2010), ethical behaviors have not been studied sufficiently as outcomes shaped by multi-factors. Of particular importance is the investigation of the impact of institutional weaknesses and voids on ethical behavior and ethical decision-making in both local and multinational firms. In addition, since ethical behaviors tend to be influenced by the context (Al-Khatib et al., 2002; Al-Khatib et al., 2004; Tsalikis and Lassar, 2009; Sidani and Thornberry, 2010), further research is needed on the changes in ethics since the recent instability/civil war in some Arab countries and the way in which the different regions and groups have developed different work ethics. Finally, little is being studied about the consequences of unethical behaviors in either local or foreign organizations in the Arab world.

5.3. The overcoming of firm level legitimacy concerns/barriers in the Arab world

The legitimacy of MNCs' operations in Arab markets is a topic that has received attention from several scholars, particularly those

investigating avenues for MNCs to gain/secure external legitimacy in their host markets, not just among local citizens but among governments as well (Wilkins and Huisman, 2014). The topics included under this theme are managing corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices and managing within a context of conflict.

5.3.1. Managing CSR to gain legitimacy

The research on CSR in emerging markets has received increased scholarly attention (Doh et al., 2015) and in the Arab world, 24 of the 176 studies (14%) that were found focused on sustainability/CSR issues. Lebanon and Egypt seem to be the markets attracting the most studies; they were home to 33% and 25% of the studies respectively. It is apparent that many other markets have been left out of the scholarly discussion. Only two studies examined the relationship between CSR and financial performance (Rettab et al., 2009; Brik et al., 2011). The work of Rettab et al. (2009) found a positive relationship between CSR and firm performance using survey data from 280 firms in Dubai. In a follow-up study, Brik et al. (2011) found that CSR moderated the relationship between market orientation and firm performance in Dubai.

Many studies focused on the unique localization aspects of practicing CSR in the Arab world. This includes the challenge of bringing cultural/Islamic norms and company CSR policy to market practices (Aribi and Arun, 2015; Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher, 2017; Rice, 1999). Jamali and Neville (2011), for example, used the case of Lebanon to examine the forces of convergence and divergence surrounding CSR. Jamali (2010) investigated how far CSR practices by global firms are being diffused in their host/local markets and found that after being diffused some of these practices are actually becoming "diluted". Jamali et al. (2009b) investigated the unique approaches of CSR in SMEs, as opposed to larger MNCs in the Arab world. Others found that in the UAE the link between the CSR concept and the improvement of society is quite weakly perceived by business students (Goby and Nickerson, 2012) among whom philanthropic acts were more popular. But in the Lebanese context, a study reported that perceptions of the CSR practices of employers did influence the job choice of applicants (e.g., Dawkins et al., 2016). Most in this group are single country studies, with only one comparing the Syrian to the Lebanese CSR orientations (Jamali, 2008). Stakeholder theory and institutional theory were often used in these studies (Forstenlechner and Mellahi, 2011).

Jamali and Mirshak (2007) reported a significant number of firms which adopt a more philanthropic than strategic approach to CSR. But as the literature developed, we saw several studies focusing on the opportunities behind a strategic CSR agenda that MNCs can pursue to combat institutional barriers and voids. An example of these is the work of Karam and Jamali (2013), who called for the use of the CSR agenda to overcome institutional constraints on the enhanced development of women's economic roles. Likewise, Spence et al. (2011) highlighted the role of institutional incentives to encourage more sustainable and socially conscious entrepreneurship in the Arab world. Forstenlechner and Mellahi et al. (2011) investigated the hiring of the local workforce in some key industries to gain the perception of legitimacy as well as governmental support.

In our sample, we found that only four studies focused on environmental issues in the Arab world (Rice, 2006; Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher, 2017; Eiadat et al., 2008; Fahmy, 2005), indicating opportunities for more research (e.g., Obeidat et al., 2018). The link between sustainable practices and firm performance has not often been investigated, except by Eiadat et al. (2008), who reported a positive relationship between environmental innovation and firm performance in the context of chemical companies in Jordan. In particular, the work of Rice (2006) sheds light on the existence of Islamic environmental ethics. Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher (2017) followed a qualitative approach to better define the "Eco-Islam" concept as understood in the Holy Scriptures and they go on to investigate further the application of these concepts within SMEs in Arab markets.

MNCs' attempts to gain legitimacy through relevant CSR practices is an area of increasing research interest with significant potential for future research. First of all, there is insufficient evidence on the relationships between firms' social and environmental performance and firm level outcomes (financial performance, corporate reputation, innovation, etc.) in these countries (Eiadat et al., 2008; Obeidat et al., 2018). How may these relationships be shaped by the formal and informal institutional context? Studies that combine firm and market level constructs can provide significant insights into ways for firms to approach CSR in the Arab world. Furthermore, how far are consumer attitudes to CSR and firms' corporate social performance and outcomes comparable across Arab markets (Selvik, 2013)?

Second, we need to conduct more research on an effective balance between local and global CSR orientations and practices. Indeed, we know too little about the interactions between parent and subsidiary firms (Jamali, 2010) when it comes to the pursuit of more relevant CSR practices. Although we have seen that the incorporation of Islamic ethics into the CSR/environmental research agenda is increasing, we do not know how far local and foreign firms in these markets are leveraging Islamic ethics to enhance the relevance and implementation of their CSR agenda (Thibos and Gillespie, 2011)?

Third, it is likely to be fruitful to investigate further the notion of MNCs strategizing CSR to gain legitimacy in the Arab world, particularly in contexts of conflict. Studies that shed light on the process whereby MNCS can become effective agents of change despite institutional voids and needed reforms are likely to have an impact on the image of their "foreignness". Some of the issues which can form part of a strategic CSR agenda may include gender biases, the migrating labor force and balancing trade-offs between a local and a foreign workforce. Furthermore, it would be interesting to check whether there are current institutional incentives to encourage MNCs to play such a role and what barriers/threats to legitimacy MNCs were likely to face at the organizational, market and governmental level if they tried to fill this gap.

5.3.2. Managing within the context of conflict in the Arab world

The Arab world indeed seems to offer a unique institutional context with varying opportunities as well as challenges for research in conflict management. Jallat and Shultz (2011) highlighted some of the best practices of companies struggling in conflict zones. Jamali and Mirshak (2010) presented a typology for possible strategies that businesses can adopt in such circumstances. To illuminate

MNCs' crisis management practices, studies investigated those recovering from terrorist attack in Lebanon (Jallat and Shultz, 2011) and the investment in social-benefit projects to secure "safe" social ties away from a stigmatized political regime in Libya (Darendeli and Hill, 2016).

A number of studies have addressed different types and sources of conflict in the Arab world across individuals, firms and markets. Two major macro level conflicts studied in the literature are (1) the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestine; and (2) the civil wars in Yemen, Syria, Libya and Iraq. Some studies made the case for increasing MNCs' involvement in conflict zones and also advocated more collaborative efforts to highlight some of the best practices in hazardous times (Jallat and Shultz, 2011; Darendeli and Hill, 2016). Jamali and Keshishian (2009) focused on studying MNCs' partnerships with NGOs in the Arab world to reveal that relationship management factors can determine how successful they are at different stages of the partnership. Few scholars focused on the impact of conflict zones on the sense of self-identity and personal/work values (e.g., Al-Abdin et al., 2016; Prasad, 2014). In particular, the work of Abdelzaher et al. (2017) presented an Islamic values-based model that employees can leverage at times of market turbulence to highlight as a potential untapped source from which to appease employee anxiety. The notable work of Idahosa (2002) questioned MNCs' corporate ethics in operating in conflict zones associated with the oil and mining sectors to determine whether they were really "developing" these markets. Other studies focused on human relations and fostering justice-based processes between workers trading in conflict zones particularly in light of the Palestine occupation dynamics (Sa'di and Lewin-Epstein, 2001; Srour et al., 2013).

Although some attention has been given to the way that the ongoing and increasing conflicts in the Arab world have shaped management and employee processes (Honig, 2001; Abdelzaher et al., 2017; Groarke, 2016; Elbanna et al., 2011), the implications of these conflicts on MNCs' business and managerial practices continue to raise many insightful research questions. First of all, what are the antecedents and outcomes of political conflicts affecting business outcomes in conflict zones, as opposed to non-conflict zones (Haufler, 2008)? What are the boundaries/intricacies of these conflicts? What role do local institutional voids play in these critical times? Qualitative research methods are likely to be useful for revealing the perspectives of managers who find themselves caught up in political unrest.

Second, we need to study how external conflicts impact relationships within the firm (Oh and Oetzel, 2017). For example, what are the response patterns to conflict when the firm has a mix of local and foreign employees? What role does corporate culture play in mitigating the negative impact of the associated level of uncertainty and stress of conflicts? What role do corporate values vs. Islamic ethics play in shaping the operation of MNCs in conflict zones? Do Arab managers differentiate between destructive and constructive conflicts and what are the underlying cultural traits that shape their behaviors (Elbanna et al., 2011)?

Third, from a strategic perspective, what opportunities do conflict zones create for MNCs' entry? Does the pursuit of business opportunities in these conflict zones pose an ethical question (Idahosa, 2002; Haufler, 2008)? How do we draw the line between a MNCs motivation to develop and its motivation to exploit a conflict-stricken zone? What do we know about the different stakeholders' perspectives that may be involved in decision-making about investing in such areas? Furthermore, what role does the level of corruption play in the operations and outcomes of such decisions (Kukhianidze, 2009)? Addressing these research questions is likely to enhance our understanding of strategy formulation in conflict zones.

Table 2 provides a summary of the overarching research questions and areas of future research questions for each of the themes discussed above.

6. Conclusion

The goal of this article was not only to present a summary of what has been written on the Arab world, but also to highlight the unanswered research questions to promote the development of a relevant evidence-based research agenda, for the benefit of re-searchers and managers. This proposed agenda incorporates the impact of the recent macro level changes in the Arab world on the management issues raised here. In light of this, we first discuss the theoretical contributions of this study and then its methodological and managerial implications.

6.1. Theoretical contributions

Unlike a phenomenon-driven review article, which focuses on one or two specific constructs, our work focused on a region, singling out the many topics/areas that are being studied under "management" there. It is worth noting that the task of providing this type of review article can be somewhat fragmented through including too many of the topics covered in the management literature. The current research on management phenomena reveals that most issues are thinly studied, which highlights the need to build deeper knowledge of these phenomena before we can advance our understanding about the Arab world. In acknowledging this issue, we are trying to position this review paper as one which surveys the published literature on the Arab world for a target audience of researchers, managers and policy makers who are interested in it, rather than one which reviews an international management construct in great depth,. Given the fact that the most of the studies fall under the heading of "Highlighting avenues for economic development and performance in the Arab world", we are optimistic that there is significant interest in the Arab world as an attractive destination for FDI as well as a fruitful research context.

The review reveals that, despite the call to extend and advance theories that take account of the current changes in the Arab world (Elbanna et al., 2013), theory extension has been weak. Yet, given the possible research avenues discussed above, there is great potential for extending the theory using the context-specific phenomena unique to the Arab world and their interaction with business philosophies and practices. For example, the state of flux in certain areas and the scope and pace of change in the Arab world offer valuable opportunities for extending the theoretical perspectives related to change, institutional voids and institutional

Table 2

Summary of research questions and priorities.

Themes	Research questions	Research priorities	Key references
(1) Thematic analysis: Highlighting avenues for economic development and improved performance			
Potential entry into Arab markets	- What entry mode processes and decisions describe firms entering/exiting the Arab world?	- What are the contextual drivers for the different entry modes options into Arab markets? - What is the role of diaspora in the internationalization process? - What are the challenges and opportunities for internationalizing local SMEs?	Meyer et al. (2009); Demirbag et al. (2011); Mellahi et al. (2011); Schotter and Abdelzaher (2013).
Developing the local workforce and localization	- How does the local social context determine HRM practices and outcomes? - What are the challenges associated with the localization initiatives in the GCC countries?	- What is the impact of social networks 'Wasta' on both managerial and business practices? - What are the status quo, challenges and remedies of nationalization initiatives in the GCC courtiers? - How HRM can contribute to create more jobs and reduce unemployment levels? - How can we enhance efficiency and effectiveness of local Arab workforce? How do MNCs contribute to developing local talents in Arab markets?	Goby and Nickerson (2012); Forstenlechner et al. (2012a, 2012b); Afiouni et al. (2013); Afiouni et al. (2014); Forstenlechner et al. (2014); Berger et al. (2015); Goby (2015); Ramady (2016); Ryan (2016).
Managing immigrants/expatriates and a diverse labor force	- What are the challenges associated with hiring immigrant workers and expatriates? - How can they mobilize their resources to undertake an international career?	- What are the antecedents of the successful integration of Arab immigrants in the labor market of their host nations? - How to manage a culturally diverse workforce and effectively address the dynamics between expatriates and local labor?	Al-Ariss and Syed (2011); Khakhar and Rammal (2013); Hutchings et al. (2013); Cerdin et al. (2014); Bader and Schuster (2015).
Enhancing women's leadership	- What opportunities and challenges do working women/women entrepreneurs face in the Arab world? And what are the implications of their status and roles?	- To what extent could Arab women roles, women entrepreneurship, and women empowerment patterns and models be compared to the western ones? - To what extent and under what conditions do Arab women view themselves as agents of change in challenging their restrictive socio-cultural contexts? What role do women play in institutional and social entrepreneurship in the Arab world? - What are the implications of women leadership in the Arab world and to what extent are the roles and status of women changing with the change in the political, socio-cultural, and economic conditions?	Syed (2008); Metcalfe (2008); Al-Dajani and Marlow (2010); Lauring and Selmer (2010); Pely (2010); Abdelzaher and Bullough (2013); Hutchings et al. (2013); Welsh et al. (2014); Al-Dajani et al. (2015); Tlaiss (2015a, 2015b).
Developing strategic management and R&D understanding	- How does our understanding of strategic management and R&D differ from other contexts? - What is the nature of strategic management practice in the Arab world? - How Arab managers make strategic decisions?	- How can we incorporate the Arab context into theoretical and hypothesis development on both strategic management and R&D research? - How to deepen understanding of strategic management practice and under what conditions its practice can foster effective Arab organizations? - How can we better leverage the local potential of R&D?	Rice (2006); Beekun et al. (2008); Eiadat et al. (2008); Elbanna and Child (2007a, 2007b); Elbanna (2012), Elbanna et al. (2013), Elbanna (2016); Wongtada and Rice (2008); Al-Yahya (2009); Gelfand et al. (2015); Meyer and Peng (2016).
Leveraging the potential of strategic industries	- What is the impact of religious and cultural values of Arabs on tourism practices? - What is the nature of managerial practices in well-established industries such as, oil & gas, education and health care?	- What is the impact of ongoing turmoil and terrorism on tourism, economy and workforce? - How Arab countries can enhance dwellers' living conditions and reduce poverty? - How did the UAE develop its tourism industry? How can other countries learn from its case? - How can we boost the development of strategic emerging industries?	Mekawy (2012); Jafari and Scott (2014); Buda (2015); Eid and El-Gohary (2015); Elbanna (2016); Obeidat et al. (2018).
(2) Thematic analysis: leveraging and adapting to changing local institutional context in the Arab world			
Institutions, culture and Islam	- How change occurs and how can institutional entrepreneurs initiate change in the Arab world context? - What are the implications of change	- To what extent are the hybrid institutional models suitable for the Arab world? What is the impact of institutions and institutional voids on firms' behavior and practices? What role can institutional entrepreneurs play to	Robertson et al. (2001, 2002); Kabasakal and Bodur (2002); Al-Khatib et al. (2002, 2004, 2008); Ali and Al-Kazemi (2005); Rice (2006); Kshetri and Ajami (2008); Metcalfe (2008);

Table 2 (*continued*)

Themes	Research questions	Research priorities	Key references
	in the Arab world and how could these implications be managed?	effect an institutional change and how could this role be played? - What aspects of the Arab culture are universal and what aspects vary and for whom? What aspects of the Arab culture are evolving? what aspects of the culture confirm or disconfirm with the western values? - How can the Islamic teachings be leveraged to effect positive change in the work context and what are the implications of the different interpretations of Islam in work and business context?	Syed (2008); Tsalikis and Lassar (2009); Nasra and Dacin (2010); Elbanna et al. (2011); Jamali and Neville (2011); Kabasakal et al. (2012); Ralston et al. (2012); Khakhar and Rammal (2013); Sidani and Thornberry (2013); Sidani and Al Ariss (2014); Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher (2017); Al Ariss and Guo (2016); Chari and Acikgoz (2016); Darendeli and Hill, 2016; Abdelzaher et al. (2017); The Economist Report (2018).
Understanding ethics and its implications in the Arab world.	- How do the institutional factors (their changes and voids) affect the ethical practices both at the individual level and the organizational level?	- What are the antecedents for the fostering of ethics and their evolution? How have ethics changed after the recent instability/ civil war in some countries? - What is the impact of Islamic religiosity and culture norms on the ethics of decisions made by MNCs? How can we explain and control the expanding holes between Islamic values and business practices at both individual and organizational levels? - What is the impact of institutional voids/ weaknesses on ethical practices and on what is judged to be ethical/unethical? - What are the determinants and consequences of unethical decision-making of MNCs?	Al-Khatib et al. (2002); Ahmed et al. (2003); Al-Khatib et al. (2004, 2008); Beekun et al. (2008); Tang et al. (2008); Brammer et al. (2009); Oumlil and Balloun (2009); Tsalikis and Lassar (2009); Sidani and Thornberry (2010), Sidani et al., 2014); Jeong and Weiner (2012); Hauser and Hogenacker (2014); Goby (2015).
(3) Thematic analysis: the overcoming of firm level legitimacy concerns/barriers in the Arab world			
Managing CSR to gain legitimacy	- What are the current CSR practices of MNCs and what is their impact on firm outcomes and on addressing society's needs of the Arab world?	- What is the conclusive evidence between CSR and environmental practices and firm outcomes? - How can we gain a better understanding of the trade-offs between home and host (local) market CSR perspectives and initiatives? How can MNCs use CSR strategically to address legitimacy threats and contribute to the institutional developmental needs of the Arab world?	Jamali (2008); Jamali (2010), Jamali et al. (2015); Rettab et al. (2009); Brammer et al. (2009); Brik et al. (2011); Spence et al. (2011); Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher (2017); Aribi and Arun (2015).
Managing within the context of conflict in the Arab world	- What are MNCs behaviors and outcomes in contexts of conflicts?	- What are the antecedents and outcomes of political conflicts on business outcomes? - How does external conflict impact relationships inside the firm? - What opportunities do conflict zones present?	Idahosa (2002); Jamali and Mirshak (2010), Jamali et al. (2009a); Jallat and Shultz (2011); Elbanna et al. (2011); Prasad (2014); Wilkins and Huisman (2014); Bucheli and Kim (2015); Al-Abdin et al. (2016); Darendeli and Hill (2016); Groarke (2016); Abdelzaher et al. (2017).

entrepreneurship. Similarly, theoretical perspectives on social capital and social networking can benefit from potential extension in the context of this region.

Although the interconnections between the Arab countries are profound, significant contextual and institutional nuances modify them (Dalacoura, 2012; Tlaiss, 2015b; Weir, 2010) and sub-cultures should be better investigated (Al-Kharrat, 2005; Ralston et al., 2012). Arab countries are not identical: they have different historical backgrounds and are in different stages of social, economic and political transition. Some key economic indicators of countries in the Arab world can draw attention to the intra-variations. Qatar, for example, has a GDP of $167.61 billion with a population of 2.639 million and is considered one of the high-income non-OECD countries, while the GDP of Sudan is $117.49 billion with a population of 40.53 million and is classified as a "lower middle income" country (World Bank, 2017). This being the case, at a time when management research on the Arab world is still in an early stage of development, additional scholarship might do best to continue deconstructing Arab management along geographic and institutional lines to improve our understanding and determine broader managerial practices that might seem relevant for most Arab countries, if not all.

6.2. Methodological and managerial implications

The noted paucity of research concerning the AME region can be attributed to several factors including the relatively low emphasis placed on producing high quality research by its research institutions and the relatively underdeveloped research funding mechanisms employed in the region, notably in the domain of social sciences. Other factors that produce this scarcity can also include the poor quality/unavailability of databases and the difficulty of obtaining primary data. This has left methodological implications. For example, most Arab-focused management studies to date are empirical yet cross sectional in design and focus on individual-level analysis gathered through surveys, which may limit their research contributions. The almost total absence of team level research is alarming, in view of the collective nature of Arab societies, and warrants a call for team level research across different layers of organizations. Furthermore, the interest of non-Arab scholars in the Arab world should be treated as a strategic springboard and reflects supporting evidence of fertile ground for more collaborative research projects between scholars based in the Arab world and those outside it. It could also open the door to better research funding mechanisms in the region.

The common use of single country studies to examine phenomena is an issue in itself, as well as some sampling methods. The dependence of many studies on convenience sampling or snowballing techniques may entail biases which hinder the generalizability of findings. Small sample size along with the increased use of cross sectional rather than longitudinal design further raises methodological concerns. Social desirability bias in the method used is mentioned as a limitation of case studies. More attention is needed in the study of phenomena across different markets within and outside the Arab world, particularly since comparative studies were among the categories with the fewest studies.

This paper has also several managerial implications. The under-studied status of the AME as well as the implications of its ongoing changes leave both local and foreign firms facing a number of managerial uncertainties and make it harder to guide policy-making. This paper sheds light on what we currently know about the region and what we still need to know to help policy-makers and funding bodies set research priorities and give managers a foundation for more informed decisions. For example, our review and suggested research agenda reflect topics ranging from attracting and managing foreign investment in the region to developing strategic industries, and the status of the local workforce/women in contexts of conflict. The review also sheds light on the implications of the evolving institutional and cultural context for the management practices in the region.

To conclude, there is a crucial and increasing need felt by scholars, practitioners and governments, to publish articles that contribute to the development of management research on the Arab world to a level that reflects and responds to the needs of these challenging markets and their importance to the world economy. In this capacity, we hope that the present study may herald a more promising future for Arab-focused management research and practice.

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