

Human Well-Being Research and Policy Making

Series Editors: Richard J. Estes · Joseph Sirgy

el-Sayed el-Aswad

The Quality of Life and Policy Issues among the Middle East and North African Countries

 Springer

Human Well-Being Research and Policy Making

Series editors

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This book is dedicated to the people of the Middle East and North Africa region, people living at the grassroots in this region, and to those in the region who are fighting to enhance their quality of life, happiness, and well-being.

Preface

The Middle East and North Africa region, including the Gulf States (hereafter the MENA region), is made up of countries that have received considerable attention by scholars and the media, especially since the terrorist events of September 11, 2001 directed at the United States (el-Aswad 2013), the financial crisis of 2008 that resulted in a sharp downturn in the economies of financially advanced countries, the Arab Spring of 2011 that impacted the political and social well-being of people throughout the MENA region (el-Aswad 2016), and the current and ongoing wars being fought in Syria and Yemen with their profoundly negative impact on the well-being of people in the predominately Islamic countries of North Africa and West Asia.

The book, first of the Springer book series of Human Well-Being Research and Policy Making, is a timely work in that it addresses quality of life in the 21 nations of the Middle East and North Africa Region by focusing on multiple policy dimensions of well-being, including economy, health, education, technology, and social welfare among other objective as well as subjective dimensions of quality of life and well-being. The study deals with culturally, socioeconomically, demographically, and politically diverse countries that make up the MENA region. By broadly addressing the social realities that characterize the MENA countries, the research reported in this monograph seeks to delineate cross-cultural similarities and differences by extensively and comparatively focusing on six of the region's most influential countries—Egypt, Iran, Israel, Turkey, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), selected specifically to highlight the diversity found in the region.

This monograph reflects a holistic approach to the analysis of a wide range of policy frameworks that currently are in place in the MENA region. The monograph also identifies the major *drivers* of governmental and private sector approaches to well-being policy development that impact directly on the quality of life of the more than 381 million people living in the region—approximately 6% of the world's total population. The approach to policy development analysis adopted in this monograph is intended to both advance our understanding of the nature of well-being policy development under the conditions of the considerable political turbulence that exists in the region and, at the same time, suggests with broad brush strokes the

dimensions of a more coherent policy framework designed to enhance the quality of life of the people that are living in a defined geographic area and are loosely joined together through a shared faith—in this case, predominately Islam and its teachings (Estes and Tiliouine 2016; Tiliouine and Estes 2016).

Further, the policy analysis approach adopted in the monograph assigns priority to the enhanced well-being of people and their development as the central focus of policy development in the region and its neighbors more broadly. Thus, and as viewed from the author's perspective,

At the center of well-being is a deep sense of peace, personal satisfaction, and happiness within ourselves and in our relationships with others. All four of these states of being—peace, personal satisfaction, happiness, and well-being—are outcomes achieved through a combination of personal reflection and interpersonal exchanges. They also are associated with the often-complex interplay of the social, political, economic, religious, ideological, and other forces that surround us (Estes 2017: 3).

This monograph demonstrates the special appeal and significance of such interrelated topics as quality of life, well-being, and policy issues.

About the Book

The book contains six chapters: Chap. 1, *Introduction* and Chap. 2, *Methodology* present the main approach, which is to address well-being and policy issues from multiple lenses. Chapter 3, *Historical Background*, delineates briefly and in broad terms the successes, challenges, quality of life, and overall human development experienced by the MENA region from ancient to present times. This chapter provides a rationale for identifying 21 countries as comprising the MENA region as well as for focusing on 6 selected countries, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Tunisia, Turkey, and the UAE, for the purpose of extensive comparative inquiries. In addition, the chapter provides an account of the region's core geographic, demographic, and political features as well as its overall human development achievements, particularly in the domains of economy, health, and education. Other key characteristics of the MENA region in terms of culture, religion, ideology, minority relationships, technological developments, and militarization are provided. Within this historical context, the chapter addresses external and internal factors along with religious and ideological orientations impacting the quality of life in the MENA region.

Chapter 4, *Indicators of Quality Of Life and Well-Being in the MENA Region: A Comparative Analysis*, focuses on the quality of life and well-being issues in the selected MENA countries (Egypt, Iran, Israel, Tunisia, Turkey, and the UAE). This chapter applies multiple objective and subjective indicators to assess multiple dimensions of well-being including health, education, economy, work force, communication, technology, human rights, happiness, religious freedom, tolerance, political terror, corruption, and freedom of expression, to mention a few. This chapter presents a comparative analysis focusing on indicators of equity and

inequality in differing domains of human development and well-being or ill-being. In addition, the chapter concludes that despite the variations in quality of life across the MENA region, there is a cross-cultural similarity or a common pattern of well-being related mainly to the progress made in the multiple dimensions of people's lives. In brief, although indicators of freedom of expression, religious tolerance, and happiness are still low in the MENA countries, they have achieved remarkable progress in overall human development, particularly in the domains of health care, education, economy, and technology.

Chapter 5, *Key Drivers of Well-being and Policy Issues in the MENA Region*, investigates the staging of drivers of well-being and social–public policies in the MENA region. The essential thesis or objective of this inquiry is to show to what extent the drivers, indicators, and outcomes of well-being help the policy makers generate sociocultural plans and public policies aimed at improving the quality of life of people living in the MENA region. This study provides an assessment of the relative role of economic and noneconomic drivers such as health, education, economy, demography, political stability, security, technology, and culture in shaping policy priorities and the policy options available to the MENA region. The chapter addresses the most critical challenging factors hindering social–public policies from improving the quality of life in the MENA region. This research underscores that, although the ordinary people in the MENA region work diligently to improve their standards of living, the major challenges facing them relate mostly to incapacitated governments and inept political systems. The chapter, however, proposes that a better understanding of the drivers and determinants of well-being in the MENA region will provide relevant considerations concerning policy issues in that region.

Chapter 6, *Conclusions*, provides the most important findings of the research and recommendations to authorities and policy makers interested in the promotion of well-being and quality of life in the MENA countries. Put simply, this chapter accentuates the fact that well-being research can help policy makers target public services in effective manners and guide national and regional authorities in implementing social policies adequately and productively toward advancing people's lives.

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With appreciation,
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

DIAC	Dubai International Academic City
DKV	Dubai Knowledge Village
FGH	Financing Global Health
FH	Freedom House
GCC	Gulf Co-operation Council
GDP	Gross domestic product
GFP	Global Firepower Index
GMI	Global Militarization Index
HAAD	Health Authority Abu Dhabi
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IHME	Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation
ILO	International Labor Organization
ILS	Internet Live Stats
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	Information technology
IWS	Internet World Stats
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity; Public–Private Partnership
SDGs	United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals
SGI	Sustainable Governance Indicators
SPI	Social Progress Index
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund

UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social
WB	World Bank
WDA	World Data Atlas
WEF	World Economic Forum
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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