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Overview

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In this volume, we scan a sample of empirical work on family businesses – focusing on the Middle Eastern cluster. The societies in the cluster have their origins in the pre-Sumerian Near Eastern civilization of North Africa and West Asia. The culture is shaped by Islamic moral and legal code, the Arabic language, and the geographical features of the Nile River and the Sahara Desert. Islam alone has the total regulatory force, with limited roles for the government and the law. Moral inappropriateness is strongly criticized and punished as a crime (Gupta and Hanges, 2004). In the Middle East, family businesses are estimated to represent more than 95 percent of all businesses (Neubauer and Lank, 1998).

The sample of selected articles in the Middle Eastern cluster is given in Table 1. The articles cover six countries – Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Turkey and UAE. A diversity of research methodologies is represented: survey, interviews, grounded theory, ethnography and in-depth case studies.

Next, we present data on the culture and socio-techno-economic work-culture of the societies in the Middle Eastern cluster to understand the context in which the region's family businesses operate.