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Family Involvement in Emirati College Student Education and Linkages to High and Low Achievement in the Context of the United Arab Emirates

Abstract

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, tribal familial affiliations form the basis of society with opinions and viewpoints of parents and other family elders heavily influencing the decisions of younger Emiratis. Social transitions caused by rapid and progressive economic development have affected each consecutive generation with a vastly different set of social circumstances than the preceding generation. This paper presents results of a study investigating the types and extent of family involvement in Emirati students' college education using an online bilingual survey with 1173 participants and telephone interview with 30 randomly selected guardians. Findings of the study indicate the presence of a generational gap in education and experience between Emirati students and family elders. The generational gap may lead to ineffective academic support and career preparation.

Keywords

Higher Education, United Arab Emirates, Family Involvement, social transitions

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EMIRATI COLLEGE STUDENT EDUCATION AND LINKAGES TO HIGH AND LOW ACHIEVEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has one of the fastest growing economies in the Middle East with the capability of creating tens of thousands of new private sector jobs annually (Al Ali, 2013). Yet, the UAE has experienced one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the region (Sharif, 2013). Sharif, supported by Toledo (2013), adds that in 2010 youth unemployment approached 12% and is expected to increase as an estimated 13,000 Emirati college graduates enter the workforce each year. At this rate, the number of first-time Emirati job seekers would rise to over 200,000 (nearly 25% of the entire Emirati population) before the year 2025.

Studies, including Al Ali (2013), Sharif (2013) and Toledo (2013), have found that the most substantial obstacles to *Emiratization*—incorporating Emiratis into the workforce—are the preferences, held by many Emiratis, to work in the public sector rather than private sector and the preference among some private sector employers to employ foreigners, whom they perceive as more qualified, more experienced, and less costly to employ than Emiratis. Sharif sums up the situation as, “National employees cannot find jobs [in the private sector] that match their skills at the reservation wage, which is determined largely by the opportunity wage rate in the public sector” (p. 160).

Emiratization policies have focused on improving the education and skills of Emirati employees and establishing labor laws that encourage private sector employers to hire and

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develop Emirati employees. However, little has been done to understand the family factors, including family involvement in college student education, that affect the educational experiences and career decisions of Emirati youth in this rapidly developing, yet tribal based society.

In summary works using longitudinal data on education in Western contexts such as *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement* (Henderson & Berla, 1994) and *Annual Synthesis 2002: A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement* (Mapp & Henderson, 2002) family factors and family involvement students' education are cited as major factors for academic achievement and making informed career decisions. Little literature exists family involvement in college student education in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and the extent to which family involvement is linked to academic performance. To develop effective educational policies, linkages between academic achievement and the two related factors of family characteristics and family involvement behaviors must be understood.

In the case of the UAE, rapid development over a span of about half a century and an influx of foreign labor to fuel this development have led to important economic and social changes since nationalization in 1971 (Alsayegh, 2001). Each consecutive generation of Emiratis experienced different circumstances in the rapidly developing society, yet parents and other family elders tended to influence the decisions, attitudes, and opinions of youth in the tribally based society (Alsayegh, 2001; Crabtree, 2007; Ridge, 2010; Simidi & Kamali, 2004). This paper examines the types of family involvement that exist in Emirati college student education and the extent to which each type of family involvement is linked to academic achievement. Family characteristics that are linked to academic achievement are also examined.

The paper begins with a literature review containing a brief summary of family characteristics and family involvement behaviors affecting academic performance in Western contexts, a brief overview of the Emirati intergenerational contexts, and an explanation of family involvement in Emirati college student education. The methodology section describes the study and the two survey instruments. The results and discussion section describes the participants then reports and discusses the results. The conclusion summarizes the findings, recommends actions to be taken by policy makers and educators to maximize the benefits of family involvement in Emirati college student education, and discusses the limitations of the study.

Literature Review

The literature review is divided into two major sections, family involvement in Western educational settings, and intergenerational gaps caused by rapid development in the Emirati context. First, a brief summary of family characteristics and family involvement behaviors in Western contexts illustrates the complexity of interrelated factors that affect academic performance. Next, a brief overview of the Emirati intergenerational contexts is presented followed by an explanation of family involvement in Emirati college student education. A brief summary concludes the section.

Family Involvement in Western Educational Settings

This section discusses family characteristics and family involvement behaviors that are linked to academic performance in Western contexts. Family involvement in all levels of education are discussed.

Family Characteristics. As early as the late 1980s studies in the United States associated high academic achievement with relatively high socioeconomic status (Eagle, 1989). However, when the components of socioeconomic status were studied individually, researchers reported that socioeconomic status alone was not linked to high academic achievement. Eagle found five key attributes associated with high student performance: a)

mother's education, b) father's education, c) family income, d) father's occupation, and e) number of key possessions (cars, dishwasher, TVs). Eagle hypothesized that financial stability enabled families to provide a rich and stimulating home environment.

By the mid-1990s in the United States, alternate family structures increasingly replaced original two-parent households (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Eagle (1989) reported that students from households with two original parents tended to have high academic performance, while students from single parent households, had low performance. Milne (1989) and Eagle and found that males living without fathers exhibited lower academic performance than males living with fathers, while females from single parent households tended to perform better than females from two-parent households. Pong, Dronkers, and Hampden-Thompson (2003) found students living with one original parent and one stepparent often exhibited lower academic performance than students living with two original parents. Pong et al. hypothesized that stepparents may have other obligations that limited resources available to the blended family. Heard (2007) supported Pong et al., stating that lower student performance often accompanied changes in the family structure, such as the death of a parent, divorce, remarriage, or the cohabitation of an unmarried biological parent with another adult, especially when such changes happen early in the student's life.

Parents' presence in the home and parental expectations of student achievement were found to affect students' academic performance. Maternal working patterns were examined by Eagle (1989) and Milne (1995) who found that students from families with higher socioeconomic level performed better when mothers were not working, while students from low socioeconomic level families performed better when mothers were working even when the families were headed by single working mothers. Muller (1995) found that students across all socioeconomic levels performed better when mothers worked part-time. The mother's presence in the home, according to Heard (2007), was more important for academic performance earlier in childhood while the father's presence became more important later in the student's life. Henry, Plunkett, and Sands (2008) added that, in some population subgroups, high maternal expectations of males was linked to high achievement.

Stevenson and Baker (1987) and Schlecter and Milevsky (2010) found that students who have involved parents performed better regardless of parental education or socioeconomic status. Other findings were that family involvement was more concentrated on younger students than older students and family involvement over time was more consistent for females than for males. Catsambis and Garland (1997), Catsamis (1998), and Carter (2002) found high achievement associated with paying for private schools, engaging private tutors, promoting educational extracurricular activities, communicating frequently with school administration, maintaining strict supervision at home, talking regularly about post-secondary education opportunities, maintaining high levels of communication with students, expressing concern about learning opportunities in school, and engaging in routine activities such as discussing the events of the day.

Academic performance in students was adversely affected by the breakdown of the family structure, such as parental separation, divorce, or the death of a parent (Kells 1993). When family structure breaks down, parents may have less time to devote to their students because they have their own emotional issues to deal with or because they might need to spend more time outside the home earning money to make up for the contribution of the lost parent. Specific issues that are linked to poor academic performance include lack of family concern for student progress, little or no family contact with school representatives even when requested by the school, little or no monitoring of or encouragement of students to complete homework assignments, and lack of support at home for school rules and disciplinary procedures.

Students with high academic performance tended to have friends who thought that attending class, studying, making good grades, attending high school, and graduating high school were important while students with low academic performance tended to have friends who did not think that according to Engerman and Bailey (2006). Further, educational institutions can help low performing students develop alternate support systems in situations in which families are not supportive of or are indifferent to student achievement. Engerman and Baily suggest creating positive peer pressure to support to at-risk students by encouraging them to participate in clubs, campus-based hobbies, inspirational activities, or peer mentoring.

Family Involvement Behaviors. Factors for successful family involvement programs in educational institutions was examined by Fillwalk-Zygmunt (2006). To be effective, communication must be two-way between the educational institution and family. Families must be provided with support in knowing how best to help their students. Institutions must support family efforts that encourage students to learn at home, provide meaningful opportunities for families to volunteer at school, offer families some input in decision-making at the school, and increase community involvement to create linkages that support both the educational institution and families.

Some families, cautioned Graves-Smith (2006), choose not to be involved in institutional activities or programs, but still genuinely support their students' success by supporting them at home. Altschul (2011), Jeynes (2011), and Bower and Griffin (2011) added that high student performance is more strongly associated with family involvement at home rather than family involvement with the educational institution. Reasons that some well-meaning families avoid interaction with educational institutions were listed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995). The most common reason is the perception among family members that they do not have a role to play (or do not have the skills to play that role). Members of other families perceive that their involvement does not make a difference, or teachers or students do not want their involvement. Clark (1993) stated that uninvolved families often feel they lack "knowledge of how to help" (p. 104) or do not want to modify their involvement even when made aware of the benefits of doing so (Oyserman, Brickman, & Rhodes, 2007). Cripps and Zyromski (2009) noted links connecting negative student self-images and poor academic performance to families who were not encouraging or not supportive of their educational experience.

Prior poor academic experience and low language proficiency often accompany poor academic achievement, especially with students who study in a non-native language according to Green et al. (2008) and Engstrom and Tinto (2008). Further, Gofen (2008) explained that, despite their good intentions, first generation immigrant parents, who often lack both post-secondary education experience and English language proficiency, are often unable to support students effectively through their post-secondary educational experience. This is related to the Emirati context because the majority of post-secondary Emirati students study in English not their native Arabic and many of their parents do not have post-secondary education experience.

Summary of Family Involvement in Western Educational Settings. A synthesis of the literature on family involvement in Western contexts has shown three distinct groupings of family involvement behaviors that have been linked to academic performance and which will be used as constructs for this study: *enablers* – financial, logistical, or physical supports aiding students to persist in their studies; *engagements* – direct and demonstrable interactions among students, families, and educators; and *influences* – interactions intended to lead to change in student attitudes, opinions, or behaviors. The study examines linkages between each type of family involvement and academic performance. The study also examines key family characteristics associated in the literature with academic performance including: age, gender, location, family size, number of siblings in college, education of parents, working status of parents, marital status of parents, and marital status of students.

Intergenerational Gaps Caused by Rapid Development

The area now known as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been a regional trading center for thousands of years with economic roots in cultivating dates, animal husbandry, and pearling (Alsayegh, 2001). Traders from as far away as China visited fairs and expositions by the first century BCE and by the seventh century CE trading outposts had been established by traders spreading Islam (Alabed, Vine, Hellyer & Vine, 2008).

After economic ebbs and tides, the economy stagnated in the early years of the 20th century (Alsayegh, 2001). The first major cause of economic stagnation was the decline in demand for natural pearls in the early 1900s after discovery of the synthetic pearling process in Japan. The second major cause was the virtual isolation experienced for a century and a half - up to 1967 - as a British protectorate. In 1971 the seven "Trucial States" joined together to form the United Arab Emirates, with a leadership ready to invest newly secured oil revenues to modernize the country and improve the lives of the people.

The social structure in United Arab Emirates (UAE), and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, is based on tribal familial affiliations in which opinions and viewpoints of parents and other family elders heavily influencing the decisions of younger Emiratis (Alabed et al., 2008). At the same time, rapid and progressive economic development have caused social transitions in which each consecutive generation was raised with a vastly different set of social circumstances than the preceding generation. This section describes social transitions that define the experiences three generations, college-agers at the time of this study, their parents, and their grandparents.

Grandparents' Generation. Before unification, the people of the region experienced a lifestyle reflecting the harsh realities of life at the time. The region lacked most modern social and physical infrastructures. Most people had no formal education. The limited available health care services were provided mainly by visiting missionaries. Most people subsisted through fishing, date cultivation, and animal husbandry not unlike pre-historic times (Alsayegh, 2001). Immediately following unification, the nation's leadership began the process of building the country's modern physical and social infrastructure (Alabed et al., 2008).

Parents' Generation. The post-unification period was characterized by construction and expansion. Modern comforts and devices were introduced and contact with the outside world was re-established. Basic social services, including education and health care, were set up and provided to Emiratis free of charge (Alabed et al., 2008). The transitory lifestyle gave way to a sedentary lifestyle in which Emiratis traded their camels for cars, shopped in supermarkets and grocery stores rather than open air markets, and began integrating technology into everyday life (Alsayegh, 2001).

Alabed et al. (2008), Alsayegh (2001), and Toledo (2013) concurred that a wave of Emiratis, educated at a basic level in the fledgling educational system, eagerly left school before graduating to accept public sector posts that offered relatively short working hours (7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.), generous salary and benefits packages, and other incentives. Others joined the police or military, earning relatively high salaries despite their low education levels. Even so, an influx of expatriate labor at every skill and education level was needed to facilitate the increasing rate of economic expansion (Al Ali, 2013).

The UAE national citizen population increased rapidly after nationalization (Alsayegh, 2001). Despite a family structure shift from extended to nuclear families, later marriages for women, and a decrease in births per woman, family sizes increased. Tabutin and Shoumaker (2005) in *The Demography of the Arab World and Middle East from the 1950s to 2000s: A survey of change*, attributed the population growth to advancements in healthcare which dramatically reduced maternal, child, and infant mortality. By 2005 census figures revealed that 51% of the Emirati population was age 15 or younger (Sharif, 2013).

By the early 2000s, technology, including the internet, computers, and mobile phones, had become an important part of the UAE's burgeoning economy (Al Abed et al., 2008), and the first technologically trained cohorts were graduating from public post-secondary institutions expecting to find jobs. In 2002, the federal government approved a plan to Emiratize federal government jobs to absorb unemployed Emirati men and women and to decrease dependence on foreign workers (Al Ali, 2013).

College-agers' Generation. Emirati women, educated and ready to contribute to the development of the country, entered the workforce in large numbers by 2010. According to Al Ali (2013), by 2011 gender parity in employment was reduced to 5% – 71% women to 76% men – with women forming “two thirds of the government sector workers and 20% of the diplomatic corps” (p. 32). Women worked in the police, military special forces, customs, and were members of the Federal National Council (FNC). Public sector employment was especially appealing to Emirati women who often preferred working in “women's sections” separated from men and desired shorter working hours to have more time to take of children and family matters (Shallal, 2011).

The need for finding high paying employment was increased by family pressure to marry (Crabtree, 2007; Schevanevaldt et al., 2005). Even though marriage was occurring later in the college-ager's generation than the parents' generation – on average from about 15 years old to about 23 years old for women and from about 20 years old to 25 years old for men (Tabutin & Shoumaker, 2005), families often pressured young women to marry as soon as a suitable man proposed and young men to marry when they had secured their first job. As a result, some young men, in preparation for marriage, borrowed large sums of money to pay for wedding parties, bride dowries, honeymoon trips, and other preparations to satisfy the social and familial expectations, leaving them heavily in debt (Al Ali, 2013). Expecting this expensive life-changing event has pressured young Emirati men to seek employment in occupations that they perceive as high paying rather than personally suitable or interesting.

Summary of Intergenerational Experience Gap. As shown in Table 1, the generational gap is characterized by parents and grandparents having and improved lifestyle with access to an array of public sector jobs, requiring only a basic education yet providing relatively high salaries and generous benefits. On the other hand, the current college-aged generation faces a saturated public sector job market, forcing them to consider employment in the private sector in competition with highly educated, highly experienced expatriate workers who are willing to accept lower salaries and less desirable working conditions offered in the private sector.

Concerns surfaced that Emirati culture and traditional values were being adversely affected by the rapid economic expansion and exposure to foreign cultures. In the traditional Emirati value system, according to Simidi and Kamali (2004), family expectations and the Islamic religion held males financially and socially responsible for their nuclear and extended families. However, studies by Crabtree (2007) and Schevanevaldt et al. (2005) reported growing concerns that young Emirati males, who persisted in post-secondary education only half as frequently as did females by the mid-2000s (Ridge, 2010), may not be adequately prepared to provide for an acceptable lifestyle for their families. Another concern, according to Allagui and Breslow (2011) was open access to foreign cultures via the internet. To communicate on the internet, many young Emiratis started using a hybrid language “Arabish” – Arabic words written using English letters and special characters – rather than Arabic. Although Arabic was the official language used in the public sector, English was used as the medium of instruction in federally funded post-secondary education institutions and in most private sector companies.

Summary of Intergenerational Gaps Caused by Rapid Development. Rapid economic development since 1971 has cause a generational gap between current college age generation, their parents' generation, and their grandparents' generation who experienced

different developmental circumstances. Declining contact between family members, shifting social norms, and deterioration of the Arabic language are seen by some as negative effects of globalization and economic development.

Table 1

Characteristics of Generational Groupings

Grouping	Age Range	Characteristics of Experience
Grandparents	Around 60 years old or older	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults before nationalization (1971) • Recollection of harsh conditions before rapid economic development: most Emiratis transitory; agrarian economy stalled • Left agrarian activities to take public sector jobs with little education during initial infrastructure development • Few women worked outside the home • Few foreigners; Arabic used in business transactions
Parents	Approximately 40 to 55 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults during high growth phase of 1980s – 1990s; • Recollection of economic development; shift to sedentary lifestyle, economy booming • Obtained public sector jobs with basic education especially in military and police • With little financial need to work, few women, although educated, worked outside the home • Influx of mostly regional (Arab and Indian) foreign workers
College-Agers	Approximately 18 to 25 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming into adulthood in globalized knowledge economy with economic growth levelling off • Raised in multicultural technology rich environment with substantial subsidies and benefits for Nationals • Public sector saturated with few jobs available with private sector expanding • Educated, motivated, and career oriented female Emirati graduates seeking jobs in increasing numbers • UAE Nationals only 20% of population; English used in government post-secondary institutions and business transactions

Family Involvement in the UAE Educational Setting

The *Arab Knowledge Report 2010/2011: Preparing Future Generations for the Knowledge Society* (United Nations Development Programme/ Regional Bureau for Arab States and Mohamed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation, 2011) identified increasing family involvement in Emirati students' education as an important factor in achieving educational aims and addressing social and cultural factors. Ridge's (2010) study supported the argument that parents must be more active in their students' education by "demanding higher standards from their students" (p. 29), especially the males. Schools, according to Ridge (2010), faced "a lack of support from parents, often around disciplinary matters" (p. 29) and did not engage in regular communication with parents regarding student progress and achievement. Ridge added that parents who had little or no formal education tended to

expect male students to work as early as possible rather than to pursue education beyond compulsory levels.

According to Wagie and Fox (2005), “Arab societies emphasize the authority of the parents, especially the fathers” (p. 284). Ahmed (2011) concurred stating that Emirati students often made program study choices based on parental expectations, the perceived ease of jobs, and workplace conditions rather than the alignment of skills and aptitudes. Therefore, many Emiratis sought “government jobs so they could follow in their parents’ footsteps” (p. 4). Al Ali (2013) supported Ahmed adding that nepotism, known in the region as “wasta” was commonplace, however, steps were being taken to reduce it.

Section Summary. The literature presented in this section describes important transitions in Emirati society. Bright and Mahdi (2012) noted that, in collectivist societies such as the UAE, the social norms of family groups highly influence the behaviors of the individuals. Over three generations, the economic and social changes have dramatically affected the lives of the Emirati people putting pressure on Emirati youth to balance the perceptions of their elders with the realities of modern life. Understanding the influences that each generation exerts on the consecutive generation and how the influences affect family involvement, academic achievement, and career preparation is crucial.

Limitations

The study consisted of only Emirati students studying at federally funded colleges in the Northern Emirates and did not include Emiratis studying at federally funded universities in other Emirates or private higher education institutions. The gender distribution of students in the college was approximately 3 to 1 (female to male) while for the study the participant ratio was approximately 10 to 1 (females to males).

Asking about family matters in the conservative society of the UAE is a relatively new occurrence and had to be approached with a great deal of cultural sensitivity. Questions were carefully framed and any question that was perceived to be sensitive in any way was re-phrased or removed.

The study only included Emirati college students, so the experiences of the Emiratis who did not attend college could be vastly different.

As a result, although the findings may generalizable, the study serves to develop an understanding of the relationships among home environment, family involvement, and student achievement, which can be used to provide the necessary background understanding for future studies on this topic.

Methodology

This study examined family involvement in Emirati student education and influences on student achievement and career preparation using an online student survey and phone-based guardian survey. In both cases, survey items focused on the following research questions:

- How, and to what extent, are Emirati families involved in their college students’ education?
- Which family involvement behaviors are linked to academic performance?
- Which family characteristics are linked to academic performance?

Research Design

The study was framed using concepts gleaned from the literature then categorized into three interrelated areas: *enablers* -- financial and logistical support; *influencers* -- family involvement that shapes attitudes, beliefs, and opinions; and *engagements* -- family involving two-way interaction, participation, and engagement. Important family characteristics were

also examined. These categories were gleaned by categorizing the factor linked to academic achievement in the literature on Western contexts.

The quantitative research design using an online survey with analysis consisting of correlations and weighted average tables followed on from similar studies cited in the literature. Given the conservative nature of the society and the potential for questions to seem invasive, students were given an online anonymous survey so that they would feel comfortable and give more thoughtful answers.

Online Student Survey. The 66-item online student survey contained three sections. The survey items were based on family involvement behaviors identified in the literature on Western contexts as having linkages to academic achievement. The first section asked students for socio-demographic information including location, family size, family structure, parents' education, parents' marital status, and students' marital status. The next section asked students to indicate the frequency of engaging in key family involvement behaviors using descriptors such as "never," "seldom," "often," or "always" or "daily," "weekly," "monthly," or "less than monthly." The third section asked students to rate their agreement to statements about family involvement in their educational experience and career preparation. The rating used a 5-point Likert scale in which responses of "strongly agree (5)" and "agree (4)" or "always (5)" and "most of the time (4)" indicated high levels of family involvement and responses of "strongly disagree (1)" and "disagree (2)" or "never (1)" and "sometimes (2)" indicated low levels of involvement.

Once compiled, the survey was translated into Arabic by the official college translator then verified and reviewed for cultural sensitivity by the Emirati Dean of Student Affairs. The survey was piloted with a mixed-gender group of 37 students, modified, and administered again with 10 different students, then loaded into an online delivery system and made accessible through the college portal. The college management requested that all students in the college be given an opportunity to answer the survey, so an email went out to all students directing them to a link on the college portal. As the survey was voluntary, it was estimated that only about 800 students would complete the survey out of the total population of about 3,000 students. A total of 1173 students answered the survey exceeding the expectations of the researchers. The online delivery system exported the survey data, cumulative GPA, and other non-personally identifiable such program, credential, semester level, and gender, an excel spreadsheet.

Guardian Telephone Survey. The 29-item guardian telephone survey, delivered in Arabic, was designed to supplement and support the student survey. Items were translated into Arabic by the official college translator, then verified and vetted for cultural sensitivity by the Emirati Dean of Student Affairs. The survey was piloted with the first five guardians from a list of 100 randomly generated guardian phone numbers. Due to the novelty of requesting personal information by phone, the target was intentionally kept low at 30 completed surveys. The purpose of the guardian survey was to add support, depth, and breadth to the student survey data, not to conduct a direct comparison.

Analysis of Student and Guardian Surveys. Data analysis consisted of two phases. In the first phase, student and guardian survey data were coded and run through SPSS and StatPLUS statistical software packages to obtain descriptive statistics and correlations (Pearson r).

In the second phase of analysis, tables were constructed using weighted averages to compare the results on survey items grouped by theme. To construct the tables, family involvement constructs were assigned weightings corresponding to their ratings: 1 for "strongly disagree" or "never"; 2 for "disagree" or "sometimes"; 3 for "agree" or "most of the time"; and 4 for "strongly agree" or "always." Student Grade Point Averages (GPA) were weighted by quartiles: 0.25 for first quartile (lowest scores); 0.5 for second quartile (medium low scores); 0.75 for third quartile (medium high scores); and 1 for fourth quartile (high scores).

Relationships between family involvement and home environment factors were examined by averaging the weighted responses for each item and each home environment factor then rounding to the thousandths decimal place (Appendix A). Significant values were established as the highest rating minus 0.005 and the lowest rating plus 0.005.

Relationships between family involvement and academic achievement were examined in a rating table (Appendix B) created by multiplying the weighted family involvement construct indicator by the weighted GPA indicator. Weighted scores were averaged for each family involvement construct and sorted from least to greatest. The mean value for all averages was calculated with the significance level determined at greater than one standard deviation above and below the mean score.

Relationships between academic achievement and home environment factors were examined in a rating table (Appendix B) created by multiplying the weighted GPA indicators by the number of students with each home environment factor, then dividing by the total number of students in each category. The mean score was calculated with the significance levels being determined at greater than one standard deviation above and below the mean.

Results

The results paralleled the intergenerational demographic trends described in the literature and demonstrated that parents of Emirati college students provided encouragement and financial support, whereas, siblings, especially sisters, provided academic guidance and support. Males tended to have higher average GPAs than did females, and males received higher degrees of family involvement in their educational experience. Taken together, these findings reflect the high social pressure placed on Emirati males to become financially responsible for themselves and their families and concerns over male preparedness. Finally, participants often pursued majors that their families believed were important to gain employment with good salary, benefits, and working conditions rather than following their individual desires, aptitudes, and career preferences. Many participants believed that their families would find jobs for them after graduation.

Results of the study are reported and discussed in this section. The participants are described in the first subsection followed by a presentation and discussion of findings in subsections corresponding to the main research questions:

1. How are Emirati families involved their college students education?
2. Which, if any, family involvement behaviors are linked to academic achievement?
3. Which family characteristics are linked to academic performance?

Description of Participants

A little over 1173 students participated in the voluntary study, representing about a third of the total student population. Approximately 90% of the participants were female and 10% of the participants were male. Most students' ages (81%) ranged from 19 to 22 years old and were nearly equally divided between urban (54%) and outlying areas (46%). Half (51%) of the participants had nine or more family members living in their households and most (78%) had at least one sibling studying in a college or university.

Most students were single (88%) and most (74%) lived with at least one parent. Less than a tenth (8%) indicated that their parents were divorced. Students were not asked about having deceased parents.

Most students (95%) were not working. Of the 60 students who were working, 34 were female (3% of female sample) and 26 were male (23% of the male sample). Proportionately, nearly 8 times more males were working than females, and 91% of the married males were working. The findings support the assertions of Ridge (2010), Ridge (2009), and Kamali and Simidi (2004) that males drop out of the educational process earlier

than females and that males are expected to financially support themselves and their families, especially when married.

As shown in Table 2, most students' mothers (79%) and fathers (81%) had secondary education or less with parents of the same student having education levels similar to each other ($r=.566$, $p<.001$).

Table 2

Parent's Education Level

Responses	<u>Father's Education</u>			<u>Mother's Education</u>		
	Frequen cy	%-age / Cumulative		Frequenc y	%-age/ cumulative	
I don't know	129	11%	11%	89	8%	8%
No Education	161	14%	25%	202	17%	25%
Primary School	287	25%	50%	317	27%	51%
Secondary School	343	29%	79%	355	30%	81%
College/University Graduate	212	18%	97%	196	17%	98%
Master's Qualification or Higher	41	3%	100%	14	2%	100%
	1173	100%		1173	100%	

Existence of the generational gap is supported by the findings in which 50% of the parents of college students had no more than a primary education and more than 75% had no post-secondary education experience.

Most (67%) students *used English only in college* both in and outside the classroom to speak to teachers and staff but not to friends, while 31% *spoke English outside the college to friends or family* as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

English Usage

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Not comfortable Speaking English at all	28	2%
Uses English at college only as required in classroom	50	4%
Uses English at college only but not only in classroom	733	63%
Uses English with friends inside and outside college	257	22%
Uses English at home with family members	105	9%
	1173	100%

The combined factors of lack of parental post-secondary educational experience and the infrequent use of English support the arguments of Schlechter and Milevsky (2010),

Engstrom and Tinto (2008) and Gofen (2008), that Emirati students may be disadvantaged. Parents may not know how much time and effort is needed to succeed in post-secondary education, especially in a non-native language, or how to cultivate successful study habits in their students early on in the educational process.

Results suggest that students may be given family responsibilities that causes them to be absent from classes or limit study time as suggested in reasons that students miss classes:

- medical (71%) – sick at hospital, sick at home, or medical appointment,
- family maintenance (53%) – non-medical appointment, taking other family members to appointments, work-related obligations, taking care of sick child or family member,
- personal (21%) – did not feel like attending college or slept in

Families seemed to be tolerant of students’ missing classes for non-medical reasons (53%) with about one fifth (21%) of the students reporting missing classes for no apparent reason.

Table 3 shows that only half (50%) the students’ fathers were working at the time of the study and less than one fifth (16%) had working mothers.

Table 3
Parents’ Employment

Responses	Father’s Employment		Mother’s Employment	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Don’t know	37	3%	12	1%
Not working or retired	549	47%	972	83%
Working	587	50%	189	16%
	1173	100%	1173	100%

The study revealed that 72% of the students in the study believed that their *family would find them jobs when they graduate* and 64% reported that their *families influenced their program decision*. Families headed by parents working in the public sector or by retired fathers and non-working mothers may counsel their children with the best intentions but may not realize how much the workplace has changed in recent years. As long as families are actively encouraging young Emiratis, especially females, who need parental or spousal permission to work (Al Ali, 2013), to seek only public sector positions, little can be done by educational institutions or policy makers to encourage young Emiratis to consider private sector employment.

Research question 1: How are Emirati families involved in their college students’ education?

Family involvement is presented in three categories (Appendix B): enablers -- financial and logistical support, influencers -- family involvement shaping attitudes, beliefs, and opinion; engagements – two way interaction, participation, and engagement.

Enablers - Financial and Logistical Support. Family involvement tended to be highest for financial support, including *providing money for food every day* (95%) and *computer, printer, paper, and other materials needed to study* (92%), was the most frequently provided support. Only working males indicated *not* receiving financial support from their families.

According to Wage and Fox (2005), eligible Emiratis attend federally funded post-secondary institutions without paying for tuition or books. However, students must provide their own supplies and any equipment required for specific programs such as laptop computers, iPads, drawing kits, or other specialized items as well as transportation. The data suggests that the presence of financial support is crucial for college student persistence as the literature indicates (Eagle, 1987; Henderson and Berla, 1994) but is not a factor for academic achievement. As suggested by Engstrom and Tinto (2008) and Gofen (2008), parents who have less than a college education may not know how to support students so that they are academically successful despite their providing the appropriate financial, logistic, and physical support. Results support the literature (Ridge, 2009 & 2010) stating that young males are expected to work as early as possible and provide their own financial support.

Influencers – Family Involvement Shaping Attitudes, Beliefs, and Opinions. Families were generally supportive of students' attending college, as 97% responded that their *families encouraged them to go to college*, and 91% responded that their *families were interested in their progress*. However, only 29% of families *supported participation in college clubs, activities, or sports*, which explains why 81% of the students *did not belong to clubs on campus or off campus*. These findings suggested that family decision-makers did not understand the value of participating in extracurricular activities.

Engagements – Two Way Interaction, Participation, and Engagement. Each of the 18 general engagement behaviors were moderately correlated ($r=.402$ to $r=.475$, $p<.01$) to the other general engagement behaviors and each of the five specific monitoring behaviors were moderately correlated ($r=.315$ to $r=.475$, $p<.01$) to each of the other specific monitoring behaviors. However, there were no significant correlations between engagement behaviors and monitoring behaviors indicating that general engagement behaviors were widespread, while specific monitoring behaviors were concentrated in few families. *Parents* (83%), *sisters* (47%), and *brothers* (31%) most frequently *encouraged students to do well in college*, while students *discussed problems at college* most frequently with *parents* (49%), *sisters* (47%), and *cousins* (28%). Results show that students consult siblings, especially sisters, nearly as much as they do parents, suggesting that siblings may be filling the void when parents have little or no formal education.

Research Question 2: Which Family Involvement Behaviors and Family Characteristics Are Linked to High and Low Achievement?

Relationships were found among family involvement behaviors and family characteristics and student performance measured using student GPA quartile groupings of first quartile or *low* (0 to 0.25) and fourth quartile or *high* (0.75 to 1) performance. Home environment factors that were significant for high performance were non-single marital status, male gender, having a sibling studying at college, parents' post-secondary educations, and mother's retired work status. Only parents' divorced marital status was significantly correlated to low academic performance.

Family involvement behaviors associated with academic support were weakly correlated with low performance, suggesting that families may provide academic support on a reactionary, rather than ongoing basis. Family involvement behaviors most strongly correlated with academic achievement were those related developing a positive outlook toward education and personal skills related to having successful educational experience.

High academic achievement and the corresponding degree of students' family involvement was associated with the following family characteristics:

- **Parents' Marital status – divorced:** More than 40% of the students with divorced parents were in the low category of academic achievement (first quartile) while only 13% were in the high category (fourth quartile). Of students *living with mother only*, more (28%) had low (first quartile) performance than had high (fourth quartile) performance (21%). Of the students who lived *with father only*, twice as many were in the high (fourth quartile) achievement category as low (first quartile) category. Students living with their mothers only would need to assume more of the family responsibilities normally undertaken by fathers, and this could create more stress for the students and leave less time to devote to studies supporting Ridge (2010).
- **Parents' education level:** Higher parental education (Table 2) was linked to higher student performance, similar to the literature's findings (Eagle, 1989; Milne, 1989). However, results suggest that having siblings with post-secondary experience may serve to compensate for not having parents with post-secondary education.

Guardians' Responses Regarding Family Involvement in Education and Career Preparation

The guardians were asked a series of questions about the type and extent of family involvement students receive at home with the following results:

- More than half (57%) of the guardians reported engaging in a discussion with the student about his or her education and/or career preparation at least weekly.
- Less than half (43%) of the guardians reported discussing their expectations of academic achievement with the student often.
- More than a third (37%) of the guardians reported efforts influencing the students' career choice.

The results show that students reported receiving much higher levels of family involvement than guardians reported giving to the students, supporting the student survey results that siblings are often consulted for academic issues rather than guardians. Guardian responses clearly reflected family involvement in career preparation and attempts to influence students' attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about their future careers.

Discussion of Family Involvement Behaviors and Family Characteristics Linked to Student Achievement

This section discusses variances in family involvement by family characteristic and discusses academic achievement when linked to specific variables presented in Appendix B. Specific home environment variables including family size, parents' education level, parents' marital and working statuses, and students' marital and working statuses and were linked to variances type and frequency of family involvement behaviors. High academic achievement was linked to parental education and mother's past or present employed work status. Low academic achievement was linked to parents' being divorced.

Family Size. Results suggested that in families with 10 or more members (more than half the students), parental attention is spread over a large number of children, leaving little time for individual quizzing, discussing, and transporting students to and from extracurricular activities. Larger family size was linked to high student achievement when older siblings have post-secondary experience.

Parents' Education. Students with mothers or fathers with *No Education/Don't Know* (9%) had the lowest index scores for most engagement and four influence items while students with mothers or fathers having *At Least Post-Secondary Education* had the highest score in two engagement items, two influence items, and financial support items. In the guardian data, higher education level was moderately correlated with:

- *belief that family should be involved in students' education* ($r= 0.4, p<0.01$);
- *belief that the guardian has the skills to help the students* ($r= 0.56, p<0.01$);

- *willingness to learn more about helping student succeed* ($r= 0.42, p<0.01$);
- *frequency of discussing academic expectations* ($r= 0.44, p<0.01$);
- *level of involvement in college experience* ($r= 0.35, p<0.01$);
- *frequency of communicating with college representatives* ($r= 0.37 p<0.01$); and
- *frequency of accepting invitations to college* ($r= 0.33 p<0.01$).

In summary, family involvement was concentrated in the areas of financial support and general engagements and influences rather than in specific academic support. High academic performance was linked to parents' having at least secondary education, which supports the literature (Eagle, 1987; Milne, 1995) that links higher parental education levels to higher student academic achievement.

Parents' Working Status. Students with *working* or *retired* mothers had significant index scores for two engagement items, six influence items, and five financial and logistical support items and higher academic achievement. The evidence suggests that employed or retired mothers were actively involved in their students' education or expressed higher expectations for their students to succeed supporting the literature (Crabtree, 2007; Tabutin & Shumaker, 2005) that states that older women in Emirati society are influential in their families. When women are better educated and have work experience, they may serve as role models and be better positioned to provide academic support. Perhaps employed or retired women contribute financial support to their students further promoting academic success.

Students' Marital Status and Working Status. Students who were *married*, *divorced*, or *widowed* had low scores on four engagement and four financial and logistical support items. Students who are themselves working and/or parents have little leisure time to socialize with extended family members and would likely depend mostly on themselves or their spouses for financial and logistical, emotional, and academic support.

Parents' Marital Status. Having divorced parents (8%) was the only home environment variable that was significantly correlated with low achievement, as suggested by the literature (Eagle, 1989; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jaynes, 2007).

Family Involvement Differences for Males and for Females. In the gender category, *males* had the highest number of significant rating scores in engagement and involvement. The results for females were not significant for any family involvement category, and only 2% more females were in the high achievement category than in the low achievement category. The results suggest a positive correlation between family involvement and academic achievement ($r=.667, p<.01$) in the case of the males, thus supporting the literature that high levels of family involvement are linked to high achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

The literature suggests that family involvement is more consistent for females than for males in that family involvement decreases for males at higher levels of education but remains constant for females throughout their educational experience (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). This trend was not observed in this study. Since females outnumber males nearly two to one in post-secondary education, Emirati families may feel that young males warrant more engagement to ensure successful completion of their degrees and entry into the workforce so they can become financially responsible for their nuclear and extended families, as suggested by (Simidi & Kamali, 2004).

Conclusion

The findings from this study indicated that the students with the most engagement behaviors were males and that males had proportionally higher academic performance than females. Nearly all students, except working males, received financial support from their families, and most students and guardians reported high emotional support and strong

encouragement to study. However, academic support, including providing an atmosphere conducive to studying at home and assisting with college work, was often lacking. Family involvement behaviors most associated with high achievement are enablers, influences, and engagements, respectively.

The home environment factors most associated with student achievement were marital status, male gender, mother or father with post-secondary education, and mother retired. The family involvement behavior most associated with low achievement was having divorced parents.

As suggested by the literature, elements of Emirati family structure and social life may affect student academic achievement negatively or positively. Extended family living situations put pressure on family financial resources and decrease the ability of the parents to provide the higher number of children in the household with academic support. However, students in extended families may have more college aged siblings or aunts, uncles, or cousins of similar ages who could provide support when the parents are unable. Students with divorced parents also tended to have less financial support.

Results from both the student and parent surveys indicated that families are generally supportive of their students' education. However, academic support, including providing an atmosphere conducive to studying at home and assisting with college work, was often lacking. Family members with low education levels may not know how best to support students who are exhibiting low academic achievement although there was evidence that family members were trying to support their students, which provides evidence of a generational gap in experience between parents and students.

The availability of older siblings and other extended family members may help to fill the gap in support left by parents who have little educational experience. Working sisters, as indicated by the student survey and guardian survey, are increasingly advising, guiding, and serving as guardians for their younger siblings.

Families headed by parents working in the public sector or by retired fathers and non-working mothers may counsel their children with the best intentions but may not realize how much the workplace has changed in recent years. As long as families are actively encouraging young Emiratis, especially females, who need parental or spousal permission to work (Al Ali, 2013), to seek only public sector positions, little can be done by educational institutions or policy makers to encourage young Emiratis to consider private sector employment.

Coming from different economic environments, family elders may influence students to make program study choices in areas that do not match their skills and aptitudes in order to gain a credential perceived to be valuable for public sector employment which has become saturated. In addition, students believed that family members would find jobs for them even though measures are being taken to root out poor hiring practices such as nepotism, or hiring based on family influence, known as "wasta" in the UAE.

Recommendations

To reshape the potentially counter-productive family influences mentioned in the previous section, a partnership must be forged between educational institutions and labor market policy makers. Post-secondary institutions and schools must create initiatives to raise awareness among students and their families of the demands of the workplace in a modern knowledge economy. Labor policy makers must strive to secure work environments in the private sector that allow Emiratis, especially females, to have more attractive working conditions. For example, working conditions can be made more attractive by creating work spaces allowing Emiratis, especially females, to have more personal space in mixed-gender work environments. Timings can be made more flexible to allow current and future Emirati employees to retain their familial and community priorities and to achieve an acceptable balance between home and work lives.

Recommendations for Post-secondary Educational Institutions and Schools

- **Offering career guidance** at all levels, including identifying a variety of occupations as early as primary school and encouraging students to explore and match their own skills, aptitudes, competencies, and interests to occupations in which those skills and attributes are important
- **Promoting job satisfaction**, rather than a high salary and favorable working conditions, as the rationale for choosing an occupation
- Among students and their families, stressing the benefits of **extracurricular involvement** at secondary and post-secondary levels
- **Providing peer mentoring and tutoring** to post-secondary students who are identified as needing support in academic subjects, study skills development, and soft skills development
- In post-secondary institutions, **promoting workplace integration** that emphasizes participation in private sector employment through capstone projects, collaborative events, joint initiatives, and consulting projects between schools and employers

Recommendations for Labor Market Policy Makers

- **Developing labor policies** that encourage private sector employers to create suitable work environments that provide Emiratis with enough flexibility to achieve an acceptable home/work balance. An increased participation of Emirati women, the largest untapped human resource in the UAE's economy (Habbash, 2010), and of working students who are seeking to get the experience desired by the workplace to match their degrees can only happen if the employers becomes more flexible. Increased flexibility can be achieved through initiatives such as part-time work, job-share options, in-house child care facilities, entry-level positions with reduced hours, company-provided transportation to employees in remote areas, and peer mentors who help ease the employees' introduction into private sector companies' corporate cultures, which may be unfamiliar and intimidating to first-time employees.
- **Initiating awareness campaigns for private sector employers**, campaigns that provide solid data supporting the hiring and developing of Emiratis as a cost effective alternative to employing non-nationals.

The UAE Vision 2021 (2010) document stresses that “efforts to prosper will not come at the expense of Emirati’s strong and healthy emotional balance” (p. 4), so traditions, culture, and language must remain “a crucial matter of national pride and social stability” (p. 7). Preparing Emirati youth to enter private sector employment is essential to providing sustainable employment for future generations of Emiratis while promoting the economic vision of the country.

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Appendix A

*Study Constructs Sorted by Percentage Indicating Frequency or Agreement
(Agree/ Strongly Agree or Always / Most of the Time)*

Q#	Family Involvement Shaping Attitudes, Values, Opinions	%- age
Q56	My family encouraged me to go to college	97%
Q52	My family is very interested in my academic progress.	91%
Q48	My family insists that I respect my teachers and follow the college rules.	88%
Q40	My family stresses the importance of good grades.	84%
Q29	My family is complimentary when I get good grades.	76%
Q54	My family influenced my chosen field of study.	64%
Q47	My family shows disapproval if I miss college when I am not ill.	62%
Q30	My family shows disapproval if I get bad grades.	53%
Q44	My family supports my participation in college clubs, activities, or sports.	29%
Q57	I am considering or pursuing a major I don't like in order to please my family.	15%
Q#	Financial and Logistical Support	%- age
Q49	My family provides money for food every day.	95%
Q36	My family provides the computer, printer, paper, and other tools I need to study.	92%
Q37	My family ensures that I am at college in time for my classes.	82%
Q46	My family hires a tutor to help me with my college work.	15%
Q#	Family Interaction and Engagement	%- age
Q27	I spend leisure time with my family at least once per week.	75%
Q32	I allow my family to use the college portal to check my grades and attendance.	72%
Q31	I inform my family about my grades.	68%
Q65	I would do better if I had more support from my family.	68%
Q34	I tell my family when I have a project, paper, or test to prepare for.	67%
Q39	My family limits the amount of time I watch TV, play video games, and talk on the phone because it may interfere with my studies.	65%
Q50	My family asks me about my friends at college.	63%
Q45	My family encourages me to speak to my teacher, counselor, or supervisor, when I have a problem at college.	62%
Q41	My family tries to limit the amount of time that I can visit with friends when I have college the next day.	52%
Q38	My family encourages me to get enough rest to be alert in college each day.	49%
Q33	My family checks to see that I've done my homework and other academic tasks.	33%
Q35	Someone in my family will quiz me to help me study before a test.	10%

Appendix B

Significant Rating Table Results for Student Achievement

<i>Home Environment Factors Significant for Low Achievement</i>	Rating
Parents Divorced	0.503

<i>Home Environment Factors Significant for High Achievement</i>	Rating
Student Marital Status M/D/W	0.667
Gender – Male	0.675
Brother studying at HCT	0.681
Mother Post-Secondary Education	0.686
Father Post-Secondary Education	0.688
Mother Retired	0.714

<i>Family Involvement Survey Items Significant for low Achievement</i>	Rating
Q35: Someone in my family will quiz me before an exam.	0.222
Q46: My family hires a tutor to help me with my college work.	0.237
Q62: My family will not let me work when I graduate college.	0.239
Q57: I am pursuing a major I don't like to please my family.	0.274

<i>Family Involvement Survey Items Significant for High Achievement</i>	Rating
Q55: I work hard in college to satisfy my family.	0.516
Q53: I am passionate about my chosen field of study.	0.519
Q38: My family encourages me to get enough sleep.	0.522
Q60: I think students with high family involvement are more successful.	0.527
Q29: My family is complementary when I get good grades.	0.530
Q37: My family ensures I am at college in time for my classes.	0.539
Q40: My family stresses the importance of getting good grades.	0.541
Q52: My family is very interested in my academic progress.	0.556
Q56: My family encouraged me to go to college.	0.567
Q48: My family insists I respect my teachers and follow the college rules.	0.570
Q58: I work hard in college to satisfy myself.	0.583
Q36: My family provides the computer, printer, and other items for college.	0.594
Q49: My family provides money for food every day.	0.612

About the Authors

Georgia M. Daleure currently holds the position of Program Chair, General Studies (Social Science, Humanities, History, Global Studies & English Communication) in the Higher Colleges of Technology. Dr. Georgia completed a Bachelor of Science Specializing in Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management at Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, USA. Her further studies included a Master of Arts in Teaching Adults and Doctorate in Educational Leadership specializing in Adult Education and Curriculum as well as Assessment Development. Prior to coming to the UAE, she was employed in both public higher education and private not-for-profit training and placement services. Dr. Georgia seeks by her research to contribute to best practices in education leading to successful employment of Emiratis and holistic sustainability in the UAE.

Rozz Albon's extensive career as an Educational Psychologist has ranged from lecturing to Director of Teaching and Learning at Government universities and identifying special teaching initiatives at a private university and herself been the recipient of six various teaching and research awards. She is currently the Chair of Faculty Education at Sharjah Women's College and teaches in the Bachelor of Education Early Years and Primary Education Programs specializing in research, and leadership, administration and management. Her PhD emanated from her passion and interest in the most able and gifted of children which then resulted in a book on young gifted children. Her research has culminated in over 75 publications including giftedness, motivation, teaching and learning models, teaching in English, the development of a team learning model and most recently, family involvement and Emirati college student achievement which culminated in several joint publications.

Khaleel Hinkston received his doctorate in Counseling Psychology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1991. Prior to this, he served as an Educational Opportunity Program Counselor/College Recruiter and later held the position of Assistant Director of Outreach Services for California State University, Bakersfield (his alma mater). He worked in various mental health related settings while serving in the US Army in the 1970's. His post doctorate work experience includes twelve years employed by the Veterans Affairs of Western New York Healthcare System. Five of those years, he served as the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Treatment Program Coordinator and seven years as a clinician in the Mental Health Clinic. During his stay in the Middle East he has taught psychology at Abu Dhabi University (United Arab Emirates) and currently serves as a college counselor/occasional teacher for the Higher Colleges of Technology, Sharjah.

Tarifa Ajaiif has 13 years' experience in Student Affairs in higher education organizations in United Arab Emirates. She currently occupies the position of the Executive Dean of Student Services at Higher Colleges of Technology. Her academic qualification includes a Doctorate in Education – Management and Policy in Higher Education from the British University in Dubai (2009-2014) and Executive Master of Business Administration - University of Sharjah (2001-2003). Tarifa has presented in several conferences such as Women's As Global Leader organized by Zayed University, NASPA Gulf Regional Conferences and in BELMAS-UAE presenting about Cultural Capital for Emirati Social Responsibility Practices.

John McKeown has been a teacher since 1984. He has taught in Japan, Turkey, Egypt, United Kingdom and UAE. John is currently working at the business department in the Higher Colleges of Technology, in Sharjah, UAE where he has been employed for 9 years.

He teaches a variety of business related subjects including operation Management, business math, statistics and management information systems. His has a keen interest in statistics and devising innovative methods of statistical analysis and design incorporating spreadsheet design and presentation of statistics. John has a bachelor's degree in IT and a Masters of Business Administration, both from the University of Kent in the UK.