

# The COVID-19 Crisis Management: Male and Female Leaders' Success Factors as Perceived by Educated Arabs

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**Abstract:** There has been numerous news headlines and reports in the western media highlighting the role of women leaders of New Zealand, Taiwan, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Germany in managing the COVID-19 crisis as opposed to countries ruled by male leaders of the USA, Brazil, Russia, Spain, Italy, and France. The literature showed limited studies investigating leaders' efficiency in managing the COVID-19 crisis. This study aims to explore male and female leaders' success factors in the COVID-19 crisis management as perceived by educated Arabs. Survey results showed that 68% of the participants said that female leaders were more efficient whereas 32% believe that it is a coincident and that there is no relationship between gender and effective crisis management. The first group stated that women leader success is due to their empathy and the way they communicated with their people. Their language of discourse was full of reassurance and confidence. Women have better administrative skills. They closed borders early and implemented strict safety precautions. They excelled in acting with resilience and displaying high integrity and honesty. On the other hand, the second group indicated that there are men leaders who succeeded in managing the Pandemic. It is not solely the leader's decision. Both male and female leaders work with a team of advisors who have a role in decision making. The population size, citizens' commitment to health rules, the economic status, the healthcare budget and infrastructure, readiness of the health system to receive and treat patients, climate, whether it is a young or old society, and the rapid response from the state to the emergency played a role in managing the COVID-19 crisis. Recommendations for future research are given.

**Keywords:** Covid-19 Pandemic, Coronavirus Pandemic, female leaders, male leaders, pandemic crisis management, female leaders' success.

## 1. Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic that started in Wuhan, China in early 2020 has spread to and affected over 200 countries. This unprecedented crisis highlighted the need for effective leadership to face the Pandemic. Combating the Pandemic has been more challenging for some countries than others. Some country leaders have been more successful than others in managing the Pandemic, especially countries ruled by women such as New Zealand, Taiwan, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Germany as opposed to countries ruled by male leaders such as the USA, Brazil, Russia, Spain, Italy, and France. Female leaders responded faster and communicated better with their people about their pandemic policies. The relationship between the country leader's gender and his or her success in flattening the curve of the pandemic and in minimizing the number of deaths in their countries caught the attention of many news headlines and media reports such as "*Women Are Better Leaders During A Crisis*" (The Harvard Business Review<sup>1</sup>); *Are Female Leaders Better During A Pandemic* (Nevada Today<sup>2</sup>); *Female-Led Countries Handled Coronavirus Better* (The Guardian<sup>3</sup>); *Women and Leadership: Looking Beyond* (The New York Times<sup>4</sup>); *Women Make Better Leaders Than Men During Times Of Crisis, Here's The Proof* (Divya Taery, 2021); *Data Shows Women Make Better Leaders*<sup>5</sup>; *Why Are Women-Led Nations Doing Better with Covid-19* (New York

<sup>1</sup> <https://hbr.org/2020/12/research-women-are-better-leaders-during-a-crisis>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unr.edu/nevada-today/news/2021/atp-female-leaders-better>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/18/female-led-countries-handled-coronavirus-better-study-jacinda-ardern-angela-merkel>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/17/business/women-leaders-pandemic.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://sea.mashable.com/social-good/14318/women-make-better-leaders-than-men-during-times-of-crisis-heres-the-proof>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/avivahwittenbergcox/2021/03/06/data-shows-women-make-better-leaders-who-cares/?sh=67f83e5d46be>

times?<sup>7</sup> *Why Women Leaders Are Beating the Coronavirus* (Sara Cooper<sup>8</sup>, 2020); *Why Women Leaders Are Excelling During The Coronavirus Pandemic*<sup>9</sup>; *Why Do Women Make Such Good Leaders During COVID-19*<sup>10</sup>, and others. Like the media, studies by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in European countries revealed that many countries led by women have handled the current crisis more smoothly. They reported a positive correlation between the percentage of female ministers and the level of trust in the government.

As for studies in the crisis management literature, some studies analyzed male and female country leaders' performance to find out whether the leader's gender is related to success in the COVID-19 crisis management and whether female country leaders are excelling in the COVID-19 crisis management and why. A study by Windsor, Reinhardt, Windsor, Ostergard, Allen, Burns, Giger and Wood (2020) analyzed COVID-19-related deaths across countries led by men and women and found some limited support for the reported lower death rates in countries led by women. However, these results are not statistically significant. The researchers found that the country's cultural values offer more substantive explanation for COVID-19 outcomes. They gave some explanations for the pervasive perception that countries led by women have fared better during the pandemic, such as data selection bias, western media bias that exaggerated the successes of female leaders in OECD countries, quality of COVID-19 policy, disaster preparedness in men- and women-led countries, and differences in cultural dimensions.

Another study by Aldrich and Lotito (2020) examined empirical data on the timing of policy responses from the Coronavirus Government Response Tracker to determine whether and how countries led by women reacted differently to the Pandemic. Exploring the relationship between the gender of leaders and legislators and the timing of stay-at-home orders, school closures, and coordinated public information campaigns, the researchers found no statistically significant evidence supporting popular claims in the media about the effectiveness of women leaders. However, they found some evidence that the level of gender equality in legislatures is related to school closures.

As to the issue of female leaders surpassing male leaders, Zenger and Folkman (2020) measured leader performances before and during the pandemic. They found that women fared better, but the difference was more obvious during the pandemic. The gap between male and female leaders' performance during the pandemic is even larger than previously measured, probably because women tend to perform better in a crisis. Women were also rated more positively on 13 out of 19 competencies that reflect leadership effectiveness (taking the initiative, learning agility, inspiring and motivating others, developing others, building relationships, displaying high integrity and honesty, communicating powerfully and prolifically, collaboration and teamwork, champions change, making decisions, drives for results, values diversity, and establishing stretch goals). Women tended to slightly outperform men all the time. Women leaders were found to be more empathetic, and more aware of the fears that followers might be feeling, showed more concern for well-being, and confidence in their plans. It is the gender expectations placed on women that required them to be that way in their leadership style. A woman cannot adopt a male's leadership style, as it is sometimes too abrasive or stern. The researchers concluded that countries need leaders that have qualities such as confidence, empathy, humility, and self-knowledge to lead a country safely through a crisis such as the COVID-19 Pandemic. On the contrary, persuasiveness and brashness in country leaders distract people from empathy and flexibility during a crisis.

The relationship between female leaders and their effectiveness in handling the COVID crisis and the differences between male and female leaders in policy responses were examined by Garikipati and Kambhampati (2020). The researchers analyzed a constructed dataset for 194 countries and datasets on Gross Domestic Product (GDP), total population, population density, the annual health spending per person, proportion of elderly people, level of gender equality in the society and openness to international travel. Since only 19 countries out of 200 are led by women, the authors compared "nearest neighbour" countries to make up for the small sample size such as pairing female-led New Zealand, Germany, and Bangladesh with male-led Ireland, Britain, and Pakistan. Results showed

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/15/world/coronavirus-women-leaders.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://medium.com/euphemist/why-women-leaders-are-beating-the-coronavirus-76add6177f25>

<sup>9</sup> <http://theconversation.com/why-women-leaders-are-excelling-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic-138098>

<sup>10</sup> [www.forbes.com/sites/camianderson1/2020/04/19/why-do-women-make-such-good-leaders-during-covid-19/?sh=19f2e52842fc](http://www.forbes.com/sites/camianderson1/2020/04/19/why-do-women-make-such-good-leaders-during-covid-19/?sh=19f2e52842fc)

that COVID outcomes are significantly and systematically better in countries led by women. When women-led countries were compared to countries similar to them along a range of characteristics, they performed better, experiencing fewer cases of fatalities which may suggest “better policies and compliance”. Women-led countries locked down earlier and suffered half the deaths in countries led by men, probably because of the proactive and coordinated policy responses adopted by them. Women leaders reacted more quickly and decisively in the face of potential deaths of the Pandemic. Their attitudes towards the crisis, their empathy, and clear, decisive communication mattered a lot. Female leaders were more willing to take risks in the economy.

Even at the state level in the USA, states with women governors had fewer COVID-19 deaths compared to states with men governors as revealed by publicly available COVID-19 death data in the whole United States as of May 5, 2020. States with women governors who issued early stay-at-home orders had fewer deaths compared to states with men governors who did the same. Gender differences were also manifested in speeches to followers. Female governor briefings expressed more empathy and confidence (Sergent & Stajkovic (2020).

In addition, effective leaders showed some characteristics and practices during the Pandemic such as: communication, focus on mission and core values, having long and short-term plans, decision making in the setting of ambiguity, realistic view of the current state with optimism for the future, engaging with purpose and humility and flattening the leadership structure (Kaul, Shah & El-Serag, 2020). Another important characteristic is the power of empathy in times of crisis. Bommel (2020) indicated that empathy is a force for productivity, life-work integration, and positive work experiences. People with empathic managers and leaders are more innovative and engaged in their work than those with less empathic managers and leaders. Women of color experience less burnout when they work with more empathic senior managers. Empathic leaders respect life circumstances, support both life and work need and foster inclusion. Senior leaders' empathy is correlated with less intention to leave work.

The above literature review shows lack of studies that explored the issue of gender in managing the COVID-19 crisis as perceived by the people (citizens) themselves, how they view effective leadership, which qualities they consider important for effective crisis management and effective Pandemic control. Therefore, this study aims to find out how educated Arabs view male and female country leaders' efficiency in dealing with the COVID-19 Pandemic; who is more efficient male or female leaders, why? Are female leaders better during the Coronavirus crisis? Does gender matter? What are the key elements in successful leadership during the Pandemic? their views of the mechanism by which the COVID-19 crisis is managed, and its political, security and economic effects. The study also aims to analyse educated Arab's views of the COVID-19 Pandemic crisis management in three phases: the preparedness, the response to alleviate fatalities and losses and the feedback mechanism after the crisis. Focus will be on comparing the 7 women country leaders of New Zealand, Taiwan, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Germany in managing the COVID-19 crisis as opposed to the 7 men country leaders of the USA, Brazil, Russia, Spain, Italy, and France in Image 1. No comparisons of country statistics about the COVID-19 new daily cases, deaths, recoveries and healthcare budgets will be made.

Results of the current study will reveal how educated Arabs view the performance of male and female country leaders in combating the COVID-19 crisis; whether their views are the same or different from journalists' and western scholars' views; set an example for effective and efficient leaders in other countries; provide some lessons learned from countries that had not previously considered implementing social protection programs before the COVID-19 crisis.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

According to Hayes (2021), *crisis management* is a series of steps (a process) by which a business or organization deals with a disruptive or unexpected event that threatens to harm the organization or its stakeholders. A crisis or sudden emergency situation can be a natural disaster, terrorist attack, a global financial crisis, or a pandemic. A crisis disrupts business operations, threatens to harm people, damages reputation, and negatively impacts people's finances or a country's economy.

Numerous studies in the literature described what makes good leadership during a crisis. For example, Robson (2020) stated that a leader's response to a crisis is much more than speeches. Yet the messages given might play a key role in gaining people's trust and co-operation. A good leader takes quick, coordinated action. He/she

reassures the people and persuades them to follow through on government decisions. The leader needs to produce a good narrative that helps clarify the problem and unite the people.

der Heyden and *Nathanial* (2020) added that the COVID-19 crisis can be conquered through a positive combination of talents and competencies, engaging all in framing the crisis and getting their framing right, exploring the crisis and how to fight it, explaining what they have decided, why and how it will work, then commit to action, executing with focus and constant monitoring, evaluating, learning and adapting efforts, as well as their leadership, as new information and feedback comes in.

Moreover, controlling a crisis requires the following: (i) assembling a professional crisis management team; (ii) assessing weaknesses; (iii) drafting a crisis management plan. A crisis plan should at least address the internal and external stakeholders, primary spokespeople for each communication channel, communication infrastructure and redundancies, decision-making chain of command, access to emergency funds, holding statements, contingency plans; (iv) creating a crisis communications plan; (v) monitoring; and (vi) crisis resolution (Sickler, 2022). Leadership qualities such as communicating early and often, staying calm, separating emotion from logic, managing expectations, staying strong and managing fear are indispensable during times of crisis (Farmer, ND).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Participants

Participants in the present study consisted of 240 educated Arabs who were randomly selected from a population of 15,000 contacts and followers of the author on WhatsApp, Telegram, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. The participants come from different Arab countries (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq), belong to different age groups, and have different academic levels (B.A., M.A. and Ph.D.) and different areas of specialty (arts, business, management, IT, Computer science, Islamic studies, language and translation, engineering, medicine, journalism, and others). 43% of the participants are male and 57% are female.

#### 3.2 Questionnaire-Survey

The subjects were sent a picture with male and female country leaders (See Image 1) and were asked to answer a survey that consisted of an open-ended question:

*Do you think female leaders of Germany, Taiwan, New Zealand, Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland (in the picture) have been more successful in managing the Coronavirus Pandemic than male leaders of the United States, Brazil, Russia, France, Spain, Italy, and Britain in the picture? Why? Justify/ explain your point of view by giving at least 3 reasons and/or examples.*

#### 3.3 Data Analysis

Responses were categorized into: (i) whether the participants believe female leaders are more successful in managing the Coronavirus crisis, (ii) whether male leaders are successful and (iii) whether there is no relationship between gender effectiveness in the handling the COVID-19 crisis. The percentages of male and female participants in each category were calculated. The reasons that the participants gave for their selection and their justifications are reported qualitatively.





Image 1: Source: <https://covid-safeindia.com/index.php/blogs/role-of-leaders-during-coronavirus/>

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Views on Female Leaders' Efficiency in COVID-19 Crisis Management

Responses to the surveys showed that 54% of female and 88% of male participants said that female leaders were more efficient in handling the COVID-19 Pandemic. No differences were found in the types of factors that male and female educated Arabs gave for supporting their claim. The following are participants' justifications in order of frequency and importance:

- 1) More than half the sample mentioned humanistic qualities in women leaders such as being "empathetic, emotional, merciful, and caring about people because they feel them". They are sincere in their work and love life. They have a mother's affection and love for members of their home and the desire to protect them from all harm. This is the same motivating factor that drives a woman leader to worry about her people and give them protection from the virus.

**Ghazi said:** *All diseases need a lot of human feelings, and women are the basis of human feelings.*

**Karima wrote:** *It is known that a woman's affection is an important factor in the good management of matters, and she also does her best to prove to men that she is able to overcome adversity with tact and good decisions.*

- 2) The second factor is the way women leaders communicated with their people. The participants indicated that the language of communication and discourse used by female leaders in addressing their people is different from that of male leaders. The communication between the ruling woman and her people is similar to the relationship of a mother with her children, and we may see the presence of love and maternal affection in the speeches of those woman leaders to their people. For example, Merkel's speech to her people was full of reassurance and confidence, and she was at the top of her calmness and gratitude for the sense of responsibility her people have shown, while Trump's speech appeared hollow from any psychological aspects.

The people did not feel official support from male leaders. Trump showed lack of care and responsibility in the decisions taken. He failed to provide assistance to contain the virus when New York needed it.

**Abdullah said:** *Contrary to the dry language of communication between the man leader and his people, women leaders showed affection. This convinced the people of a ruling woman to implement the regulations and laws more carefully and seriously.*

**Khaled declared:** *Women leaders used social media and television to talk to their people and explain everything possible about the latest developments and what would happen in terms of closures and curfews.*

- 3) The third most important factor given by the participants was that women have better administrative skills. Some participants indicated that in management science, women are known for their ability to change, develop and achieve. Female Prime Ministers were more successful and proactive in handling the pandemic than male leaders. Some pointed out that a woman innately has more administrative skills than a man, and the closest example is the woman's effective management of her home, managing family members, arranging, and cleaning the house, cooking, etc. A man cannot do the same if he stays at home. Some indicated that Trump has done nothing to help the terrible COVID-19 situation in the USA. "*All he did is provoking everyone*". Many focused on the Prime Minister of New Zealand who could precisely and strictly contain the spread of the virus in her country. New Zealand became the first country to declare itself free of the virus. The PM of New Zealand took very early measures such as closing all borders and implementing strict safety precautions. On the contrary, countries run by men such as America, the UK and some European countries hesitated to take strict measures such as closing borders and imposing quarantine for fear of the negative consequences on the country's economy. Men leaders were thinking about the economy, while women leaders were thinking about the public's interest and the overall results of their potential plans.

**Mohsen wrote:** *Countries whose leaders transparently confronted their people with the seriousness of the Pandemic, and immediately implemented strict measures. They supported and equipped the health sector with everything necessary to confront the Pandemic.*

**Nadeem said:** *female leaders closed the borders so that the number of cases would not increase, and they conducted medical examinations to a large number of people in a short time. Their use of advanced science and technology helped them a lot. They also tried to save other countries by sending aid and expertise to them.*

**Nayla:** *Countries ruled by men did not take the pandemic and the precautionary measures seriously right from the beginning.*

Some declared that women are known to be better leaders than men and cited results of a study that stated that "women were rated as excelling in taking initiative, acting with resilience, practicing self-development, driving for results, and displaying high integrity and honesty. Women were thought to be more effective in 84% of the competencies that were most frequently measured. They are more concise, more accurate, and more sensitive."<sup>11</sup> Women are driven by their hearts and mind.

**Sulan said:** *spreading awareness among the members of society and spreading reassurance in the people. This resulted in the automatic commitment of the people to the mandates of the government especially after the Corona Pandemic. Women leaders also worked to increase medical equipment as Angela Merkel did.*

**Saad added:** *The speed of their response to spread or emerging coronavirus was better than other countries, as the emotional side of women led to the rapid adoption of measures to flatten the curve of the spread of the virus, while some countries were still in a state of denial.*

- 4) The fourth most common factor given by the participants was the historical-cultural stereotypes about the role of women in society. Participants declared that in our time, there is a lot of focus on women empowerment and points of strength that women have which were overlooked in the past. Hence, women in such high positions nowadays are highly educated and are doing their best to show such strengths and prove the opposite of what most societies claim, i.e., that women are not as capable as men. Women Prime Ministers deserve to be in the Prime Minister's seat. They were elected confidently, and people were convinced that they are the best.

**Muhannad wrote:** *women are always accused of negligence and that they are not good as leaders because of society's narrow view. In order for women to prove the opposite, when they became leaders, they took the responsibility more than men and began to work seriously and with dedication to prove to the world that women are not inferior to men as leaders, but perhaps more successful in carrying out their tasks. Women are more serious at work and feel the danger of the virus more than men. Women's seriousness at work, sincerity, and dedication made the difference.*

<sup>11</sup> <https://hbr.org/2019/06/research-women-score-higher-than-men-in-most-leadership-skills>

- 5) The fifth most common factor is difference in interests. Some participants believe that women are more interested in developing their society and working on that when they assume high positions in the state, whereas men are more interested in the economy, military, political leadership, and wars.

**Mohammad wrote:** *Most countries ruled by men care about power and strengthening the economy, since dealing with this virus may require complete closing and taking measures that might harm the economy, even if the affected people are citizens of their country. The greatest priority for male rulers is the race for power and status among countries at the expense of everything else.*

**Layla:** *Because a woman is more in touch with reality than a man who likes to go according to a systematic scheme. Women are more cautious than men, which makes them flexible in making proactive plans. It seems that women in those countries listened to a team of advisors whom they trusted more than they listened to the instructions of the World Health Organization.*

**Sami:** *The woman leader has developed her society and made it a pioneer because of the nature of women first, their serious and enthusiastic personality to serve the people and because they think about the concerns of their society.*

**Dalal:** *A woman leader knows how to prioritize. Unlike men leaders, she considers human life more important than the economy.*

#### 4.2 Views about No Relationship between Gender and Efficiency in COVID-19 Crisis Management

Responses to the surveys showed that 46% of female participants and 12% of male participants said that it is a coincidence that women leaders in some countries were more successful in managing the COVID-19 crisis. They asserted that the leader's gender has nothing to do with how efficient he/she is in managing the Coronavirus crisis as some factors come into play. Some participants stated:

**Suad:** *There is no gender differences in work. Work depends on the rulers' strategy, not gender. There are no criteria to measure the success of any country leader in dealing with the Pandemic. All reports are circulating news based on information and not test results under specific tutelage. Credibility does not depend on news but on criteria for investigating the accuracy of the source of the news and ensuring its authenticity.*

**Ameera:** *Success in Germany is due to the strength of its health system and the number of doctors relative to the citizens, i.e., there are 25 doctors for every one thousand citizens. So, it succeeded in tackling this virus, not because the administration is a man or a woman. In addition, the citizen's high awareness and their commitment are very important factors in the decline of the cases.*

Moreover, some participants indicated that there are countries ruled by men who succeeded in managing the Pandemic to a large extent such as China, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Malaysia, Singapore, UAE, Ghana, Nepal, and others. Some said:

**Ayman:** *There are countries ruled by men who handled the crisis better than some countries ruled by women, and this undermines the relationship between gender and effective performance.*

**Ibrahim:** *The USA, Italy, and Spain failed because they worried about the economy. Bangladesh is ruled by a woman, but it has failed, and the cases are high. Countries ruled by men such as America and Britain have a repressive side. Their priority is the economy, which aggravated the crisis.*

All the countries in the picture are states of institutions and have legal and legislative systems. They are not governed by a single person. Both male and female leaders work with a team of advisors who have a role in making decisions. The decisions of the person on top of the pyramid are subject to quality control, approval and rejection by these institutions which are made up of men and women, and therefore it does not matter whether the ruler is a man or woman.

Determining the level of success and evaluation should be carried out after the end of the pandemic and after assessing the social and economic impact on peoples and countries' economies.

**Sameer:** *It is not a matter of male or female ruler. What matters is the policy of the country and the extent of its commitment to implement its policies.*

**Salwa:** *It depends on the health infrastructure, confrontation plans, the health system, and the speed of taking preventive measures*

Some participants mentioned some differences between countries ruled by women and those ruled by men such as the huge population in America, Brazil, India, UK, Italy compared to the small population of New Zealand, Iceland, Norway, Denmark; people's awareness and their living conditions, abiding by the precautionary measures by the citizens, the strictness of the state in implementing the precautionary measures, the healthcare budget and infrastructure; the economic situation, readiness of the health system to receive and treat patients, the temperature and humidity in the country; the health status of people, i.e., whether it is a young society or an old society, citizens' commitment to health rules, the society's culture, the virus' hostility; and the rapid response from the state's agencies. Some justifications are:

**Lina:** *I think that the geographic location, the country's area size, and the population size may have an impact on the Pandemic management and the ability to control cases.*

**Taha:** *What matters is the capabilities of the state, the extent to which the preventive measures are implemented, and the level of awareness among the citizens in following the preventive measures. All countries in picture are advanced countries and have the best resources, and their people have high awareness.*

**Saleem:** *Success and failure are relative, and the way of dealing with the crisis is determined by geopolitical, economic, and social contexts.*

**Hanadi:** *Most countries ruled by women in the photo do not have large in population nor immigration rates (except Germany). They do not receive large numbers of tourists.*

**Ali:** *Corona has reversed all the scales and there are no clear or specific indicators so far. I don't see that any studies at the moment will produce accurate results. The pandemic is not over yet and maybe the coming months will change the picture of the Pandemic a lot.*

## 5. Discussion

Views of educated Arabs in the present study who believe that women leaders are more efficient in handling the COVID-19 crisis are consistent with media headlines and reports quoted above. They are also consistent with findings of prior studies by Zenger and Folkman (2020), Garikipati and Kambhampati (2020), Sergeant and Stajkovic (2020), Kaul, Shah and El-Serag (2020), and Bommel (2020) who reported that women leaders were more effective because they showed some characteristics and practices during the Pandemic such as empathy, reassurance, caring about the people more than the economy, effective communication skills, focus on mission and core values, having long and short term plans, a realistic view of the current situation with optimism for the future, and engagement with purpose and humility. Their attitudes towards the crisis, their empathy, and their clear, decisive communications made a big difference. Women were also rated more positively on 13 out of 19 competencies that reflect leadership effectiveness (see above). They outperformed men all the time, being more empathetic and more aware of their peoples' needs and fears, showing concern for well-being, and confidence in their plans.

In comparison with countries similar to them along a range of characteristics, women leaders performed better, had better policies and compliance, reacted more quickly and decisively in the face of potential deaths of the Pandemic, locked down earlier, thus suffered half the deaths in countries led by men. Women-led countries adopted proactive and coordinated policy responses. They were more willing to take risks in the economy. Similarly, states with women governors who issued early stay-at-home orders had fewer deaths compared to states with men governors who did the same. Gender differences were also manifested in speeches to the people. Female governor briefings expressed more empathy and confidence.



Likewise, educated Arabs in the present study who believe that there is no relationship between gender and efficiency in the COVID-19 crisis management are consistent with findings of some prior studies in the literature by Windsor, Reinhardt, Windsor, Ostergard, Allen, Burns, Giger and Wood (2020) and Aldrich and Lotito (2020). These studies analyzed COVID-19-related deaths across countries led by men and women and found some limited support for the reported lower death rates in countries led by women. They found no statistically significant evidence supporting popular claims in the media. They also referred to data selection bias and western media bias that exaggerated the successes of female leaders in OECD countries. In the present study, participants gave examples of men leaders who were successful and female leaders who were not successful in combating the COVID-19 Pandemic giving several reasons for overlooking the role of gender in effective COVID-19 crisis management such as the population size, country area, healthcare budget and infrastructure, climate, strength of the economy, peoples' awareness and willingness to comply with the rules and regulations imposed by the governments, and having a team of advisors and legislative bodies that make decisions.

The author thinks that some of the countries ruled by women such as New Zealand, Iceland, Taiwan, New Zealand, Taiwan, Denmark are isolated islands with less frequent people mobility than European countries taking into consideration the population density in both groups of countries in the Image. Although China has the highest population in the world, yet they were able to contain the Pandemic successfully within a relatively short period of time. This is due to acting quickly, high financial, technological, professional capabilities, that enabled them to build an emergency hospital with 1000 beds in just 10 days to meet the need for additional hospital beds required by the increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases, in addition to the strict law enforcement of curfews and closures, social distancing and precautionary measures such as wearing masks in public.

## 6. Recommendations and Conclusion

Media attention to female country leaders successfully leading their countries through the COVID-19 crisis might be explained by the fact that female leadership is still exceptional, and therefore attracts more attention. Findings of the current study showed that there are factors that helped female leader face the COVID-19 crisis successfully and at the same time, there are factors that rule out the gender-crisis-management relationship. Analysing male and female performance during the Pandemic and after the Pandemic needs to continue because statistics of new COVID-19 cases, deaths, and recoveries in relation to a country's total populations, appearance of different COVID-19 variants such as Delta and Omicron, and the percentage of people who received 1, 2, and 3 vaccine jabs across the world are still open for further investigation in the future. New factors need to be explored, considered, and determined as the outcomes of the Pandemic mature and the impacts on the economy become apparent across the whole world.

Furthermore, more studies that compare the performance of male and female leaders not only in the health sector but also in other sectors such as the educational, economic, social, public service, government sectors and non-profit organizations are needed. In Saudi Arabia, in particular, there is a need to compare the performance of male and female leaders at Saudi schools and universities, in particular due to the many changes that have taken place in women empowerment in the past few years and the emergence of new female leaders at higher education, ministries and other sectors. For decades, national universities in Saudi Arabia have created closed centers for women off their main campuses. Though segregated, women were and are still studying and working in accordance with the same structure and regulation of "mother" institutions. At most Saudi universities, male administrators were in control of higher administrative positions of deanships, colleges, academic and service departments. Women used to serve as deputies and had a limited role in decision-making (Al-Jarf, 2013; Al-Jarf, 2005). But nowadays, Saudi women are holding high administrative positions whether in higher education institutions, and other sectors. Therefore, such comparisons between male and female administrators are needed especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic and post-Pandemic eras to find out how the gender equity gaps in distance and online learning during the Pandemic and post Pandemic eras have been bridged by male and female leaders (Al-Jarf, 2021b). Future studies might also investigate the communication styles of male and female university and college administrators (leaders) in gender-based learning and work environments in Saudi Arabia, and the characteristics of the discourse they use with their students and colleagues (Al-Jarf, 2021a; Al-Jarf, 2016; Al-Jarf, 2012).

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