



# Awards Arab World 2025

## Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

<b>Institution Name</b>	Taibah University
<b>Submission title or project name</b>	How does oil price uncertainty affect the stability of conventional and Islamic banks in major oil-exporting countries? Evidence from the GCC region
<b>Nominee / key personnel</b>	Dr Mohammad Hassan Alsharif (associate professor of finance at Taibah University)
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1544612324011905">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1544612324011905</a>
<b>Submission</b>	<p>This study investigates whether oil price uncertainty has different effects on the default risk of Islamic and conventional banks in major oil-exporting countries. Using a dataset of 61 banks from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, we examine the impact of the Oil Price Uncertainty Index (OPUI), a new forward-looking text-based uncertainty measure created by Abiad and Qureshi (2023). The results suggest that conventional banks are more vulnerable to higher oil price uncertainty, while this relationship does not exist for banks that adhere to Islamic finance principles. This provides an opportunity for investors to hedge against the region's systemic risk.</p>



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## Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

<b>Institution Name</b>	Hamad Bin Khalifa University
<b>Submission title or project name</b>	AI for Palestine: a voice for justice
<b>Nominee / key personnel</b>	Mowafa Househ (project lead); Dr Samir Belhouari (technical director); AlHassan AlSammaraie (lead design team Applab); Hurmat Ali Shah (lead data curation); Ashad Islam; Mohammad Bahri; Zain Tariq
<b>URL</b>	<a href="#"><u>We can send you a link and password, it works, but given the new trump administration rules and laws on pro palestine content, we had to take the site down. However, we can give you direct access to it without making it public.</u></a>
<b>Submission</b>	<p>At AI for Palestine, we strive to offer an authentic Palestinian perspective on events through our AI-driven platform, developed in collaboration with Applab in Doha and Hamad Bin Khalifa University's College of Science and Engineering. Our interdisciplinary research collects first-hand accounts, archival records and digital communications to preserve and amplify Palestinian narratives traditionally misrepresented in the media. Named "Handala" after the symbolic character by Naji al-Ali, our AI embodies Palestinian resilience and exemplifies our commitment making sure the truth is told. Over the past year, we navigated challenges such as data scarcity and cultural sensitivity, adapting advanced machine learning to interpret local dialects accurately. The resulting platform fosters community engagement and informed dialogue, empowering activists, educators and policymakers to better understand occupation and resistance, ultimately contributing to a more balanced public discourse and inspiring further research and civic participation. Our work not only preserves heritage but also fuels meaningful social change.</p>



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## Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

<b>Institution Name</b>	Gulf Medical University
<b>Submission title or project name</b>	Eco-centric stakeholder theory
<b>Nominee / key personnel</b>	Dr Najeb Masoud
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.gmu.ac.ae/eco-centric-stakeholder-theory">https://www.gmu.ac.ae/eco-centric-stakeholder-theory</a>
<b>Submission</b>	<p>Eco-centric stakeholder theory (EST) redefines corporate governance by recognising non-human nature as a legitimate stakeholder. Traditional models, such as stakeholder theory and shareholder theory, often overlook the environmental dimension of decision-making, focusing primarily on human stakeholders and profit maximisation. EST bridges this gap by integrating environmental ethics into corporate strategy, offering a framework that aligns economic, environmental and social interests. The research demonstrates that incorporating non-human nature into decision-making can lead to sustainable, long-term corporate strategies that benefit both businesses and the environment. This framework has significant implications for industries facing pressing environmental challenges, including energy, manufacturing and agriculture. By operationalising sustainability, EST offers a path for companies to reduce their ecological footprint, enhance accountability and meet global sustainability goals, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable future for both human and non-human stakeholders.</p>



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## Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

<b>Institution Name</b>	Ibn Tofaïl University
<b>Submission title or project name</b>	Virtual Tabadoul: enhancing cultural exchange and community building through task-based language learning in virtual reality
<b>Nominee / key personnel</b>	
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://sd.uit.ac.ma/innovation-through-virtual-exchange-ibn-tofail-university-leads-the-way/">https://sd.uit.ac.ma/innovation-through-virtual-exchange-ibn-tofail-university-leads-the-way/</a>
<b>Submission</b>	<p>Virtual Tabadoul is an international virtual exchange initiative designed to connect students from Morocco and the United States through shared language learning and cultural dialogue. The programme aims to create inclusive and accessible spaces for students to interact across cultures. At its core, Virtual Tabadoul seeks to bridge the gap between language education and real-world intercultural engagement by encouraging meaningful communication among peers from diverse backgrounds. The initiative reflects a growing need for global collaboration and understanding in an interconnected world. By offering a structured yet flexible framework for exchange, it supports participants in developing broader worldviews and cultural sensitivity. While rooted in academic partnerships, the programme's broader aim is to foster mutual respect, dialogue and a sense of global citizenship. Virtual Tabadoul continues to evolve as a model for innovative international education that values connection, cooperation and cultural learning.</p>



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## Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

<b>Institution Name</b>	University of Balamand, in collaboration with the Lebanese American University
<b>Submission title or project name</b>	Stakeholder dynamics in rural Lebanese women's entrepreneurship
<b>Nominee / key personnel</b>	Omayya Kuran; Lara Khabbaz
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/1750-6204">https://www.emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/1750-6204</a>
<b>Submission</b>	<p>This research explores how stakeholder engagement can empower female entrepreneurs in rural Lebanon amid ongoing national crises. Using participatory action research and narrative enquiry, the study engaged 28 women over three years to understand how they navigate systemic barriers such as limited resources, societal norms and geographic isolation. The project revealed the pivotal role of community networks, NGO support and tailored training in fostering entrepreneurial resilience and redefining success beyond profit. While formal government support was limited, informal ecosystems emerged as critical to business sustainability. The research has sparked dialogue with local NGOs and development partners about enhancing support strategies for female entrepreneurs in fragile contexts. It offers a replicable framework for inclusive, grassroots-driven development that recognises women as key agents of change. The study underscores how collaborative, socially engaged research can inform policy and practice while amplifying marginalised voices.</p>



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## Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

<b>Institution Name</b>	Qatar University
<b>Submission title or project name</b>	Greek-Arabic proverb encounters
<b>Nominee / key personnel</b>	Irene Theodoropoulou
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://sites.google.com/view/greek-arabicproverbencounters/home">https://sites.google.com/view/greek-arabicproverbencounters/home</a>
<b>Submission</b>	<p>A comparative analysis of Arabic and Greek proverbs completed in 2024 demonstrated the expression of common moral values, including honour, patience and family loyalty. The research goal was finding matching proverbs and studying their linguistic and cultural aspects to build cross-cultural understanding. I built two corpora by drawing from ethnographic and classical sources while organising proverbs based on theme and pragmatics and structural elements. The research faced obstacles when trying to deal with Arabic diglossia and when matching different imagery types (Greek maritime versus Arabic desert). I solved these issues through strict coding procedures and with advice from experts. The research findings demonstrated major similarities between the two cultures, which contradicted East–West dualities and proved the existence of common values. The research outcomes resulted in educational curriculum development alongside cultural preservation initiatives and community outreach programmes. A relevant future follow-up project is the Mediterranean-Middle East Proverbs Atlas.</p>



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## Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

<b>Institution Name</b>	Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, in collaboration with the University of South Carolina
<b>Submission title or project name</b>	Does board gender diversity matter in emerging markets? Evidence from banking sector performance in Egypt
<b>Nominee / key personnel</b>	Mohammed Omran (professor of financial economics, Graduate School of Business, Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, Alexandria, Egypt); Omrane Guedhamia (Russell Hill professor and professor of international finance, department of international business, Darla Moore School of Business, University of South Carolina)
<b>URL</b>	
<b>Submission</b>	<p>This research explores the real-world impact of gender diversity on corporate boards in Egypt's banking sector. In response to new regulatory mandates, the study tracked board composition across 33 banks from 2016 to 2022, uncovering a clear and consistent link between female representation and improved financial and operational performance. Banks with at least two women on their boards outperformed others in profitability, efficiency and asset quality – highlighting the importance of reaching a “critical mass” for meaningful inclusion. The findings also reveal that women on boards help to mitigate governance risks tied to state ownership and power concentration. By offering solid evidence that diversity enhances decision-making and accountability, the research supports wider gender equality efforts and provides a valuable model for policymakers across the MENA region. Beyond academia, the work has sparked national dialogue, guided reforms and opened new avenues for collaborative research into inclusive leadership and corporate governance in emerging markets.</p>



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## Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

<b>Institution Name</b>	The University of Jordan
<b>Submission title or project name</b>	Al-Khaizuran: a culturally responsive digital intervention for supporting youth identity, voice and well-being
<b>Nominee / key personnel</b>	Latefa Ali Dardas (associate professor of psychiatric mental health nursing and vice-dean for quality, international accreditation and global ranking, University of Jordan School of Nursing)
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://noor-project.org/">https://noor-project.org/</a>
<b>Submission</b>	<p>Al-Khaizuran is a culturally adapted Arabic-language digital platform designed for adolescents and youth to build resilience, explore identity and bolster emotional well-being. The self-guided website delivers a series of interactive modules integrating storytelling, cognitive-behavioural techniques, religious values and local narratives, accessible via mobile devices. Developed through a seven-phase process – including national surveys, youth interviews and a randomised controlled trial – the project overcame barriers such as device access, stigma and engagement by co-designing with youth and using visual storytelling and culturally resonant content. Results showed high satisfaction, improved resilience and greater preference for self-guided, stigma-free support. Beyond health, the platform promotes emotional literacy, reduces stigma and serves as a digital humanities tool that blends narrative, ethics and social science. Following its successful publication in <i>Frontiers in Psychiatry</i>, the project is being expanded into a mobile app and considered for use in schools, youth storytelling archives and cross-cultural studies, affirming its interdisciplinary and societal value.</p>