

Women in Management



Participants and speakers at the Forum with our representative Mrs. Siham Jubayli

«Woman in Management» has become a major subject for Forums sponsored by the Middle East Industrial Consultants (MEIRC)^(☆) held consecutively in 1988, 1989 and 1990 in the Arab Gulf.

The overall objective is to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas and experiences, and for the discussion of managerial skills related to women in the profession of management.

The particular emphasis is on the Arab countries, however, distinguished guest speakers from other parts of the world are sometimes invited to broaden the perspective and increase the scope of interchange.

Mrs. Siham Jubayli represented the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World in the first forum that took place in February 1988.

FORUM I - 6 TO 8 FEBRUARY 1988 - BAHRAIN

Participants were forty women in managerial/senior supervisory and professional positions in education, medicine and other areas, who wished to explore items

of particular relevance to their status and effectiveness. An enthusiastic and ambitious group competing with their fellow colleagues to reach even higher positions in their respective fields.

What was notable is that most of the participants were in their mid-thirties which proves that women are starting their careers early in life to enable them to reach managerial positions at a younger age. Most of the women managers were working not because of financial need but for their desire to be effective and productive in their respective communities; to fulfill themselves; and prove their abilities.

Countries represented were Bahrain, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Oman and Lebanon.

Guest speakers - with the exception of one - were Arab women. The language used was English.

Topics^(☆☆) and speakers included the following:

The Role of Women in Management: Opportunities and Pitfalls By Dr. Hala Al Omran, Director Bahrain Television - Bahrain.

(☆) MEIRC is an independent multinational consulting firm which specializes in human resource management and organization development.
MEIRC: P.O. Box 65014-15410 - Psychico, Athens, Greece.

(☆☆)Papers can be obtained from MEIRC.

Managerial Skills for Working with Multinational and Mixed Workforce by Dr. Moudi Al Hmoud, Dean, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Kuwait University - Kuwait.

Issues Facing Women in Management: A Western Perspective by Professor Joyce O'Connor, Director, Social Research Center, National Institute of Higher Education - Ireland.

Coping with Stress at Work by Dr. Nahid Osseiran, Chairperson, Psychology Department, University of Bahrain - Bahrain.

Latest Trends and Developments in Managements: An Update of Professional Knowledge by Dr. Safia Duwaigher, Director of Cultural Affairs and Scholarship, Ministry of Education - Bahrain.

Career Development for Women in the Gulf by Dr. Farida Haider Ali, Manager, UAE Task Force, Zakum Development Company - Abu Dhabi.

Guest and MEIRC speakers presented plenary sessions followed by substantial discussions and workshops in smaller groups. Workshop sessions included, among others, topics such as «Management in the Gulf: similarities and differences with other parts of the world»; «The Implication of Women's Employment for Family, Society, and Economy in the Gulf». An open forum on «The Future Prospect of Arab Women in Management» concluded the meeting.

Some of the recommendations and conclusions reached were as follows:

- Management principles are universal in theory, however, some have to be adapted to fit the region.
- Female managers in the region face a number of constraints in their work:
 - Business constraints in dealing with peers and clients in everyday working situations;
 - Political constraints imposed by wars and instability in the region;
 - Governmental constraints;
 - Economic constraints due to high dependence on oil in the region as well as shortage of skilled national labor;
 - Socio-cultural constraints where a manager must abide by values, traditions and customs that are unique to the Arab countries.
- Action oriented recommendations included:
 - A) Action on the official level:
 - 1 - Change image of women
 - a - through media (T.V., Journals, Radio, etc.) to help change the mentality of society at large;
 - b - through textbooks and reading material to help young children accept women as capable intellectual members of society.

2 - Employ women to help the economy by reducing dependence on expatriates.

B) Action on the institutional level:

- 1 - Increase self-confidence of working women by:
 - a - providing in-service training;
 - b - providing a system of recognition (merit, increases, rewards, promotion) to encourage motivation.
- 2 - Increase the efficiency of women by:
 - a - developing an educational system in the region that prepares and encourages women to work;
 - b - teach female children at a young age to be more assertive, disciplined and more appreciative of time.

C) Action on the personal level:

- 1 - Set a role-model for others through successful individual managers.
- 2 - Be persistent and ambitious.

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The Institute requested **Mrs. Faiza Bsat**, Educational Consultant at the Hariri Foundation and representing it at the Forum, to give her impression and observations:

The Forum created awareness and emphasized the importance of the competent role women can hold in high managerial positions. The presence of three women with doctorate degrees who held the position of department chairpersons in Bahrain and Kuwait universities, was a positive indicator of the ability of women to compete with men in running successfully and effectively such challenging managerial positions.

There was a general consensus as to the negative effect of the stereotype role of women presiding in the Arab as well as in Western societies, since recent statistics in U.S.A show that only 2% of top managers in over 56 international corporations are women.

The natural role of women for child bearing and rearing presented a controversial issue as to its priority vis-a-vis their career. The majority agreed that women should pursue their career disregarding any other consideration in order not to miss any promotion and to have equal chances with men in holding higher positions.

Personally, I belonged to the minority that accepted the natural role of women as a reality we have to live with and to fully commit ourselves to this role at a certain stage in our lives and hence continue to pursue our careers afterwards, with confidence and commitment.



Professor Joyce O'Connor Mrs. Siham Jubeily and Mrs. Zahra Tabbara

Participants suggested several steps in an attempt to improve the status of women, especially in changing the stereotypical role which prevails in all Arab societies. The recommendations as suggested by participants were adopted by the Forum and we expect that they will be actively communicated to other sectors in the Arab countries in the near future.

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FORUM II - 4 TO 6 FEBRUARY 1989 - KUWAIT

Based on the success of the First Forum which proved to be stimulating and beneficial, and upon the request of the participants a Second Forum for «Women in Management» took place. Forty participants represented different Arab countries. The language used was Arabic and guest speakers included women and men.

Following are some of the topics and the speakers:

Women in Management by Dr. Faiza Al Khrafi, Dean, Faculty of Science at the University of Kuwait - Kuwait.

The Role of Women in the Management of Health Services by Dr. Farida Al Drazi, Chairperson, Nursing Section, School of Public Health, Ministry of Health-Bahrain.

Experiences of a Woman in Managing an Engineering Contracting Company by Hessah Al Khalidy, Engineer, Owner and General Manager of Al Khaznah Contracting Company - Abu Dhabi.

The Positive Concept of Self in Development by Dr. Jasem Al Sayegh, Deputy Assistant for Personal Development - Kuwait.

The Importance of Knowing How to Deal with Others by Dr. Abdo Bardawil, Assistant Vice-President in charge of Training, Middle East Airlines - Lebanon.

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FORUM III - 17 TO 19 FEBRUARY 1990 - DUBAI

The Third Forum for «Women in Management» is scheduled to take place as mentioned above.

Subjects to be discussed will include:

The Role of Women in Raising a New Generation. Managerial Leadership: how to influence others. Career Development Opportunities.

Motivation and Incentives: what can and cannot be achieved.

Setting Standards and Appraising Performance.