

# Review Essay

## Empowering Women Coaches in Arab Local Organizations

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*With the rise of many coaching regulatory organizations, such as The International Coaching Federation (ICF) and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), women are becoming central to the dialogue. This is especially the case with The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (GCC, 2024) which sees encouraging women and providing empowerment tools and strategies as part of the future strategic transformation in the region. This research essay is based on a survey conducted to explore public opinion on women's participation in coaching as leaders and coaches in Arab local organizations. The survey was launched and circulated in social media and WhatsApp groups using Google Forms. The data collected are representative of both women and men who live and work in Arab cultures and speak Arabic. The survey conveys the perceptions, beliefs, and values of the participants and how they view women's empowerment, leadership, and coaching in organizations. The purpose is to inform women coaches, policymakers, and consultants who support organizational development in MENA. This data-driven article will help enrich the lives of professional women in the field of coaching while supporting practitioners in understanding the landscape.*

**Keywords:** women empowerment, Arab culture, leadership coaching, organization development

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## Women Leadership and Coaching: Introduction and Literature Review

This essay focuses on the status of women coaches in organizations. It is important in this context to define coaching: “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. The process of coaching often unlocks previously untapped sources of imagination, productivity, and leadership” (ICF, 2024). Similar to this in Arabic is the term *Tawjeeh*, which means supporting someone to focus on a destination or a goal. Contrary to what many Arabs think, that the word means guidance, direction, or direction setting, the word *Tawjeeh* is a derivative of *Wajh*, meaning face, which implies facing. The word’s meaning as alluded to in Arabic language texts (Ibn-Manthoor, 1882) is used in the Quran in more than seventy-five verses to express moving toward a destination like the Qibla or having a destination or a goal to move toward. In the contemporary context of Arab organizations, it is understood as setting directions for someone.

Nevertheless, the role of a director is translated as *Modeer*, which implies the one who circles or spins things around, from *Da-Ira* or a circle, which implies a sense of the non-directive context of management. While management is more of a directive and non-human aspect in Western literature on leadership and management based on many Western cultures, the Arabic *Modeer* requires a more high context approach that avoids confrontation or upsets the system by giving orders or edicts (Livermore, 2009). In the Quran, Allah states: “For everyone, there is a destination (*Wojha*) they are pursuing (*Mowaliha*). You are asked to follow and compete toward goodness (*fa- istabiquo Alkhyrat*). Wherever you are, Allah will bring you all back (for the day of judgment). Allah is all capable” (2:148).

Another obstacle to be removed is “guidance” as a synonym for *Tawjeeh*, which is implied by many. Looking at the richness of the Arabic language and heritage, *Morshid* is used for the role of a guide, *Rashaad* for good decision, and *Irshaad* for the act of guidance which can also be equivalent to “Mentor” who is considered *Morshid*. *Morshids* are also non-directives and do this very gently, but they know the way very well to be mentors for others. The last obstacle we need to address when it comes to terminology is the confusion between *Tawjeeh* in schools as educational supervision and the role of a coach. It is common in education in the Arab world to use *Mowajeh* as a role taken by a teacher supervisor to support teachers in their performance. The word “Tawjeeh” is used correctly here to imply authentic coaching for teachers and or supervision of teachers (Angawi, 2023).

Moving forward, when it comes to coaching leaders and executives or systemic and team coaching, women have been championing the field in research and practice. One example is Ruth Wageman who has been a pioneer in team coaching research up until this moment (Wageman, 1997; Wageman & Lowe, 2019). Arab women aspire to take their seats alongside men in many organizational development positions based on competence, experience, and skill. Being in the field myself, I have witnessed Arab women become executive leaders and team coaches, such as Jihan Labib, Muna Alyusuf, and myself as interviewed in my podcast in late 2023 and early 2024 (Angawi, 2023; Angawi, 2024). My humble attempt to explore the role of women coaches in local Arab organizations is one of my contributions to the field. It may spark the interest of local coaches to conduct their own research and enrich the literature.

A report on women at work in the Middle East (Marcati & Assi, 2020) explored employment opportunities for women in the region and identified four indicators that have a relatively high correlation with women's participation in professional and technical jobs: education, financial inclusion, digital inclusion, and legal protection. This provides key indicative recommendations for improving women's participation and leadership in the region. In turn, a study by Bain and Company (Khalaf & Malauzat, 2023) confirmed that: "70% of women agreed that gender bias and stereotypes represent one of their biggest challenges to workplace advancement" (pg. 4). Along with inadequate mentorship, training, and support for work-life balance, these challenges directly hinder women's corporate leadership advancement in the region.

The situational analysis report by the UN is relevant to the coaching profession, which requires mostly a distant and online presence. The UN report predicts that the share of women in professional and technical jobs is set to more than double by 2030 through digitization, online platforms, and entrepreneurship (Piller-4, n.d.). While organizations may satisfy the required quota for gender equality in many parts of the world, women have no guarantee that organizations will fulfill what they need from the workplace. A study by Clerkin (2017) on 745 women and men highlighted the important points presented in our research. Women want to satisfy their calling and feel purposeful in a work environment; they also want a flexible work-from-home schedule and number of hours while parenting. Women recognize true leadership opportunities presented to them in a sincere and authentic environment. Female leaders champion flexibility

and resilience in all forms but often face subtle discrimination and biases (Monzer & Basitkey, 2023).

In the United States, women and men seem to have equal opportunities in relation to executive and leadership coaching. According to Zippia (2024), women scored 49.6% of executive coaching positions in 2021, a number that exceeded women's expectations in senior leadership positions in Fortune 500 companies, where females still hold only 25% of leadership positions (Gilligan, 2023). The McKenzie study (Devillard, et al., 2014) alludes to these issues that challenge women's leadership at the top in their 2014 quarterly periodical. The most critical challenge is corporate culture, which may not support women's rise to lead. It explains why strategies fail and points to the fact that one of the cultural norms is having executives make themselves available 24/7. Another challenge is how women and men view diversity programs and women in the workplace. This is especially important when men need help understanding the forces influencing women's career trajectories. This lack of acknowledgment and opposition creates doubts and uncertainty at different times in a woman's career. Perception seems to be the issue regarding women's leadership worldwide.

While this may be true for business corporations, the issue is no better in higher education or educational institutions, where a focus on human development might be expected to allow women to fare better. Gooty et al. (2023) point to women being underrepresented in research and academic leadership ranks in business schools due to three systemic structural factors: (1) The masculine social structure of business schools, (2) A muddled approach to performance evaluation, and (3) An under-representation of research topics that affect women in the workplace. The paper dives into common business school practices and cultural perceptions. Likewise, Tanya Fitzgerald's (2014) study identifies negotiating in and around gendered culture as the most complex challenge facing female leaders across Western institutions. Two-fold perceptions of women's leadership roles in higher education are identified. First is the negative shadow of women leaders adopting internalized masculinist practices. Second, women of indigenous origin and ethnic minorities face the hurdles of further assimilation and marginalization (Angawi, 2015).

Women have been working alongside their male colleagues in many organizational positions across MENA for the past decades as part of a movement to improve their participation in the local Arab economy. Recognizing that the system and policies to support women's participation were not put in place due to social and cultural views, Arab countries

have advanced strategies based on demand and requests by local women's movements backed by international entities like the United Nations (UN, 2023). By changing workforce strategies across the region, GCC countries are now ushering in new legislation to make it easier for women to get a passport, relocate, and protect themselves from discrimination. These policies, for example, resulted in a 37% jump in the number of women working in Saudi Arabia, exceeding the 30% expected by 2030 by seven years. In Qatar, the number of employed women has reached 60%; in the UAE, it has reached 53%. If continued at this rate, it will surpass the global women participation average of 47.4% (Khalaf & Malauzat, 2023). This has also sparked small business and women entrepreneurship across the region as evidenced by a 3.7% increase in women's business ownership in Saudi Arabia, compared with just 1.6% in 2016 (Norma Taki, 2022).

With regard to women's leadership of organizations in the MENA region, achieving this goal will be a long process, specifically in the GCC countries (Forbes, 2023). Nevertheless, women's empowerment has become part of many GCC countries' strategies, such as Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and Qatar's National Vision 2030. While women have recognized the chance and are pushing to support their leaders' vision of female empowerment, gender equality nevertheless remains a distant goal in the region, especially at the leadership level. For example, around 7% of board seats are held by women in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) versus 20% globally. The study by Bain & Company (Khalaf & Malauzat, 2023) included 1,150 professional men and women in 25 of the largest organizations in the GCC. The biggest challenges highlighted were gender biases and stereotypes, inadequate mentorship, training, and support for work-life balance, the same challenges women around the globe are facing. The study recognizes mentoring as a tool for growth and leadership development. This is the closest we can get to coaching in terms of mentoring purpose and approach because of the scarcity of literature on women coaching in the MENA region.

According to research on coaching, a number of studies (e.g. Hamlin et al., 2009; Stober, 2005; Passmore & Ai, 2019) consider coaching as an emerging profession that began as a separate discipline in the early 1980s. Looking at its growth in the MENA region, the profession is still in its infancy and only a few regulating chapters were founded in 2015 onward across the GCC. Coaching mainly relies on reciprocal actions between the coach and client in a dyadic interaction where the client is at the center of the process and their motivation to change is an essential antecedent

for coaching success (Passmore & Ai, 2019). According to Hamilin et al. (2009), contemporary organization development (OD) and human resource development (HRD) practitioners conceive of coaching as an extant core component of their respective fields of study and practice, contrary to what the professional coaching bodies and the professional coaches affiliated with them advocate. Hamilin et al. (2009) believe an open dialogue between the professions can cross-pollinate theory with practice to avoid silo effects (Hamlin et al., 2009). If the field of coaching is siloed, women coaches will be viewed as outsiders by organizations, furthering the divide between them and professional participation in the workforce. A consolidated professional view of coaching as part of HRD and OD functions will make it possible to assimilate the presence of women coaches. The growing number of private practices may allow women to move faster in acquiring credentials and practicing coaching. In a 2019 study on coaching in the Middle East by Passmore et al. (2019), 75.9% of participants were female, divided equally between nationals and expatriates in nine Arab countries. “This reflects the high number of workers from other countries who are economically active within some countries of the Middle East, such as UAE and Bahrain,” the report states (Passmore et al., 2019, pg. 8). The study also suggests growing professionalism from organizations toward commissioning coaches with qualifications and a professional body membership. The report highlights why they hire coaches. It mostly falls in developing self-awareness, leadership, improving performance, business measurable outcomes, creative capabilities, closing the gender gap, and supporting women’s development, a little over 10 percent of the other goals mentioned (Passmore, et al., 2019). This is considered the closest we can get on women coaches in Arab local organizations; this study therefore fills an important gap in the literature.

#### method of inquiry

This survey aims to address the gap between men and women in organizations by gathering qualitative data from a random sample over social media and WhatsApp groups. There were no conditions on participation except interest and time to answer the questions, which required about twenty minutes. The questions were focused first on women’s participation, leadership, and experience with a female coach, whether as a leader or hired to do the job. The researcher initiated a panel discussion and invited four Arab women executive coaches to participate with

their stories and inspire the audience in the 2023 MENA-ICF conference, which was hosted by the ICF-Oman chapter and held in the city of Muscat, Oman (Angawi, 2023). Research was conducted to inform the discussion. The researcher designed the survey to be semi-structured while allowing open-ended questions. Four assumptions were to be confirmed or invalidated.

1. Women are not favored as leaders by a male-dominated culture.
2. Women have insufficient credentials and qualifications for organizational jobs.
3. When given an opportunity, women do not show up as professionals.
4. Women are emotional and cannot make informed decisions.

The assumptions came from the experiences shared with the panelists in a pre-research launch meeting held in early September 2023. The researcher captured what the panelists brought forward as arguments, designed questions to test some of these assumptions, and launched the survey. The articulated assumptions were seen in many of the participants' answers and in collected data as prohibiting factors or barriers to advancement of women participation and leadership. The panelists continued their professional lives until a week before the conference, when the researcher gave them a draft of the survey results and findings. The researcher did not ask them to use the data but rather to tell their stories and have their conversation in light of the collected data (Angawi, 2023).

The questions were structured and divided into three types of experience: personal subjective, external objective, and a third set that combined both in relation to women's coaching in organizations. Each category had sub-questions that probed into experiences lived and/or observed. It was not possible to ask about women coaches' roles without women's participation first and leadership second. Most leaders perceive coaching in organizations as a role they play when supporting their direct reports. The researcher did not want to influence the sampling or allude to the definition of coaching to preserve the authenticity of the results. The survey used two words to convey the meaning: the English word coaching written in Arabic and the Arabic word *Tawjeeh*.

A total of 45 individuals participated in the survey representing various leadership positions and professions including human resources, consultants, coaches, engineers, non-profit volunteers, nurses, customer care representatives, public sector employees, entrepreneurs, supervisors, chairpersons, VPs, retired, lab specialists, educational supervisors,

accountants, students, physiologists, CEOs, teachers, safety managers, life coaches, academics, general managers, software engineers, freelancers, and housewives. The respondents came from different parts of the MENA region. Of the 45 participants, 60% were women. The different leadership levels among the respondents were as follows:

- 26.7% fell into senior leaders' categories.
- 22.2% were team leaders from middle management.
- 8.9% were frontline supervisors.
- 13.3% were individual contributors to organizations.
- 28.9% were freelancers or entrepreneurs.

The respondents reflected deeply on the questions in their answers. The answers traced specific thought patterns and perspectives engraved in the social fabric of Arab culture. The four assumptions above were part of the articulated data. The analysis used a spreadsheet of all the answers by collecting specific phrases into categories related to the questions. The categories were our objective focus as they would tell us how many believed in this or that. The phrases then were studied carefully, and the wording used was noted as common expressions in the culture to mean specific perceptions based on our knowledge of the Arabic language. When the data sorting was finalized, a pattern started to emerge around the assumptions and the data categories. Although the sample was not as large as in previous studies referred to in the literature review, taking the time and effort to provide deep thoughts to the answers helped make it comparable to the large quantitative surveys in previous studies. The quality of data and phrases used by the participants were informative enough to reflect the current status quo that prevents women from advancing in the fields of leadership, organizational development, and coaching.

The *personal subjective experiences* were captured in the following six questions:

1. Informed by the current context, what are the positives of empowering women in organizations?
2. Informed by the current context, what are the drawbacks of empowering women in organizations?
3. In the future, what are your aspirations for women's empowerment?
4. In the future, what are your fears of women's empowerment?
5. Do you personally prefer to be led by a woman at work?
6. Please explain more why you answered this way.



There were three questions pertaining to *external observations*:

1. Does the work environment and context around you encourage women's empowerment in organizations?
2. What is required from the work culture to facilitate women's movement in organizations and her ability to share her expertise?
3. Does the environment around you encourage women in senior leadership positions in organizations?

The questions relating to *women coaching* in organizations were:

1. Have you ever received coaching by a woman in an organization?
2. Was the experience suitable and enriching?
3. What is your opinion on women coaching in organizations?
4. What can stand in the way of women in coaching and organizational development professions in the context of organizations?

## disCussion of findings

is Women's empowerment positive or negative?

The 45 participants expressed positive experiences around women's empowerment in the workplace, including women's presence sending a message of equal opportunity based on competencies; women possess unique characteristics that will add value, such as precision, quality of work, planning, timely execution, decision making, handling parallel projects and tasks, higher productivity, work ethics, developing others, inclusion of others, and creativity/innovation. In addition, women add to the financial well-being of the family. The same group had negative concerns around the following: negative male culture of isolating women and disempowering male colleagues, lack of women leadership positions, women running behind due to natural family roles such as pregnancy and childcare, and family roles affected by a woman's career.

Of the 45 participants, a third had nothing negative to report, while the other two-thirds expressed the following negative experiences: A culture of isolation and competitiveness where males and females experience isolation and alienation from both sexes, women not making sound decisions, recognizing opportunities, comprehending their roles, complaining, refusing other women's leadership, abusing authority, and lacking collaboration, empowering women without assessment or development, women empowerment creating negative social impact at various degrees and levels.

The data suggest that views based on personal experiences lean more on the positive side of empowering women in organizations. The negative experiences were either related to culture or perceptions as part of the transformation process. These issues are not unknown to men either; people of other races and young generations often face similar biases, as indicated by several participants. Job and competency-related negative experiences can be dealt with through training, mentoring, and coaching. These findings are integral to devising approaches by organizational development specialists, of which coaching women by women can be one of them. When it comes to the effect of women's empowerment on social life and private family relations, we move toward the social and broader culture outside the organization. This, too, can benefit from introducing a coach who is trained to deal with relations and life coaching. On the positive side, 60% of participants viewed women as more productive and able to handle bigger workloads. If this indicates anything, it is women's ability to flex and adapt themselves to a flexible work schedule as indicated by those participants.

#### future aspirations and fears and Women's Leadership

We then asked a deeper question to explore personal perspectives around aspirations and fears. On the side of aspirations, 96% of participants were positive and expressed their desire to witness women in senior leadership positions. Most anticipated a 40% rise in women leadership positions, 3% more than the actual percentage reached by Saudi Arabia (Khalaf & Malauzat, 2023). The participants stressed the need for equal opportunity, competency-based appointment, strategic roles in economic growth, supportive culture, continuous performance assessment, development opportunities, a sustainable code of ethics, and flexible hours. When it came to gender roles, 50% were conscious that some roles may not suit the biological nature of women and the same for men and that in many roles both genders complement each other as a collaborative team.

On the side of fears, 45% reported no fears of women empowerment, and 3% reported fears of imbalances and negligence to family roles, resulting in the disintegration of social values and fabric and an increased divorce rate. Of the participants, 15% expressed fear of women substituting men or taking leadership positions, leading to increased male unemployment and creating imbalances in social accountability where men feel responsible for women, not vice versa. Twelve percent of the participants feared women making reactive and uncalculated decisions, having a lack of experience,

emotional reactivity, and not rising to performance standards. Three percent feared men would become dependent on women and irresponsible. Two percent expressed fear from physical burdens, including long-distance commuting to work. Two percent feared empowerment is just about numbers and not real leadership. One participant expressed fear of sexism, where men compete fiercely against women, creating a divide. The last participants feared women would be unable to break the glass ceiling. Most fears are understandable as they come from subjective experiences and perceptions. However, for the purpose of informing women who coach other women, it is important that we capture even the slightest fear so that it can be addressed through coaching.

### Women in Leadership

This is the last topic we explored in the subjective experience category, women in leadership. Those participants who were open to being led by a woman gave the following explanations, including that female leaders will help spread women's empowerment and advocate for women's voices to senior leadership, shrinking the divide. They also expressed that women are more empathetic listeners and can understand what other women are facing, are better at giving directions, have a holistic view, and make better team leaders. Most respondents agreed that leadership positions should be given to the most competent and not based on gender. Surprisingly enough, 23% who chose women as leaders and attributed their choice to positive experiences with women were men. Those who were against women leading, some of which were women, gave the following reasons: lack of leadership skills, lack of leadership role models, women using emotions, women being low in self-awareness, and women being arrogant. One male refused the idea of women leading due to social considerations.

In general, all participants seem to be optimistic about empowering women to lead with varying degrees of reservation, alluding to factors related to women's training, coaching, and performance, organizational culture and preparation, social roles, and supportive environments aiding in the empowerment process. These findings correspond with the previous 2023 study (Khalaf & Malauzat, 2023). It is obvious here that role modeling leadership for other women is important, as well as influencing how men perceive women's leadership in empowering women for leadership positions, making coaching and mentoring of even greater importance.

## environmental and Cultural factors affecting Women empowerment and Leadership

Although this part of the survey is intended to seek participants' perspectives outside of their direct experience, their perception of the outside context is still subjective. The questions are designed to explore the effect of the environment and culture on empowering women. What does it look like? What can be changed or kept? And does it support women's leadership?

Of the 45 participants, 68 percent thought that women have opportunities and are given their full rights. When asked about the factors that facilitate women's movement in organizations, all 45 participants listed the following actions and strategies. The factors were sorted into two categories, organizational and cultural. Organizational factors summed up implementing laws and policies that support women's participation and equal rights, such as equal pay, allowances, anti-abuse or harassment policies, and job benefits. Also important was the availability of personal and competency development opportunities, including assessments, training, mentoring, exchange programs, and coaching. Also evident was the importance of creating possible opportunities, assigning women more challenging roles, and giving them control over resources, all while preparing the work environment for their needs and giving them flexible workspaces. Noted on the cultural side was increased trust in the culture to address inherited prohibiting beliefs focused on increased cognitive awareness around the importance of a job rather than just the position. This should tie in with a common purposeful work journey, giving women pride in serving their country. As to whether the culture supports women's leadership, 58% of the participants thought the culture encouraged it, while 42% did not. We conclude that even those who had reservations and were cautious regarding women's empowerment alluded to factors integral to empowering women and obstacles that stood against their participation and leadership. Once more, there are lessons learned from the data for coaches and mentors.

## Women Coaching in organizations

In this part of the survey, we gave the participants four questions: If they had ever been coached by a woman before, if the experience was positive, their opinion in general on coaching and its use in learning and development in an organization, and what they see as obstacles to women coaching in organizations. We do not know what the participants perceive as coaching in the sense that they know it is something to help them

improve and develop. However, they may need to define it per professional coaching association standards.

In the first question about receiving coaching from a woman, of our 45 participants, 18 women have received coaching from other women, and all but three thought the experience was positive and enriching. Conversely, 12 men received coaching from women and all but two thought the experience was positive and enriching. The total number of those who were coached by women was 30 out of 45. This tells us how popular coaching is in the MENA region. Regardless of the coach's profession in terms of accreditation or membership in accrediting organizations, its impact on the receiver is mostly positive. The receiver, male or female, from a female coach seems also to have no reservation against the idea of receiving from a female, which is a positive indicator and a strong reading for women who aspire to coach organizations.

When asked about women coaching in organizations, 76% of the 45 participants encouraged it or thought it would suit women's natural inclination to nurture and develop others. They also explained that a woman can do anything provided she is trained and capable. When asked to identify barriers, they listed the following: (1) Inherited negative, restraining organizational culture, favoritism, random choices, and lack of trust; (2) Sustaining the impact after development; (3) Lack of collaboration between players; (4) Misunderstanding initiatives and development programs; (5) Social adaptation; (6) Arrogant women; (7) Unethical behaviors; (8) Lack of competence, experience, and a track record of achievement; (9) Fears and apprehension; (10) Male opposition; (11) Policies that do not rule out and fake empowerment. There seems to be a pattern whereby women are not getting enough opportunities to receive development such as coaching and mentoring, nor being present in organizational development roles such as a coach or mentor, let alone organizational leadership. When women have the opportunity, they experience the above barriers. We can conclude that all the barriers related to women's empowerment and participation in the workforce apply to empowering women coaches in the context of organizations. Nevertheless, the idea of coaching seems to catch attention as a means of developing others, which matches women's nature around educational, nurturing, and supportive roles. It is sometimes seen as an extension role for leadership and at other times to stand alone as a support role.

From the data collected, we find a significant degree of confirmation of the first assumption that women are not favored by male-dominant cultures as leaders. The evidence of prejudice against women in the workplace

clearly showed how the participants worded their answers. This requires special treatment from HR in those organizations that spot such prejudice. This does not rule out men being victims of discrimination due to color and race. Strategies such as coaching, training, and supportive learning environments can be implemented to raise awareness and develop a healthy culture inside an organization. It is the duty of executives in these organizations to ensure such biases impair no one, neither women or men.

The second assumption is that “Women do not have enough credentials and qualifications for the job,” and the third is: “When given an opportunity, women do not show as professionals.” Both are nullified based on the responses. The majority believed that women could play a great role in the organization but might suffer from common problems in performance due to insufficient opportunities for development. This pertains to the organizational strategy in relation to assessment, training, coaching, and a supportive learning environment.

The fourth assumption is that “Women are emotional and cannot make informed decisions like men.” Although it relates to stress and inability to handle several roles, both men and women can suffer from emotional impacts if there is no support system. Women playing other roles in life have an extra burden when there is no one to share responsibilities. In the past, women who collectively took care of each other in extended families freed each other for bigger matriarchal leadership roles. In the survey, eleven of the participants mentioned the roles women play outside work and how this can be jeopardized. For example, parenting, taking care of elderly parents, a disabled relative, and finally taking care of themselves as they go through their monthly cycle, which can leave them drained and stressed. To learn from our own history, women help and support each other in the system, which few participants mentioned as a positive. This is not a one-organization-job but rather the system where this organization exists. The system must also provide the needed health care, social care, childcare, and emotional coaching. One answer in the survey mentioned the importance of organizational flexibility with women who play multiple roles in life. The secret to this is women sharing their experiences with other women in a trusting environment and asking for help.

## Con CLusions

The data collected from this wide sample of professions, regional cultures, and affiliations brings authentic answers throughout the sample.

There were comments about emotions like fear and worry. Others signified strengths and confidence, while many expressed aspirations and ambitions. It seems women who were empowered and managed to get a place to work in an organization are struggling with asserting themselves in a business and work context. There are concerns about family roles and support systems, as well as imbalances in how they perform their roles.

Additionally, challenges in male-dominant organizations have thrived on that culture for decades. There are also challenges of cultural norms, perceptions, or traditions. These are all fertile subjects for coaching discussions to empower women by women and set local role models for continuous improvements on a personal level for women themselves and for the organizational policies and processes that support their presence.

Regarding coaching, there was wide recognition of women's nurturing roles in organizations. Learning and development, assessments, competency-based training or mentoring on the job, and coaching all seem to be known as methods already implemented. However, what seems to stand out is women and men receiving coaching from other women, whether these coaches were leaders who adopted the coaching role or coaches. The idea of coaching is acceptable to both genders. The leverage is there for women to support male leaders. This may also mean that, contrary to what men think about women in Arab culture, they do trust women in coaching them. This reading gives us an optimistic view of women coaches' continuous and growing role in the MENA region and their growing number.

It is important to note that many women coaches are focused on life coaching, while there is a great need for their presence in organizations to support other women. Coaching other women for career and leadership roles is integral to the empowerment process and supports all parties involved. The coach gains insight about her client who is leading or working in an organizational context. The women leader benefits from the skills and focused sessions given to her by an external coach who is trained to listen and provide a safe space for navigating and exploring the landscape. Women new to coaching or with less experience in coaching in organizations should seek other more experienced professional coaches to coach them and role-model them from the local culture to move to organizational coaching. Women in organizations need coaches who understand and can empathize with them through shared experiences and not just coaching competencies. To provide this level of support both ways, there must be a form of collaboration between women. Coaches and women in

organizations need the opportunity to learn from each other in a coaching relationship for knowledge transfer, experiences, and support.

It is now up to organizations to adopt some of the solutions and strategies highlighted in this research and push for them to happen as a collective force. Women need to form and unite in organizations to demand what is right for them and change the culture through their continuous conversations. Even among those who expressed discomfort in being led by women or opposed women's leadership, the power of the collective shows in the folds of their words and the mere fact that they took the time and effort to write and contribute to this survey. This means we are changing perceptions just by taking the time to write our ideas, express them, and articulate what we think.

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