Editorial:
Between antiquity and modernity in sustainability management research: reflections from *MSAR* board members

Introduction

Despite the seemingly diverse Arab countries, there are elements of commonality and homogeneity in culture and tradition and, hence, using deductive reasoning, we can objectively claim that there is what we can call an "Arab world" (Elbanna *et al.*, 2020; Zahra, 2011). Prior research has noted the need to distinguish the Arab world in research that has to do with emerging markets resting on evidence that what we can call an "emerging market" is not "uniform" despite the internationalization of education and an ever-global digital environment (Elbanna *et al.*, 2020). Arab culture is not separate from its social, historic and political context, and this, therefore, warrants dedicated research platforms. To date, this perspective remains sporadic and sparse in the international literature and journal landscape.

Whether what we can call the "Arab world" today, however, blends in with different other cultures as compared to previous times, is a question we can tackle through diverse research fields. One of these contemporary and pertinent fields is indeed sustainability or what we can broadly call "responsible management" (Laasch *et al.*, 2021) [1]. Blending the rich historical tradition of the Arab civilization with the modern façade, urbanities and ethos of the global cosmopolitan culture would present a much-needed perspective to the "responsible management" discourse. Sustainability is more than just preservation of the environment. It also encompasses individual and societal sustainability such as enhancing long-term wellbeing of consumers, social groups and humankind; preventing harm for other stakeholders beyond environment; reducing disparities across regions and socio-economic groups; inclusivity regarding vulnerable individuals, amongst others. Global events such as the financial crisis of 2008 and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing business repercussions, raise critical reflections about the status of sustainability management on an international level. The events and consequences of the Arab Spring have raised more concerns on sustainability in the Arab region.

With these considerations in mind, the founding of *Management and Sustainability: An Arab Review (MSAR)* journal has two goals. Our first goal is not only to present and agglomerate research that tackles contextual variations of responsible management in the Arab region, but also to contribute to the international literature in this domain on intellectual, moral and spiritual levels that go beyond the geographical confines of Arab countries. For this reason, research that addresses other cultures, particularly non-Western ones, with relevant insights and implications to the Arab world is also welcome. For example, the need for non-Western approaches in management was addressed in an essay recently published in the *Journal of Management Studies* where a series of point-counterpoint essays outlined the "common concern" that local approaches to knowledge development in management are needed (Muzio, 2021). The Arab context is not alien to that concern. This was empirically supported by Elbanna and Child's (2007) study on strategic decision making in Egyptian manufacturing firms which concluded that some findings

were interpreted as "culture free," whereas some other findings supported the "culture specific" argument.

Our second goal is to uncover and attempt to define the unique challenges facing Arab countries on their road towards sustainable development. Just as the conscious and subconscious minds overlap despite their seeming duality, we aim to uncover the hidden contours of surface consciousness and dig into the deep "subconscious mind" of both the challenges and potential solutions for sustainability problems in the region. Future progress of sustainability in the region relies heavily on detangling the fog around this dual understanding and the ensuing roller coaster that relates both the conscious and subconscious perceptions of this important topic on a global level. It will not be an easy task and will require the support and concerted efforts, cooperation and tolerance of diverse stakeholders both in the focal region as well as within the international community. The need for tolerance of this diversity despite stark differences in research methods, inclinations and approaches is reflected in a global editorial advisory board that includes well-established and emerging scholars in the region as well as in Europe, the US, Asia and others. Board members also include many notable women scholars highly vested in research on sustainability and responsible management. We argue that this tolerance and diversity is imperative to the welfare of the global community. The importance of such global dialog related to sustainability and social responsibility in a post-COVID-19 world is particularly important (Jamali *et al*, 2020a) since the pandemic has taught humanity the need to set aside all differences and work collectively toward the advancement of the global sustainability agenda.

We welcome views that reflect lack of alienation in the acceptance of all what can be termed "the other" regardless of nationality. Academics communicate and understand research topics on a level that transcends geographical borders, all physical confines and elevates to a level that results in communication on an intellectual level as scholars. The blend in intellectuality that comes out of the diversity in background and education results in unique hybridization that can produce novel approaches in methods and research outcomes. This will be the road to the success of *MSAR* and its acceptance by the global community. Together, we can facilitate peaceful transitions toward sustainability, which will not only benefit the region but can also expedite global efforts toward achieving fruitful sustainability outcomes.

We proceed as follows. The next section attempts to understand the current situation of sustainability management research in the Arab World which will enable us to develop a vision for *MSAR* journal. Based on our understanding of both the current situation of sustainability management research and our prospect about it, we propose several potential research themes for future research classified under two main perspectives/orientations, which are described as insider/internal perspective (emic) and outsider/external perspective (etic). The final section concludes this editorial.

Mapping sustainability management research in the Arab World
A key question to ask is what is "Sustainability Management"? Cohen (2014, p. 163) defines it as "the organizational management practices that result in sustainable development. In the modern industrial world, sustainability management is the practice of economic production and consumption that minimizes environmental impact and maximizes resource conservation and reuse". It is reasonable to think that the broad characteristics of this definition will persist in the Arab context as researchers draw on international literature and add to it whatever is "uniquely-Arab". This is the role of the potential scribes, readers and researchers of *MSAR*. Several knowledge domains are integrating for the advancement of this "glocal" transdisciplinary discourse (Laasch *et al.*, 2020). These include responsible management, sustainability management, business ethics, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and others in what we can broadly consider at the overlaps between "management" and

"sustainability." Other collateral disciplines informing this discussion include business disciplines such as marketing, accounting, economics, finance, along with other disciplines such sociology, history, religion, cultural studies, geography, environmental sciences, anthropology, amongst others. Opportunities for cross-disciplinary studies are endless and as editorial board members, we put no confines to the imagination of our potential authors. Our aim is to guide and communicate our shared vision and philosophy in line with *MSAR* scope.

An important theoretical knowledge domain identified as relevant to sustainability management research is CSR which sets a robust foothold in strategies of today's organizations (Fatima and Elbanna, 2022). With the ever-increasing attention from the business community to the responsibility that companies have towards the environment and society, managers are increasingly pressured to adopt more socially- and environmentally-friendly practices, and engage in more CSR disclosures. Recent research has witnessed more efforts focused on understanding CSR in emerging markets in general, and in Arab countries in specific. CSR has been a more compelling concept amongst civil society and the business sector after the Arab Spring (Avina, 2013; Elbanna *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, there has been a more recent focus on clustering countries that share similar business and institutional settings to allow for a better understanding of the influence of specific contexts on CSR practices (e.g. Jamali *et al.*, 2017, 2020b). Yet, the absence of consideration to CSR contextualization may lead to practices and disclosures which could be associated with flawed perceptions and interpretations related to the setting of the developing world (Tilt, 2016). We believe that this is particularly relevant for Arab countries, wherein these contextual issues, such as political system, sociocultural environment, ideology and culture, are more likely to exert stronger influence on companies.

Research on CSR that studied the Arab world has focused on three main dimensions: *perspectives, motives* and *impact*. For example, in their extant systematic review of the current state of CSR in the Middle East, Al-Abdin *et al.* (2018) identify three main areas of progress: (1) the influence of stakeholders and institutions, (2) CSR and its impact, and (3) managerial approaches to CSR. The authors exhibit inconclusive results with respect to the influence of institutions and stakeholders on CSR strategies and call for exploring the impact of other formal and informal institutional factors, such as culture and religion, on CSR. With respect to the impact of CSR, their review shows that CSR is associated with several benefits, such as financial wealth, and better corporate reputation. The study also suggests that future researchers should investigate to what extent CSR contributes to social development in politically unstable countries in the Middle East. The findings of Al-Abdin *et al.* (2018) also reveal various managerial views of CSR across Arab countries. For example, most managers from Lebanon, Syria, Iran and Jordan prefer views on CSR that emphasize social, economic and environmental issues, while managers from Turkey tend to be less concerned with social and environmental benefits.

Similarly, Jamali *et al.* (2009) provide evidence in support of the classical perspective of CSR, in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, which focuses mainly on profit maximization. Hence, CSR, in that view, is perceived as an added cost and business burden. They also note that this is along with adopting the modern orientation, in which businesses receive benefits when adopting socially responsible activities. Their findings are consistent with the philanthropic view of CSR. In another study, Mandurah *et al.* (2012) find that the concept of CSR in Saudi Arabia is still in its infancy among Saudi firms and that although managers are aware of the concept, yet there is little connection between managerial perceptions toward the concept and actual attitudes in the firm workplace. Recently, Sorour *et al.* (2020) examine the Egyptian context post-2011 revolution and find that managers' views toward reporting practices of CSR reflect less adoption for instrumental "business-case" perspectives in favor of a more "political CSR" that considers a wider set of societal challenges.

A thorough review of CSR literature in the Arab context uncovers that most of these studies mainly focus on examining the extent of CSR practices and reporting in addition to their determinants. For instance, El-Bassiouny and Letmathe (2018) examine whether the adoption of CSR practices in Egypt is triggered more by internal efficiency or external legitimation forces. In contrast to findings from industrialized countries in the Western world, the authors reveal that internal corporate governance plays an effective role in driving CSR, while the effects of legal regulations and stakeholder pressures appear to be insignificant. Based on examining 13 countries in the Arab region, Ismaeel et al. (2021) show that CSR reporting is still limited, and mainly affected by linkages and openness to the global economy and high public visibility. These findings are consistent with the notion that companies in developing countries adopt CSR in response to global stakeholders and trends. Related to that, Jamali et al. (2020b) synthesize another extant systematic literature review to investigate how institutional heterogeneity in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) affects CSR practices. Their review affirms the role of geopolitics in the region in affecting whether and how the state affects the CSR agenda. The authors highlight the importance of both socio-emotional wealth and religion in influencing CSR practices and urgently call for more research in this understudied context to help develop reliable conclusions.

Some studies suggest that socially responsible firms convey a positive impression to diverse groups of internal and external stakeholders (Alexander and Bucholtz, 1978; Duthler and Dhanesh, 2018). For example, Karam and Jamali (2013) investigate the role that CSR activities can play in promoting positive developmental change in Arab countries. They reveal examples of CSR initiatives which regional corporate actors can adopt to help propel positive developmental change especially supporting women, such as encouraging women employment and gender mainstreaming. Duthler and Dhanesh (2018) exhibit a strong positive association between social and sustainability dimensions of CSR, and social and affective dimensions of employee engagement in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). However, when it comes to the financial benefits associated with the practice of CSR, the results remain inconclusive (Brooks and Oikonomou, 2018). Lenz et al. (2017) also note that financial returns on CSR largely depend on which CSR initiatives are implemented (i.e. how CSR is done and not "whether" it is done) and on contextual factors related to the firm and industry. Furthermore, the issue remains largely unexplored in Arab countries. Abdelfattah and Aboud (2020) reveal supportive evidence suggesting that CSR is a value-enhancing practice in Egypt as firms associated with higher CSR disclosures are found to have better stock returns. In a related context, Mallin et al. (2014) find a positive relationship between CSR disclosure and financial performance in 90 Islamic banks across 13 countries.

Another relevant, but less explored, question is related to business ethics in the Arab world. Little research has focused on employee-related ethical issues (Al-Khatib et al., 2002; Elbanna et al., 2020). Tlaiss (2015a) discusses how Islamic business ethics affects the entrepreneurial behavior of women in the Arab world. Their study, based on face-to-face interviews with Muslim Arab women entrepreneurs across four countries in the Arab Middle East region, reveal that Islamic work values are embedded in the activities of these Arab women who seek wellbeing and excellence whilst running their businesses. In another study, Koburtay et al. (2020) investigate the impact of culture, religion and legalities on women's employment in Jordan. Their findings show a gap between Islamic values toward fairness and justice in employment, and women's status in Jordan wherein the tribal and Bedouin traditions still restrict women's employment and advancement.

Drawing on a parallelism between the sustainability logic and Islamic tenets, Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher (2017) propose the concept of Eco-Islam that links religious teachings and environmental ethics and discuss the essence of the relationship between Muslims and the environment, drawn from the maxims of Eco-Islam. The study suggests that Eco-Islam can act as an innovative tool for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to boost environmental

ethics and practices. Going a step further, Abdelzaher et al. (2019) link Islamic ethics and environmental responsibility via providing a comprehensive framework of Eco-Islam, based on conducting a content analysis of the holy Quran. In this framework, the authors propose behaviorally applicable principles of Eco-Islam to address the questions of why and how individuals should adopt environmentally responsible actions. Examples of these principles include avoiding overconsumption, applying moderation, practicing self-accountability, preserving justice, acknowledging interdependence and observing modesty. The study also discusses several faith-based relevant initiatives in industry where the proposed framework can be applied in the actual marketplace.

The vision of *MSAR*

MSAR emphasizes several principles that encompass its broad vision. These include:

(1) *Relevance*: *MSAR* adopts a research philosophy that emphasizes relevance. Despite the current challenges associated with empirical research conducted in the Arab region (Elbanna et al., 2020; Zahra, 2011), we believe a paradigmatic shift in research culture can occur over time. This needs the support of governments and academic institutions in Arab countries to invest in research that aims at development and the de-politicization of research. It also requires the support of international research community to be open toward accepting novel models published in the journal that break existing norms in favor of what suits the Arab region best.

(2) *Interdisciplinarity*: We particularly encourage studies that can include and blend between different fields, such as drawing on anthropologic research, religion and cultural studies, different schools of thought in psychology such as the psychoanalytic school or the behavioral school. For example, we welcome research that aims at examining the different facets of psychological wellbeing as related to management in Arab countries.

(3) *Adaptation of Vital International Research Goals with Local Approaches and Methods*: In *MSAR*, we argue that a mismatch between research gaps identified in the international literature on one hand, and local approaches and means of their implementation on the other will in fact curb development in Arab countries and the effective applicability of the research in question. We encourage our authors to work on shared spaces that avoid this mismatch which could present a hurdle to sustainability discussions not just in the region but also worldwide.

(4) *Strategic Development of Important Sectors that Affect the "Human Being"*: These include sectors such as education, health and tourism that shape people's minds and pave the way for cross-cultural understanding in line with sustainability and the desired sustainability mindset.

(5) *Inclusivity*: *MSAR* emphasizes the breadth of audiences for whom useful implications are provided. These implications can eventually induce behavioral change. Our stakeholders include not only firms but also policy-makers, non-governmental organizations, society and the planet. We also emphasize a broad readership and diverse perspectives. For instance, *MSAR* is a journal relevant for non-WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic) people and vulnerable and difficult-to-reach populations (for a discussion on WEIRD samples, refer to Lambert et al., 2019).

(6) *Openness to Potential Hybridization of Existing Models and Frameworks in the International Literature*: The *MSAR* editorial board members rely on the

international community to welcome (and be open to) new theoretical developments that could take place as a result of the hybridization of existing models in the international literature with the local Arab context in the lines described above. Our diverse editorial board members reflect this potential hybridization intention which we hope to benefit the Arab region and beyond.

Potential research themes

Based on reviewing sustainability literature and the series of webinars conducted as part of the journal launch process, several themes for future research are proposed using the emic and etic perspectives. The emic perspective adopts an insider's ethnographic approach while the etic perspective relies on a generalist comparative lens (Morris *et al.*, 1999). Morris *et al.* (1999) point out that some scholars use the two terms in a narrower sense referring to culture-specific and culture-general/free constructs, while other scholars use them in a broader sense reflecting diverging interests of control versus deeper understanding. Following related research which reviews region-specific research topics (e.g. Bruton and Lau, 2008; Elbanna *et al.*, 2020), we use the emic to capture studies that adopt a regional lens to phenomena (insider perspective) while the etic to those studies that perceive Arab countries from an outsider perspective to the region. The two perspectives and the associated topics included under them as revealed from our analysis of the literature are discussed to show the major research issues of the existing literature, which we used as a base to propose future research directions. This approach can further develop our understanding of sustainability phenomenon in Arab countries and beyond. We have noticed that the majority of studies fall under the insider/internal category (emic).

The insider (emic) perspective: future research avenues from the regional lens

The insider/internal perspective adopts a regional embedded lens to different research issues in the Arab World to study how regional challenges/issues influence regional business operations (Bruton and Lau, 2008; Elbanna *et al.*, 2020). Drawing from this perspective, our analysis revealed eight future research themes as discussed below:

(1) *Conceptualizing and Understanding the Arab Identity and its Impact on CSR Practices and Outcomes*: It is also important to emphasize that the Arab world has elements of homogeneity discussed earlier (see introduction section), yet it also has elements of diversity. Arabs have many similarities in culture, history and tradition yet not all Arabs are the same. This complexity in "defining" and, therefore, understanding what is "uniquely Arab" will pose a challenge for researchers aiming to publish in *MSAR*. Yet, with the help of our editorial board members and reviewers at large, we believe that we can reduce this complexity with time since research has always had the aim to simplify complex phenomenon. In this regard, we rely on our authors to put on the hat of modernization and the entrepreneurial spirit in research, whether they are physically based in Arab countries or not. In this regard, future research topics can include identifying what is genuinely "Arab" in line with glocalization (Laasch and Conaway, 2015), the potential hybridization between different knowledge domains and concepts that unite under the broad umbrella of responsible management such as CSR, ethics and sustainability. As the field and scope of *MSAR* develops, conceptual articles that delineate the nuances of Arab identity are particularly welcome.

(2) *Exploring Options for Enhancing the Success of Sustainability Efforts:* These include, for example, an openness to dialog with multiple stakeholders whether regional or global, the sharing of best practice models and frameworks as related to

sustainability and the progress of responsible management, agile adaptation to an ever-changing digital environment, the role of the diaspora in knowledge transfer back to their home countries, the potential benefits of multi-country studies, and the role of expats in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries with regards to localization efforts and knowledge sharing. Recent research published in the *Journal of Business Ethics* noted the philosophical post-humanist approach to Responsible Management-as-Practice that is a developing conversation shifting away from the "liberal humanist individualism" approach (Gherardi and Laasch, 2021, p. 4).

(3) *Implementation of CSR:* Research at *MSAR* that addresses the implementation of Responsible Management-as-Practice in line with this shift is welcome (Gherardi and Laasch, 2021). A recent review paper at the *Journal of Business Ethics* concluded that the implementation of the CSR is a less researched topic as most of it remains academically unexplored (see Fatima and Elbanna, 2022). This applies to general CSR literature and more particularity that focused on the Arab region.

(4) *Women Empowerment*: We specifically encourage studies that focus on gender entrepreneurship, women as intellectuals and independent entities, or de-marginalizing women. Studies can also look further into challenges faced by women entrepreneurs (Abdelzaher and Bullough, 2013) and opportunities for working women in the region (Tlaiss, 2015b).

(5) *The Imperative Role of Religion and Culture for Sustainability:* Most Arab countries are Muslim in majority and are, therefore, affected heavily by the Islamic philosophy and teachings. A future section in *MSAR* will be dedicated to religion and spirituality, where divergent religious perspectives will be welcome. Spirituality approaches that affect management, such as mindfulness, will also be welcome. Moreover, linking religion and cultural practices to ethics (Sidani and Thornberry, 2010) and the impact of CSR and ethical practices on the institutional development in the Arab region (Goby and Nickerson, 2012) are interesting avenues for future research.

(6) *Role of Education towards Sustainability and Responsible Management*: A main challenge for many Arab countries is to educate youth about sustainability and responsible management practices (Mousa *et al.*, 2019). This shows our need to investigate the role of education in instilling values in the minds of youth that are in line with the sustainable development goals, ethics and responsible management. A major challenge for educational institutions and business schools is to guide the students towards practices that are sustainable and beneficial to the society (Brookes *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, Hays *et al.* (2020) also indicate the importance of the "Sustainable Process Paradigm" that ensures that sustainability is not just taught in theoretical form but in a practical manner that one can experience through practice.

(7) *Sustainability through Social and Economic Development:* Although social and economic development are integral parts of sustainability, the Arab region still needs to investigate aspects of social development i.e. basic human needs, health, well-being, equality and community welfare. Moreover, social upliftment leads to economic development of a country or a region that enables a market to be competitive, expand and remain relatively stable (Kolk, 2016). Sustainability should also be advanced to include sustaining human resources and not just natural resources. Thus, research that examines enhancing the Arab workforce (Sultan, 2012), development of local talent (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2014), entrepreneurial spirit (Spence *et al.*, 2011) and reducing unemployment (Asi, 2021; Elbanna, 2021) are all interesting avenues for future research.

(8) *Investing in Technology, Innovation, and Research and Development (R&D):* With internationalization and globalization booming, it is imperative for research in the Arab world to focus on investing in innovation, technology and R&D (Zaidan *et al.*, 2019). The region still lacks fundamental investments being made in technological infrastructure and innovation that can lead to better efficiency and effectiveness. Furthermore, with investments being made in innovative technologies, sharing economy may arise that is another important aspect of sustainability. Sharing economy helps in the utilization of assets in a sustainable and efficient manner, encouraging sustainable value creation (Martin, 2016; Hossain, 2020).

The outsider (etic) perspective: future research avenues from an external lens
The outsider perspective looks at the region as an important region and investment location for non-Arab firms such as multinational companies (MNCs) and international organizations such as the United Nations (Bruton and Lau, 2008; Elbanna *et al.*, 2020). We discuss below the six topics for future research that emerge from this perspective.

(1) *Overcoming Institutional Barriers that Curb Development in Arab Countries:* These barriers can take the form of legitimacy concerns for firm entry modes, excessive bureaucracy, the lack of resources, an over-emphasis on profit maximization and business-as-usual, investment hurdles that curb foreign direct investment (FDI), the role of and the distinction between formal and the informal economies and the brain drain phenomenon.

(2) *International Pressures to Maintain the United Nations-Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs):* UN-SDGs have led many countries in the region to follow specific norms to ensure sustainability. However, given the heavy reliance of Arab countries on natural resources, such as the dependence of GCC countries on oil and gas to run their economies, several other factors get little attention such as green human resource practices, capacity building and maintaining economic stability (Obeidat *et al.*, 2020; Zaidan *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, other factors such as corruption in the region that impacts funds allocated towards implementation of sustainability measures need also to be further researched in the future (Elbanna *et al.*, 2020).

(3) *Future Internationalization Trends on the Road toward Development:* The progress and future of sustainability management in Arab countries requires cooperation with international initiatives that transcend national borders and confines, such as the United Nations – Principles for Responsible Management Education (UN-PRME) and the Responsible Research in Business and Management (RRBM) network, amongst others.

(4) *Awareness and Understanding of both the East and the West:* The Arab world is best understood as the "heart" of the global ocean since it is in the middle of the world map between the modern cosmopolitan Western civilization and the Eastern (or Far Eastern) civilization. Arab culture presents a more conservative culture to the sustainability discourse with rich history and tradition. Indigenous approaches exist in various cultures and they present eye-opening perspectives that are less uniform and more unique than the widely accepted models already redundantly present in the international literature. *MSAR*, therefore, intends to include a future section on translations of traditional Arabic and Islamic texts that can benefit sustainability and responsible management discussions. We believe that our reviewers from the region, being also native Arabic speakers, can aid in this process since they have the ability to understand and review it.

(5) *Impact of the Broader Environment on Sustainability:* The broader environment can take the form of political turmoil or transformation in certain countries (e.g. Lebanon, Yemen, Palestine, Tunisia and Libya). It can also take the form of regional waves of change such as the Arab Spring or global challenges that go beyond the borders of a specific country yet influence it heavily, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

(6) *Research as Conflict Resolution Mechanism:* The potential role of management in the peace-building process has been discussed over the year in the Business-for-Peace literature domain (Joseph *et al.*, 2021). Using parallel wisdom and the match with this extant field of research, we argue that research on sustainability management in the region can also present a potential untraveled road toward peace building. Conflict resolution can also be explored with respect to its impact on relationships within a firm (Elbanna *et al.*, 2011).

Taking into consideration the points outlined above, we would like to reiterate that papers published in *MSAR* should emphasize both theoretical and practical relevance regardless of methodology or research design as long as international state-of-the-art quality standards are utilized for the tool or method chosen. It is also worth noting that the scope of the journal is not limited to the above themes. Other relevant research areas are welcome by the journal such as these discussed by Elbanna *et al.* (2020) and Zahra (2011). For example, we encourage scholars to examine articles that address conceptual research agenda development in emergent sub-fields that fall under the broad umbrella of sustainability and responsible management such as El-Bassiouny (2014), Fatima and Elbanna (2022), Frynas and Yamahaki (2016), Ostrom *et al.* (2021) and Zahra (2011). In addition, the value balance accountability (VBA) model presents an interesting perspective to the future of research in responsible management (Schwartz and Carroll, 2008).

Articles in the inaugural issue
Prominent scholars in the Arab world wrote articles in the inaugural issue. Most of the articles presented interesting conceptualizations at the interface of sustainability and management that can prove useful in advancing this research agenda in the Arab region. The first article of the issue presents a citation-based systematic literature review of sustainability management research related to the Arab world. The article conducts a bibliometric analysis of the sampled publications and reveals an increasing trend of growing trend of publications on sustainability management in the generally understudied region. The article also identifies most influential journals, articles and authors in this under-researched context.

A second article conducts a tertiary review of international CSR literature which reveals important knowledge gaps for scholars interested to conduct research about this topic. These include surveying CSR measurement tools and researching CSR in the context of service industries, amongst others.

Given that the UAE has made significant progress related to sustainability in recent years, another paper proposes the viable system model (VSM) as a framework rooted in systems thinking for the wholistic implementation of sustainability in the UAE. This wholistic implementation factors in the complex socio-dynamics of sustainability and sustainable development. The aim is to have better understanding and governance of sustainable development in this important context.

Another paper presents an empirical assessment of consumer sentiment towards corporate sustainability practices in Egypt. Based on the results, consumers are also clustered into groups based on their sustainability concerns.

A final paper conducts a systematic review for articles dealing with social sustainability in the supply chain between 1997 and 2020 and identifies drivers, enablers and barriers for the implementation of social sustainability in supply chain management.

Concluding remarks

As editorial board members, we do not claim that founding a journal is an easy task. Yet, we are counting on the passion, strong will and unbreakable motivation of researchers that share the two goals of the journal outlined in the opening of this editorial both within the Arab region, in the diaspora and beyond in the global international community. We need to also consider the fact that conducting research in the context of Arab countries is not without challenges. Lambert *et al.* (2019) outlined such challenges which include, for example, the traditional expectations regarding conducting research in the Global West such as sample expectations, impact factor challenges, difficulty of finding dedicated reviewers, an "invitation-only academic system" (p. 189), publishing in trendy topics, having to maneuver through diverse "power dynamics" and a general lack of understanding for novel non-traditional topics. Similarly, Elbanna *et al.* (2020) and Zahra (2011) address similar and additional challenges when conducting empirical management research in the Arab World particularly, bearing in mind, the associated institutional transformations currently taking place in the region.

The history of leading global bodies such as the "Academy of Management" and leading global journals such as the *Journal of Macromarketing* presents positive lessons about the fruitful outcome of collective enthusiasm toward reaching desired goals given right persistence and motivation (Hunt, 2011). The founding editor recounts the chronological events that led to the success of the *Journal of Macromarketing* that started with a series of seminars followed by the assembly of the editorial advisory board. In the midst, a series of correspondences occurred between the editor and the key board members; brave and pioneering scholars who welcomed and believed in this novel (and noble) initiative at the time and were willing to expend dedicated time and effort because they subscribed to the timeliness of the journal founding in the 1980s. To convene different streams of scholarship, several conferences were organized with proceedings representing journal issues subject to successful peer review. Sponsorship was also one of the key success factors. In the case of the *Journal of Macromarketing*, several institutions sponsored the journal (Hunt, 2011). For *MSAR*, this can be a potential route in the future as sponsored research awards are planned especially for PhD students who have manuscripts (conceptual or empirical) that address sustainability issues in the Arab context, whether they are based in institutions within Arab countries or worldwide.

The founding of journals is indeed a process that matures gradually with time and is a many-to-many conversation. One day, we will document our success in a dedicated manuscript and recount to the international community the proud history of *MSAR*. As the editors of *Business Ethics: A European Review* (now re-branded into *Business Ethics, the Environment and Responsibility*) noted, our efforts are "beyond suppression" (Jamali *et al.*, 2020c).

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Note

1. For a discussion on delineating the different facets of responsible management research, see Laasch *et al.* (2021).

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