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# Editorial: Envisioning the future: elevating *MSAR*'s impact in management and sustainability research in the Arab world

Editorial

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## Introduction

In light of the concerns and potential regarding management research in Arab countries (Elbanna *et al.*, 2020; Zahra, 2011), and in response to the growing global and regional emphasis on sustainable practices, *Management and Sustainability: An Arab Review (MSAR)* journal was established in 2022 as a vital international peer-reviewed journal. This journal aims to bridge the gap in knowledge and contribute significantly to the discourse on management and sustainability practices in the Arab context, thereby directly contributing to the economic advancement and addressing the unique challenges of this troubled region (El-Bassiouny *et al.*, 2022). The first issue of *MSAR* was published online in April 2022, marking the opening of a new platform for scholarly dialogue and research dissemination in the Arab world. This short journey of the journal to its current standing is a testament to the collective effort of various stakeholders, including our dedicated editorial team, Emerald Publishing, authors, reviewers and the wider academic community across the Arab region and beyond. The visionary leadership of El-Bassiouny as the founding editor has been decisive in setting the journal on its path of growth and impact, laying a strong foundation for its future developments.

In January 2023, I was honored with an invitation from the founding editor, Noha El-Bassiouny, to join *MSAR* as a Co-Editor-in-Chief. In January 2024, following Professor El-Bassiouny's decision to step down, I stepped into the role of Editor-in-Chief, committed to steering the journal toward its vision. Given my new capacity, in planning for this editorial, I purposely chose not to conduct an analysis of the content, themes or trends in submissions and publications that have characterized the journal so far. At this early stage, I deemed it more important to outline a forward-looking vision for the journal. This approach signals a strategic focus on shaping a pathway informed by our accomplishments to date, aiming to enhance the journal's impact and relevance in its field, rather than retrospectively examining our initial body of work. Having stated this, the subsequent sections will articulate our strategy on advancing *MSAR* toward adding significant milestones in line with its vision.

## Strategic framework for shaping the future of *MSAR*

In this section, I outline a strategic framework designed to propel *MSAR* toward achieving its visionary goals. The dialogue spans several key dimensions, each highlighting an essential element of the journal's growth, its dedication to research distinction, and its impact on society. Firstly, I define the journal's scope, then discuss four content-oriented themes – challenges in the Arab World, viewpoint and commentary series, practical implications and regional research integration. Subsequently, focus shifts to three vital operational facets aimed at refining *MSAR*'s editorial practices. This includes initiatives to strengthen the editorial team and enhance the review process more efficient, and foster support for pertinent projects. These holistic measures are intentionally crafted to markedly enhance the journal's quality indicators as discussed in the last section.



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### 1. Journal scope and coverage

*MSAR* is dedicated to advancing both management and sustainability discussions that offer insights pertinent to the Arab region. Importantly, the journal transcends being a mere conduit for sustainability discourse; it embraces a wide array of management subjects that intersect with sustainability concerns and the region's future prospects (El-Bassiouny *et al.*, 2022). We invite a diverse spectrum of scholarly work, ranging from conceptual frameworks to empirical investigations, and we are particularly keen on interdisciplinary endeavors that bridge sustainability and management, intertwining these with adjacent fields. Our editorial policy is inclusive of various research methodologies, valuing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Geographically, while *MSAR* is rooted in the Arab world, its scope is not limited to this region alone. We welcome contributions from countries like Turkey, South Africa and Malaysia, which, though outside the Arab League, share cultural or contextual affinities with the Arab world. This inclusive approach allows *MSAR* to serve as a nexus for regional and international scholarly engagement, promoting a diverse array of perspectives that contribute to the enrichment of managerial and sustainability practices within and beyond Arab countries. Such a stance is essential for clarifying *MSAR*'s unique position and mission vis-à-vis the scholarly community, emphasizing its role as a forum for critical and inclusive academic dialogue.

### 2. Addressing challenges in the Arab world

Given the formidable challenges facing Arab nations, from political unrest and economic difficulties to social upheaval in countries like Palestine, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon – with others watching suspiciously – the landscape within which we operate is markedly complex and fraught with adversity. These are challenging times, with each day seemingly unveiling new obstacles. It is within this challenging context that the mission of *MSAR* acquires heightened significance and urgency. Our goal is to provide insights and solutions that align with the needs and ambitions of people throughout the Arab World, thereby affirming our dedication to making a tangible difference in these challenging times.

### 3. Introducing expert viewpoint and commentary series

In our ongoing effort to push the boundaries of research on the region to contribute to addressing its challenges, we plan to introduce a new series of viewpoint and commentary articles. This initiative aims to leverage the insights of distinguished scholars who are deeply interested in the Arab region, thereby broadening the journal's content and addressing themes of critical relevance. For example, one of our forthcoming articles will explore the impact of justice on consumer well-being, drawing upon diverse theoretical frameworks including Rawls' theory of justice (Rawls, 1999) and Islamic perspectives. This example represents the kind of insightful analyses we intend to offer, reflecting on issues that resonate with the socio-cultural context of the Arab region. Through this series, *MSAR* aspires to serve as a pivotal platform for critical reflections and thought leadership, fostering a comprehensive understanding of management, sustainability and the societal well-being of the Arab world and beyond.

### 4. Emphasizing practical and social implications

In an era characterized by an overabundance of research focusing on trivial issues, the advent of AI technology is anticipated to further exacerbate this trend, resulting in an increase in studies with minimal impact (Elbanna and Child, 2023). This presents a significant challenge for journals, including *MSAR*, as emphasized by several scholars, who advocate for a shift toward purpose-driven publishing (Elbanna and Child, 2023; Grandori and Morley, 2022).

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In response to this challenge, we are implementing a policy that encourages authors to feature a section dedicated to practical and/or social implications within the structured abstract. Furthermore, we hope authors will elaborate on these implications more thoroughly within their manuscripts. This initiative is designed to ensure that the research we publish not only contributes to scholarly debate but also provides practical benefits and actionable insights for the real world.

#### 5. Fostering academic dialogue and regional research integration

We have noted that certain submissions may overlook seminal works pertinent to their research on the Arab region. We aim to foster a lively academic conversation centered on the Arab region, directing scholarly attention to noteworthy studies and developments on the region in their particular fields. Emphasizing the significance of research focused on the Arab World is vital for enhancing both the depth of individual studies and the collective knowledge base. We encourage authors to consider the broad spectrum of valuable work available, enhancing the scholarly discourse through inclusivity and relevance.

#### 6. Strengthening the journal team for future success

Steering a newly established journal toward future success and enhancing its positioning presents a significant challenge for any new Editor-in-Chief. Since such a task cannot be accomplished without the steadfast support of the editorial board, building the journal team for the next stage of its development is the clear priority. We aim to assemble a cohort of committed scholars, in addition to our existing board members who are willing to continue their support for the journal over the next two years.

#### 7. Enhancing the review process

Working to elevate any journal's standing as a desired outcome must be paired with efforts to enhance its processes (Grandori and Morley, 2022), with a particular focus on refining the peer review process. In our commitment to uphold the highest standards of scholarly rigor and integrity, all submissions to the journal have been rigorously evaluated through a double-blind peer review process. As we look to the future, our dedication to maintaining and enhancing the quality of our review process remains unwavering. To achieve this, while continuing to use the Publons system for its transparency and efficiency, we plan to increasingly leverage the expertise of our editorial advisory board and engage subject matter experts referenced in submissions. This approach ensures that each paper is assessed with the highest degree of specialization and insight. Furthermore, the editor will play an even more active role in this refined process, providing constructive feedback. As a result, authors may anticipate a review period that is relatively longer but significantly more efficient and effective. This deliberate emphasis on a thorough review process is designed to offer authors invaluable feedback, thereby elevating the quality of their work and ensuring that it makes a meaningful contribution to the field and the region.

#### 8. Supporting sustainability and management initiatives in the Arab World

A central pillar of *MSAR* is its commitment to spotlighting and bolstering initiatives aimed at improving sustainability and management practices within Arab nations. An example of such endeavors is the MENA Business Schools Alliance for Sustainability (MEBAS). Orchestrated by the College of Business and Economics at Qatar University, MEBAS represents a concerted effort by AACSB-accredited business schools throughout the region to integrate sustainability into business education and confront the urgent issue of climate change. A significant challenge for initiatives like MEBAS,

among similar ones, lies in translating their efforts into impactful practices both within academia and the broader business landscape. In parallel, *MSAR* aims to engage with initiatives from international organizations, such as the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (UN PRME). The journal's support for such initiatives will manifest in various forms, including the dedication of special issues, encouragement of submissions that discuss these topics and their prominent feature within our content.

## 9. Indexing and quality metrics

In our pursuit of academic excellence and recognition, we understand the dominant importance of journal indexing and quality metrics in advancing the careers, promotion prospects, and research visibility of our contributors. Although such achievements are often at the forefront of scholars' interests, we have chosen to discuss them last in this editorial. This is because we see them as the natural outcome of the diligent efforts and strategic initiatives we have already discussed above. Given this, Emerald Publishing, together with the *MSAR* editorial team, is dedicated to enhancing the journal's visibility and stature within the global academic community. We have taken significant steps toward this goal, highlighted by our recent approval for inclusion in Scopus and our plans to apply for the Emerging Sources Citation Index. These initiatives are designed to bolster the journal's recognition and affirm its status as a promising venue for scholarly publication. Our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of research quality is evident in our rigorous peer-review process, which ensures the integrity and excellence of the work we publish. This dedication to quality has begun to be seen in the growing number of submissions and citations, signaling the journal's expanding impact and relevance in the fields of management and sustainability. Furthermore, *MSAR*'s recognition as one of the top five finalists for the "SDG Initiative of the Year" Award at the Africa level is a testament to our significant contributions to sustainable development goals. Looking ahead, we expect the *MSAR* journal to achieve indexing in several prestigious quality matrices, further attesting to our ongoing efforts to uphold and elevate its scholarly value. While the challenges faced are typical for any new journal, our performance to date stands out compared to our peers. With the implementation of our new strategic framework, we anticipate our efforts will soon be positively reflected in various quality metrics and indexes.

## Conclusion

I see *MSAR* as an inspiration of hope and a force for positive change within the troubled Arab World. This vision has driven me to fully embrace my responsibilities as the Editor-in-Chief of *MSAR*. Throughout this journey, we are dedicated to refining our editorial practices and enriching our content, aiming for the highest standards of scholarly excellence. Improving our indexing and quality metrics is not a mere goal but a commitment to our authors, reviewers and readers, ensuring that *MSAR* remains a reputable and trusted source of knowledge. We deeply appreciate our community's unwavering support. Your contributions are the cornerstone of our progress and the driving force behind our vision. Together, we will navigate the challenges ahead, committed to making a lasting impact on the Arab region and beyond through robust scholarship and a shared dedication to a sustainable and prosperous future.

Said Elbanna

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