



## **STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE OF COMPETENT MANAGEMENT IN MENA COUNTRIES: WASTA AS A DETERMINANT**

### **Abstract**

Recently, many societal challenges have emerged in the MENA region, such of those challenges have a direct influence on management practices and on performance of organizations in this complex part of the world. In top of these challenges and perhaps the most important one is the practice of Wasta in HRM. Though Wasta is considered to be an integral part and an emblematic characteristic of HRM in the MENA organizations, little is known about this intriguing and complex phenomenon. Despite its central role in shaping and evolving various HRM practices. Till this day, Wasta remains a relatively obscure topic of research, insufficiently dealt with in managerial literature. Therefore, this paper comes as an attempt to develop a theoretical framework model for Wasta using the Jordanian public institutions as a case study, which seeks to offer a deep understanding of the considerations that relate to its extent among HR practitioners and individuals alike. Furthermore, this model illustrates in addition to these factors, the consequences of Wasta in the workplace at both individual and organizational levels.

**Key Words:** Wasta; HRM; MENA; Informal networks.

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## Introduction

The study of Wasta in MENA region has become a central topic of research in the field of HRM (Alsarhan et al. 2021). This ever-increasing interest in understanding this phenomenon is due to the fact that it is considered a main distinguishing characteristic of HRM in the public sector of most MENA countries on top of which Jordan. Wasta is defined as the practice of receiving preferential treatment from relatives, friends, or acquaintances who are in a position of power to achieve one's gains (Loewe et al., 2008). This term in HRM basically refers to persons in power who help individuals linked to them socially, politically to obtain jobs, rapid promotions, good compensations or performance appraisals regardless of their competence on the expense of other qualified counterparts, which in turn leads to creating a generalized sense of injustice between individuals in the workplace (Alsarhan and Valax, 2020).

In addition, the role that Wasta plays extends to steering the relations between individuals in Arab societies or between Arab nationals and expatriates who work in their countries. Hence, the significance of understanding Wasta is essential due to its considerable role in social, economic, and political spheres (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011). Another key motive to understanding Wasta lies in the fact that a new found understanding of this phenomenon can help international executives enhance the effectiveness of their subsidiary operations in the MENA region (Weir et al., 2016). Not to mention that the risks of failure among expatriates due to their inadequate knowledge and preparation in facing these kinds of phenomena still exist and the percentage of failed international assignments when doing business across different cultures is still high (Aljbour and Hanson, 2015), especially given the fact that there is a rapid boost in the FDI in Jordan and in MENA alike, thereby increasing the number of global organizations (Branine and Analoui, 2006). Hence the need for studying and understanding a variety of management related norms linked to HRM, such as Wasta have become a central necessity.

Despite the significance of understanding Wasta, a limited number of scholars have taken the burden of studying this phenomenon. Nowadays, there is still a lack of information on this topic in managerial literature, and scientific papers published in international peer-reviewed journals that tackle this phenomenon from different HRM perspectives and are very scarce. Within the few references available on the topic, there remains to be an absence of a clear framework model that describes this phenomenon and its implications in a holistic manner. Not to forget the fact that the whole state of research on HRM in the MENA indicates that there are still limited publications on this topic. This literature now available is still relatively modest in comparison with the large number of publications dedicated to HRM in the Western context. As (Iles et al., 2012) clearly state “there is a clear neglect of investigation and reporting of Arab cases and examples in textbooks of “management” “HRM” and “international business” ”(p. 465). One of these important themes, arguably the most important one, is the study of the phenomenon of Wasta. Therefore, this gap in the literature needs to be tackled and compensated with the proper analytical and theoretical knowledge in order to make better sense of the reality of HRM in that particular context and to come up with insights into the future of HR there.

Thus, this paper comes as an attempt to develop a model for Wasta in the Jordanian context as a case of MENA countries, and to understanding the considerations and factors that

impact Wasta's use among individuals and HR practitioners alike in MENA region, this dimension will be tackled through answering the following RQ:

***RQ: What are the considerations that impact the use of Wasta among individuals and HR practitioners in the workplace?***

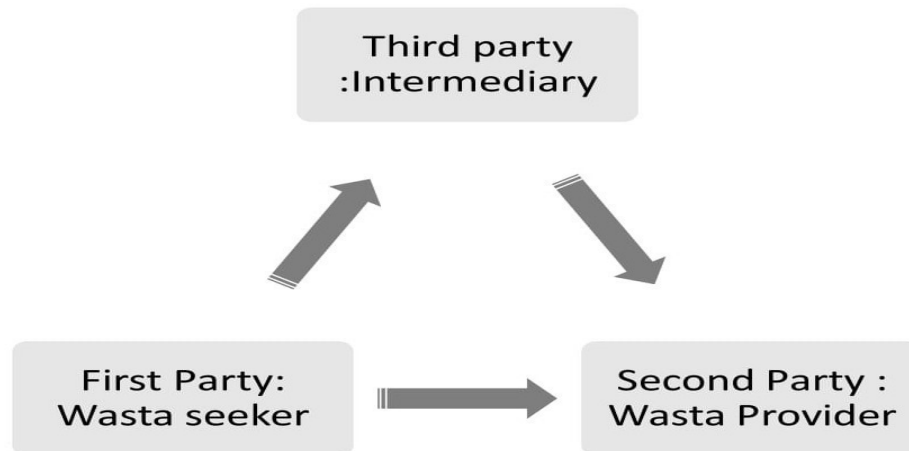
In order to do so, we divided this paper into four sections; the first will tackle Wasta and its theoretical foundation. The second will investigate its consequences. The third will expose the research design. In the end the results will be disclosed in the fourth section.

## **1. Theoretical foundation**

In the ME, the family core is considered of the utmost importance, and the notion of family encompasses the extended family, which means people don't only feel a sense of obligation to their immediate family, but also an obligation to save face for their distant family members and acquaintances (Hutchings and Weir, 2006). Arab countries are considered collectivistic societies (Hofstede, 2003) in which there is more emphasis on the groups to which one belongs, and where there aren't any barriers drawn between professional and private lives, since family and community relationships take precedence over work tasks (Ali et al. 1997; Abu-Saad 1998). Many scholars stressed the correlation between collectivism and Wasta, according to (Kropf and Newbury-Smith, 2016) "Wasta like other types of negatively classified networking systems, is attributed to collectivist societies"(p.5). Since Wasta flourishes in the intersection between private and public lives, its reasons of being are social, economic, administrative and even political. For instance, the culture of saving face can offer one a justification for the widespread of Wasta. Nowadays the culture of Wasta is deeply rooted within the fabric of the Jordanian society, to the point where "everything, no matter how simple it is, requires a Wasta in Jordan"(El-Said and McDonald 2001,p.77). Indeed, Wasta is still predominant in all aspects of Jordanians' lives, till in reality it became a parallel system where equality doesn't exist and citizens are categorized according to their connections. In terms of HRM some scholars argued that Wasta is the only way for Jordanians to get employed (Branine and Analoui, 2006).

It's important to illustrate that Wasta refers to both the action of Wasta as well as the person who mediates to achieve the gain (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). The process of Wasta consists of three parties; the first is the person in need. The second is the provider of Wasta (the person who is in the position of power). And the third is the intermediary (the person who possesses the ability to influence the decision maker; the provider of Wasta) (Alawamlah, 2013). However, the need for a third party isn't always present, as it's only called for when there are no strong relations between the first two parties and the third party has strong relations with both of them. Therefore Wasta can simply consist of two parties.

Figure (1) Parties of Wasta



Surely the principle of Wasta depends on the reciprocity of mutual benefits between individuals and groups. Nonetheless it's important to point out that this kind of reciprocity doesn't necessarily mean the provider of Wasta will receive immediate favors back from the beneficiary as soon as the latter benefits from Wasta. Rather, the provider assists the beneficiary in achieving his gains without knowing for sure when he will receive assistance in return from the seeker. Moreover it's not always mandatory that the reciprocal favor be extended to the provider himself; rather it can be delivered to any member of his family or acquaintances. This means that a Wasta provider may never receive actual benefits himself despite the favors he provided.

Wasta is considered to be a significant form of Social Capital. El-Said and Harrigan noted that SC develops in different countries regardless of their economic effectiveness and status, regime type and capacity to influence their societies. Nonetheless they elaborated that in corrupt countries suffering from the absence of accountability such as MENA countries, the impact of SC is more profound on societal life as opposed to transparent countries which fight corruption and have fair and independent judiciary systems as in the case of western countries (El-Said and Harrigan, 2009).

There are two types of SC, the type that brings close together people who already know each other; it is referred to as a bonding capital, and the type that brings together people or groups who previously didn't know each other referred to as bridging capital (Gittell and Vidal, 1998). Wasta can be used or acted as a Bonding or Bridging form of SC as it can emanate from a provider in the same group, (family or area) hence a Bonding SC, or from persons who don't share the same social group as a Bridging SC. On the other hand, the use of SC can have both positive and negative effects on individuals, as pointed out by (Coleman, 1988) who established that SC is valuable in facilitating certain actions for many people, but that inversely it could be harmful in different contexts. Wasta as a form of SC conforms to this principle since on one hand it can be efficient in getting a job or receiving good treatment for those who benefit from it and

on the other hand it can lead to negative consequences on the performance of institution through the inequity that it creates.

Undoubtedly, Wasta is one form of corruption that can further lead to and strengthen other types of corruption since there can be no traditional corruption, like bribe, if there's no reliance on administrative defects such as Wasta. The study of (Ashawi et al., 2011) in the MENA didn't only confirm that Wasta is a form of corruption but it also indicated a correlation between Wasta and corruption per se. This study found that individuals who have a positive experience of Wasta are more tolerant when it comes to dealing with issues of corruption. Likewise the principle of Wasta seems to be consistent with the definition of corruption according to the Transparency International, which states corruption as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain". Furthermore, the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Law 2016 in Jordan, article 16/A/7 states that "The acceptance of nepotism and favoritism [Wasta] by public administration employees, which revokes a right or validates what is void" shall be deemed as corruption. Seeing that both nepotism and favoritism can be considered as synonyms of Wasta, this confirms the solid links connecting Wasta to corruption.

## **2. Consequences of Wasta**

Wasta exerts its negative impact on different levels of management. Wasta along with inequity in HRM practices leads to low morale and motivation, dissatisfaction and low job engagement, which in turn lead to negative effects on the overall performance of public institutions. Inequity in treatment of employees through Wasta directly impacts their behavior in several dimensions of which most importantly employee motivation. According to Adam's Equity Theory, inequity between employees exists for a person whenever he perceives that the ratio of his outcomes (rewards, good compensation and promotions) to inputs (contributions that he brings to the job, his education level, skills, and physical effort) and the ratio of other's outcomes to their inputs are unequal. This may happen when two workers are in a direct exchange relationship, or when both are in an exchange relationship with a third party and one of them compares himself to the other. Consequently, inequity and injustice in social exchanges largely contribute to creating dissatisfaction and low morale for individuals (Adams, 1965).

In Jordan, individuals appointed by Wasta and who benefit from easy recruitment show little or no motivation to improve their work performance since it was Wasta that helped them get employed in the first place, and it's Wasta which will help them get benefits at work. On the other hand actual qualified employees hired based on their qualifications will exhibit no desire to sustain a good work level since they feel their efforts are pointless when met with other employees' Wasta (Alsarhan and Valax, 2020). Hence, the mere existence of Wasta makes employees who don't suffer from it, use it as a pretext to explain their lack of motivation.

Furthermore, Wasta can lead to the exclusion of many employees based on their origin or difference of opinions and political orientations. This means that Wasta will hinder workplace diversity since individuals hired through acquaintances and tribal connections are more likely to promote uniformity (Ali et al., 2013). The importance of diversity in the workplace lies in its link to job engagement along with organizational commitment and high performance. According to a survey conducted by (Korn Ferry Institute, 2013) on more than 400 executives, a resounding 96% of executives believe that having a diverse workforce can improve employee engagement and business performance. Indeed the significance of job engagement lies in its correlation with

the outcomes of any organization through individual's behavior, organization commitment, productivity, and overall performance. In a meta-analysis study conducted by (Harter et al.,2002), based on 7,939 business units in 36 organizations it was concluded that employees' engagement is related to meaningful business outcomes, and that changes in management practices which increase employee engagement may increase business outcomes including productivity and performance. (Kahn, 1992) stressed this correlation by articulating that engagement leads to individual outcomes which lead to better organizational outcomes. Since the presence of Wasta has negative consequences on employee diversity, it contributes to reducing their job engagement which reflects negatively on overall performance. This conclusion is confirmed by the study of (Ali et al.,2013), who state that organizations that avoid Wasta and that are operate ethically according to their employees and to the community will benefit from better employee job engagement.

As for employee satisfaction, inequality in HRM plays an important role in employee satisfaction thus impacting employee turnover. Griffeth and Gaertner found that "employees who perceive themselves in an inequitable situation will be dissatisfied". Likewise job dissatisfaction which results from inequality also brings about effects on turnover intentions and actual turnover (Griffeth and Gaertner, 2001). According to these scholars, various forms of inequality such as unjust distribution of pay, unjust administration and different treatment, all lead to dissatisfaction, thus in order to keep the turnover low, organizations have to pay close attention to the perceived fairness of their HRM systems. In the Jordanian context (Abdalla et al., 1998) brought forth that inequality due to the practices of Wasta has negative consequences on employees being satisfied in their jobs, and consequently becoming disloyal and uncommitted to their organizations. They indicated that employees might lose their work involvement thus creating an atmosphere of absenteeism and causing an increase in turnover leading to the inability to achieve the organization's mission. This can explain why Wasta is a significant factor that forces thousands of highly qualified Arabs professionals to immigrate to foreign countries leaving their countries' public institutions with bad performance (brain drain).

### **3. Research Design**

#### ***3.1 Research Methodology***

In this paper, a qualitative design was embraced and semi-structured interviews were used as an instrument to collect data. The choice of the qualitative method is appropriate in seeking in-depth data needed to understand complex social constructions such as Wasta (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, we used the Grounded Theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to analyze our collected data. First we constructed an initial diagnosis that generated a broad description of the reality based on 27 semi-structured interviews and observations in the Jordanian public sector. We also researched articles, exclusive interview, surveys, and public databases for additional information to corroborate, triangulate and confirm our interview results. We translated our interview questions from English to Arabic, and the answers from Arabic to English with the help of a third independent party, in order to avoid any kind of bias or personal interpretations. We carefully reviewed our notes for accuracy immediately after the interviews and before transcription. Furthermore trustworthiness in our interpretative research was ensured through four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. In regards to the duration of the interviews, they lasted between 48m and 1h 24m, depending on the participants' interest in Wasta as well as their personal knowledge and expression.

### ***3.2 Defining Our Field of study & Target Population***

The Jordanian public sector is considered to play an essential role in providing most basic services to citizens; it is also considered the most important provider of job opportunities. In general, the public sector in Jordan consists of two main branches; the first one is the military forces and security agencies, the second consists of ministries and other organizations and SOEs. Despite the fact that articles in the Jordanian law that deal with employment and fair access to opportunities clearly prohibit any type of preferential treatment, Wasta still plays a major role for public sector employees regardless the branch they work in. Indeed, Wasta remains a powerful tool in several stages of public employee's service whether in recruitment; promotion; etc.

In terms of recruitment in the Jordanian public sector, this process happens either through the Civil Service Bureau or directly on the level of ministries or special committees when it comes to higher end positions. Recruitment can also take place through independent HR departments in the armed forces and other security agencies. The process of candidacy and selection is theoretically done through public announcements and objective selection, which is not always the case. However, Jordanians have learned over the years not to trust the public HRM system and they know to always look for Wasta to get hired. Based on this reality, the choice of participants for the interviews was based on individuals' experience in the public sector. Those who were selected had either already retired from their public functions, or were still on duty at the time of the interviews. The sample that was eventually selected consisted of joining individuals from different public domains. On another hand, we focused on individuals who are/were in leadership positions and top management levels, as well as individuals who are/were in HRM departments at either middle or low levels. Through this approach, we could insure that some of our interviewees have been at least once in decision making positions or have been asked to give a recommendation regarding several practices of HRM. This experience in HRM positions or top management positions means that our participants were surely familiar with Wasta at some point in their careers.

Verbatim reports, geographic considerations, social class considerations, gender, age, organizational tenure, nature of job, team size and boundaryless organization approach, were all essential in defining our sample. Lastly, in order to encourage our interviewees to express themselves freely, we assured them and their organizations complete confidentiality through the anonymity of their contribution.

## **4. Findings & Discussion**

### ***4.1 Main Elements***

#### ***4.1.1 Influence of geographic considerations***

There is clear evidence that Wasta is widely spread between Jordanians whether in the capital Amman or rural areas. However the form and degree of their use of Wasta varies according to these geographic considerations. In order to study the varying influence of external factors on the Wasta process among different geographical regions, it is first of all important to acquire an understanding of the essential realities regarding the contrast between the capital and rural areas in Jordan. By analyzing these realities we will clarify the links established between higher uses of Wasta in the public sector among certain segments of Jordanians depending on their geographic location. The first aspect which emerged concerns the social fabric of the

Jordanian society which is highly influenced by the tribalistic mentality of some Jordanians. As one respondent put it *“People in Amman have less Wasta than remote areas due to the presence of tribes and strong connections that cannot be neglected there, which affect one’s social situation, benefits, power of influence.”*(OS) Strong social ties and mutual sympathy also characterize the Jordanian social fabric: *“Wasta is very visible in rural areas; in Amman [...] not that much [...] I think people in rural areas are more sympathetic towards each other, that is the reason why Wasta works more there”*(IS). Another trait is mutual respect: *“The level of respect within a family or tribe is eminently influenced by the amount of services that a person extends to his relatives in procuring them with Wasta in order to get hired or receive benefits”*(MA). People living in different geographical zones have also different level of awareness: *“There has been a public awareness between Jordanians in Amman that employment in the private sector is better than in a public sector [...]. Public awareness on this issue has not yet been achieved among Jordanians in remote areas who still believe that working in security agencies; military forces and government institutions is more secure and stable.”*(FA)

The second aspect concerns economic challenges which include high rates of poverty and unemployment: *“The economic situation is very difficult in rural areas, people are destitute there and they do not have other options. There are no investments there, only poverty and unemployment [...]. Government jobs for them are the last life boat”*(AA) The imbalance in the distribution of private investments development plans among different zones also plays a role in the form and extent of Wasta: *“It is not the question of place of residence in my belief[...]the problem is in the country’s development plans,[...] which much like other Arab countries focus more on the capital than other remote regions, hence the difference in the use of Wasta between Amman and those regions is greatly influenced.”*(RA) Another take states that *“In Amman there are more job opportunities [...]if I can’t find a job in the public sector ,it is possible for me to work in the private sector, in companies and private institutions, but in remote areas there are no large projects and investments at all. Therefore people are forced to search for opportunities in the government sector that overwhelmingly depends on Wasta.”*(SU)

#### 4.1.2 Individual & collective factors

The 1<sup>st</sup> factor concerns gender issues related to the use of Wasta, where there is a general consensus regarding the overwhelmingly masculine presence in decision-making positions in the Jordanian organizations compared with the number of women in the overall population which creates an unequal dynamic in many professional aspects among which, the use of Wasta in HRM: *“[...]men generally seek and benefit from Wasta on a larger scale than women, which can be justified with the fact that Arab societies are predominantly masculine societies that condone the use of Wasta for men as a means to achieving benefits and success.”*(BA) Another respondents states that *“It is obvious that young men benefit more from Wasta since most ministers, deputies, general directors, CEOs in Jordan are men.”*(SAL) This masculine mentality creates different perceptions on employment for both genders thereby influencing their use of Wasta: *“having a job of men is considered urgent and necessary due to the social responsibilities put on them, whereas jobs for women are an added value and a supplementary source of income to improve the standard of living.”*(MO)

The 2<sup>nd</sup> factor is the generational question, or the age gap and its links to the difference perceptions of Wasta. Many considerations may play a role here; they range between the changes in the nature of Wasta and the lack of government jobs. One argument points out the link between the old tribalistic mentality and the use of Wasta: *“The old generations use Wasta more,*



*due to the tribal mentality which is still dominant, and due to the lack of awareness concerning the procedures and reforms that have been made since their time.”(FA) However, other perspectives indicate that the younger generation is more reliant on Wasta for different reasons: *Wasta varies according to the different generations in terms of the perception towards Wasta which are different for the new generation who conceives it more as a way for showing off and boasting. [...] Nowadays the idea of Wasta as a purely tribal phenomenon which is how older people saw it is changing little by little, and it now includes new forms such as the mutual personal interests Wasta, and the showmanship Wasta.”(RA) Experience of the ways in which HRM functions in the public sector has granted the younger generations with an advantage for using Wasta: “The new generations [...] have become fully aware of the system and Wasta’s role in achieving gains more than the old generations. They are impulsive [...] and do not believe in gradual step by step progress.”(MU)**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> factor pertaining to social class distinctions, shows that Wasta is spread among all social classes in similar and close levels but in different ways and for different goals: *“Wasta is present in all social classes of the Jordanian society, but I imagine at different levels [...] since each social class has its needs [...] and its aspirations which are different from those of other classes.”(HA) The different ends of Wasta are thus directly impacted by social classes: “upper social classes seek Wasta to increase their wealth while the middle and poor classes seek it to get employed.”(HAS) The degree of Wasta’s also varies among social classes: “Rich people use Wasta more than the middle and poor classes, because they have money and actual power which enables them to reach officials and decision-makers in the state. Sometimes [...] decision-makers who are not rich, have to pay courtesy to rich people by accept their Wasta.”(SAM)*

#### 4.1.3 Perception of inequity & frustration

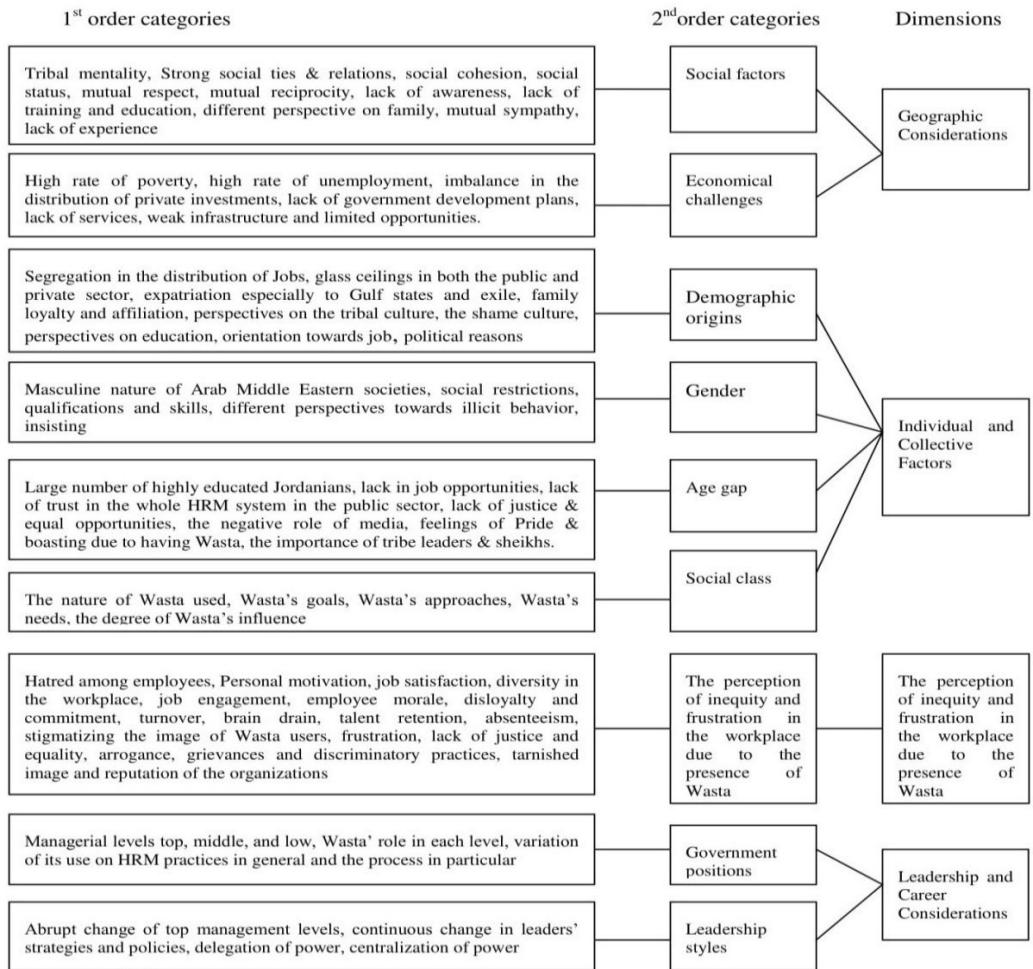
Links have been established between the level of inequity in the workplace with the presence of Wasta among different HRM practices and the high level of frustration, low morale, lack of diversity, dissatisfaction and demotivation among staff and high turnover. This in turn reflects on the overall performance: *“Wasta leads to employee frustration and it affects their personal motivation to work hence it impacts achievement within the institution. Furthermore, it affects the image of the institution since it gives an impression that the institution is unprofessional and not advanced, in other words a failed institution. [...] Moreover frustrated employees will transfer this frustration to the recipients of the service (i.e. citizens), thereby influencing the quality of services which gives a negative image of the institution in particular and the Jordanian public sector in general.”(FA) One respondent gave the following testimony: “I noticed that the Wasta employee got more benefits financially and position wise than me even though we were equal in qualification. He got more preferential treatment like less discipline in working hours without being questioned [...]. As a result, he appeared to be more productive and important in the eyes of top management than the rest of us [...] how do you expect my job morals to be!”(SAR) Another testimony shows the extent of the consequences of Wasta on frustration: “A new employee came through Wasta in my department. He got almost double my salary! And I could not claim the same benefits. At the end, I quit my job and moved to work aboard.” (SU) Furthermore, the extents of inequity have negative consequences on the image of the organizations where Wasta is practiced: “Maybe Wasta will impact the image of an organization, thus it becomes the outstanding symbol of this organization, which creates a general sense that it impossible to make any transaction or get any paperwork done in this organization without having Wasta.” (HA) The negative impact on the organization’s image*

directly stems from that of employees : *“I think Wasta has an impact on the image of organization itself, whereas the oppressed employee will reflect that bad image from within the institution towards outside, especially if this bad image has multiple and repeated cases.”*(SAM) In addition, the widespread of Wasta leads to high disappointment among workers which in turn may lead to grumble for workers: *“I believe that this high level of frustration and the feeling of disappointment among government employees can be easily attributed to the widespread of Wasta in their organizations. Where this large extent of Wasta will lead to creating a state of discontent and anxiety and fear among the remaining workers who are afraid for their professional careers and their interests which might go to those who do not deserve them.”*(MU) Therefore, these employees perceptions of those who benefitted from Wasta will always be negative regardless of their real competences and performance. Unconsciously they will not perceive them positively even if they prove their qualifications and their ability to work, because those recruited through Wasta take more rights at the expense of their colleagues’ interests in an unjust manner : *“Their colleagues’ perceptions will not change towards them even if they prove their merit, due to the fact that they basically came through Wasta unjustly, even if they prove their eligibility after while ,a belief prevails that others are doing the tasks for them.”*(SAU) The use of Wasta is thus a stigma which chases its user throughout their professional career: *“It is always unacceptable and the bad image towards individuals who came through Wasta doesn’t go away even if they have competences and qualifications. [...] If they are really qualified, why do they need Wasta?”*(OS)

## **4.2 Data Analysis**

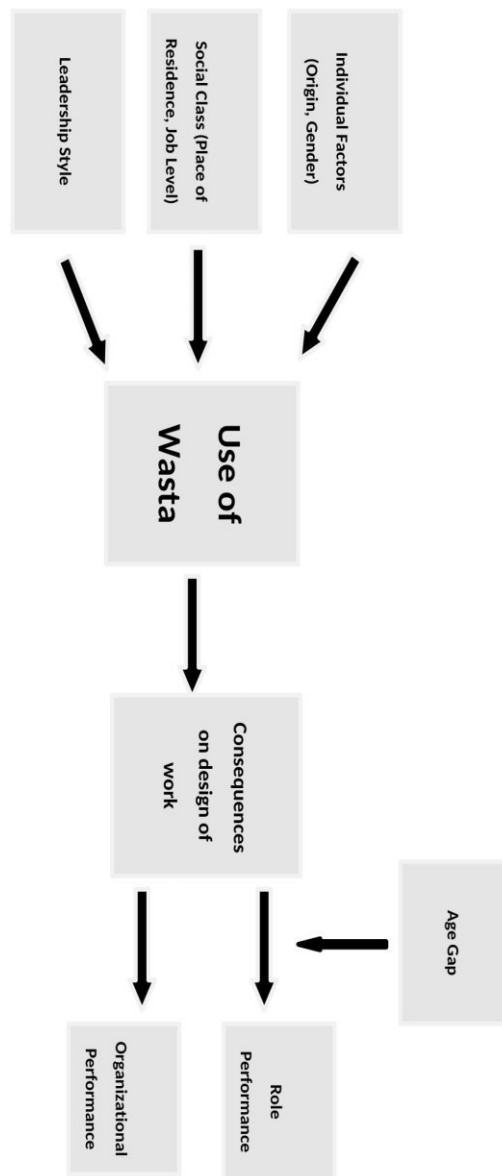
In this paper, the Charmaz’ approach for coding which was adopted (Charmaz, 2006) includes the initial line by line and the focused coding. We chose to code our transcripts line by line by hand in order to avoid missing out subtle details expressed by the interviewees which might prevent us from discovering one of the hidden aspects of Wasta. This kind of fidelity to the original expression of the participants will enable us to explore their statements and the implicit meanings, either consciously or subconsciously hidden by our interviewees. We implemented the constant comparative method of data analysis (Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1998) where we continued to gather information and compare it to emerging categories, repeating this process until our categories were saturated. In order to seek more qualitative rigor in our inductive research, we followed the Gioia Methodology approach (Gioia et al., 2013). This approach includes two phases of analysis: the 1<sup>st</sup> order analysis that uses informants’ terms, and researchers make a little attempt to distill categories. The 2<sup>nd</sup> order analysis uses researchers’ concepts and themes. As an outcome of the aforementioned stage of the categorization process, our main categories emerged. Afterwards, we will be delving deeper in our analysis and engaging in other determinate categorical processes in order to reach the core categories we aim to establish, thereby defining our dimensions and discovering the different relations among them, which will subsequently enable us to advance to a more theoretical level. In our study of 2<sup>nd</sup> order categories we began seeking similarities and differences among the 1<sup>st</sup> order categories in order to reduce the number of these categories and obtain a more controllable number. Hence, 2<sup>nd</sup> order categories come as a synthesis of the 1<sup>st</sup> order categories.

Figure (2) Data analysis structure (based on Gioia et al., 2013)



After obtaining our main dimensions through multi categorization analysis, we can expose our proposed model which aims to describe our studied phenomenon. In this model, we included our emerged dimensions as well as other consequences of Wasta on different levels.

Figure (3) Paper Model



### ***4.3 Managerial Implications & Limitations***

The outcomes obtained throughout this research have proven to be unique due to the unprecedented nature of the proposed model for the phenomenon of Wasta. The significance of this model emanates from the several aspects of Wasta that it presents which offer a holistic theoretical understanding of this little known concept. We argue that our obtained model will be, to our knowledge, the first model elaborated to explain and define Wasta and its main aspects. In addition, we consider that our findings can be an important reference for any future research regarding Wasta. Our research's value is also derived from its role in assembling, organizing and presenting the crucial insights of our respondents in a synthetic manner that puts the many

aspects of Wasta in an orderly manner allowing for a theoretical understanding of this phenomenon.

Nevertheless, we are aware of the fact that these findings should be interpreted with caution. Similarly to any research, this work is bound by some limitations which need to be acknowledged. Firstly, our research was written in English and relied primarily on published papers in English, while another important source of data for this study, our interviews, were conducted in Arabic given the study context. Since language is thought to be responsible for shaping not only the way people express themselves but also their vision of things, we were aware that using two different languages could create some variation between two different perspectives on HRM practices in relation to Wasta. Secondly, due to the use of the qualitative method, the question of the generalizability of our outcomes always remained an issue we kept in consideration. As (Myers, 2009) states: “a major disadvantage of qualitative research [...] is that it is often difficult to generalize to a larger population.”(p.9) Since all of our participants are located only in the Jordanian public sector, this does not allow for generalizing the results and projecting them on other ME contexts or even on the private sector in Jordan. The importance of this paper lies in the fact that this paper opens new avenues for scholars in terms of many dimensions and factors impact the use of Wasta among HR practitioners, which means each of those factors must be studied deeply in independent papers and any future works.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this paper, we attempted to illustrate the concept of Wasta and to demonstrate its negative impact on HRM and overall performance of public institutions. Given the wide variety of negative impacts which does not only fall on people who are outside the circles of power and influence but rather extends to the whole of society, it seems evermore essential for global executives and HR specialists to understand the intricate nature of the causes and effects of Wasta, as well as to innovate new ways to approach this phenomenon. This article offers insight for academics who are interested in HRM research in ME and Jordan by pointing out Wasta related realities. In the end, through this newfound understanding, our paper aims to contribute to the rising understanding of HRM principles in the ME.

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