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Unity and Diversity in Arab Managerial Styles

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ABSTRACT A key approach to understanding cross-national variations in leadership is to examine how leaders handle routine events within their span of control. The sources of guidance employed by samples of middle and senior managers in four Arab nations were surveyed. Saudi managers showed the expected traditional and personalistic pattern of relatively strong reliance on both formal rules and unwritten rules, as well on as co-workers and subordinates. Respondents from Qatar, Oman and Lebanon each differed from this pattern in ways consistent with theories of modernity. Correlations with evaluations of how specific work events had been handled in each nation confirmed the presence of distinctive leader styles. The assumption that there is a relatively uniform style of leadership across Arab nations is thus questioned.

KEY WORDS • Arab nations • guidance sources • job satisfaction • leader effectiveness • leadership

In recent years, cross cultural researchers have greatly increased the range of nations that are sampled in their studies. A notable exception to this trend is provided by the 22 nations comprising the Arab League. Hof-

stede's (1980) pioneering study of national differences in culture originally omitted the whole of the Arab region, but later included a set of scores for the region as a whole that was based on an average of 141 responses

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obtained from seven different Arab nations. Among other more recent large-scale cross cultural surveys, Schwartz's (2004) values survey includes only a sample of Israeli Arabs within the 67 nations that he has sampled, while Bond, Leung et al.'s (2004) survey of beliefs and Smith et al.'s (2002) survey of managers' sources of guidance included only Lebanon among the more than 40 nations sampled. Given this lacuna in the literature and the emerging political importance of Arab societies, there is a need for greater inclusion of Islamic cultural groups in multi-cultural studies.

The GLOBE Leadership Survey

The present article seeks a fuller understanding of the nature of managerial styles within the Arab region, and the recent 62-nation GLOBE survey conducted by House et al. (2004) therefore provides a key point of reference. House et al. collected data from samples of managers within Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco and Qatar. Sample sizes ranged between 78 from Kuwait and 101 from Morocco, to 201 from Egypt and 202 from Qatar (Den Hartog et al., 1999). Some of the analyses reported by GLOBE researchers did examine the results from each of these nations separately (Kabaskal and Bodur, 2002), but for the most part their results were aggregated to constitute scores for an 'Arab' region in which the data from the non-Arab nation of Turkey were also included. This rather broad cluster was later renamed as the 'Middle-East' region (House et al., 2004).

The GLOBE researchers asked their respondents to rate the extent to which each of 112 traits would characterize an outstandingly effective leader, in order to test their hypothesis that outstanding leaders would show the same charismatic qualities in all cultural contexts. The resulting trait ratings were grouped into six clusters and mean scores for these clusters were then compared

across nations. Effective managers from the Arab cluster were found to score significantly lower than those from elsewhere on charismatic, team-oriented or participative qualities. However, effective Arab managers were reported to score significantly higher on 'self-protective' traits, namely self-centredness, status-consciousness, face-saving, conflict induction and reliance on procedure. Face-saving and status-consciousness are often said to be important values in traditional Arab culture, especially within tribal cultures (Gregg, 2005). Thus this finding appears plausible. These qualities were reported as particularly characteristic of leader effectiveness by respondents in Egypt, Kuwait and Qatar, but less so by those in Morocco (Kabaskal and Bodur, 2002).

These rather striking findings of the GLOBE researchers require detailed scrutiny. Can it be correct that these self-protective qualities do actually contribute to leader effectiveness, or is there some way in which the data were assembled and processed that leads to misleading conclusions? There are several possibilities.

First, it is important to understand the basis on which these cross-national comparisons were made. Managerial reliance on self-protective traits was not in fact *strongly endorsed* by respondents from Arab nations; it was rated *less negatively* than by those from other nations. In a similar way, managerial reliance on charismatic traits was not rated *negatively* by respondents from Arab nations; it was rated *less positively*. Thus Arab respondents tended to position their responses more toward the centre of these rating scales. In evaluating these results, then, we need to be clear that cultural differences in response to rating scales have been adequately controlled. Dorfman et al. (2004) report that even after data standardization had been conducted, Arab nations still scored higher than others on endorsement of leader self-protection. However, there is continuing debate as to whether the standardizations

that were used by the GLOBE researchers were the appropriate ones for their nation-level comparisons (Peterson and Castro, 2006).

A second possibility is that these results were obtained because none of the qualities listed in the survey represented those that are actually the most important in determining the effectiveness of Arab leaders. Dorfman et al. (2004) acknowledge this possibility and note that researchers from some nations that were involved in the GLOBE project did add additional items to their survey. Among the nations with strong Moslem representation that were included, researchers from Iran included an additional 54 qualities thought relevant to leadership to the basic list of 121 traits (Dastmalchian et al., 2001). These additions enabled the identification of four additional clusters of effective leader qualities, which Dastmalchian et al. named as 'familial', 'faithful', 'humble' and 'receptive'. These qualities contrast strongly with the self-protective traits listed above. Unfortunately, the means that Dastmalchian et al. report for the strength with which these qualities were endorsed could not be compared directly with those from other nations.

A third difficulty in evaluating the GLOBE results is a more general one. How should one interpret the relation between what the data show to be qualities thought desirable in an effective leader, and the actual frequencies of different types of leader behaviour? Abdalla and Al-Homoud (2001) discuss this crucial issue in their presentation of the GLOBE results from Kuwait and Qatar. In this instance, they supplemented their collection of the survey data with content analysis of a small number of interviews. The interviews confirmed the endorsement of attributes such as inspiration, motivation and knowledge as important in leader effectiveness. However, as they put it:

Previous research suggested that Arab leaders are paternalistic, centralized, have a strong tendency to base their decisions on intuition/hunch, and to subordinate efficiency to

human/personal relations. The findings of previous research are consistent with the local social values and organizational practices, however; the desirable profiles reported by this research are not. Previous findings suggest that Arabian Gulf societal cultures are characterized by weak future orientations, moderate performance orientations, moderate reliance on social norms and bureaucratic practices to alleviate unpredictable future events, and high centralization of authority . . . However, it is worth noting that the desirable leadership profiles are consistent in many ways with the Islamic leader profile, in terms of its emphasis on integrity, team, future and performance orientations. (pp. 523–4)

Thus there may be a greater divergence between the Arab leader qualities identified as ideal by the GLOBE researchers and everyday Arab leadership practices than is found in other parts of the world.

Alternative Perspectives on Arab Cultures and Leadership

Aside from the recent GLOBE project, no further empirical studies have been reported that directly compare the behaviour of leaders or managers across Arab nations, and only a few have provided relevant data from within a single Arab nation. Robertson et al. (2001) surveyed the work values of managers in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman. They found stronger endorsement in Saudi Arabia of the belief that work is good in itself and that it bestows dignity on the individual than they did in Kuwait or Oman. In an early study, Ali and Al-Shakhis (1989) found Saudi managers to be more individualistic, less egalitarian and less humanistic than Iraqi managers at that time. The effects of more recent events are undocumented.

Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) analysed Saudi culture along the four cultural dimensions defined by Hofstede (1980), concluding that Saudi managers scored high on power distance, relatively high in uncertainty avoidance and high on collectivism and femininity. These authors attributed Saudi managers'

high scores for collectivism and femininity to Islamic teachings. Comparing their results to those of Hofstede, they suggested that compared to the USA, 'Saudi Arabia scores considerably higher on power distance and uncertainty avoidance, considerably lower on individualism and relatively lower on masculinity' (p. 35). However, these researchers based their conclusions on data from just 38 part-time Saudi MBA students. Their attribution of high femininity and high uncertainty avoidance to Arab managers does not accord with Hofstede's earlier data. In another comparative study, Buda and Elsayed Elkhoully (1998) found oil industry employees from the Gulf States to be more collectivistic than Egyptian managers.

Arab managers have been shown to strongly endorse the Islamic work ethic (Abu Saad, 1998; Ali, 1998, 1992). Hunt and At-Twajiri (1996) also reported that Saudi executives' values are derived mainly from Islam and show a moderate tendency towards individualism. In addition, they are said to give their friendships and personal concerns more importance than the goals and performance of their organization. However, these authors did not specify whether these priorities are expressed conceptually or practically.

In Qatar, Al-Hajiri (1997) found that leaders tend to encourage subordinates to participate in decision-making only when the issue is related to personal matters rather than organizational ones. Al-Malki (1989) found that less than half of department directors ask for their employees' opinions during the decision-making process. It appears on average that for only about half the time are employees either asked their opinions or involved in the decision-making process.

However, many factors currently affect the values and subsequent practices of managers in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. For instance, many professional expatriates have entered the region over the past half century, importing markedly different values, especially in the heavily industrialized areas.

Large numbers of foreign workers have also helped in building the infrastructure of both Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. For these reasons it is possible that managers in the region could hold significantly different values, based on their exposure to alternative perspectives (At-Twajiri, 1989; Hunt and At-Twajiri, 1996).

The existing literature thus provides only a partial view of management and leadership from within the Arab region. We currently lack systematic descriptions of the behaviour of Arab leaders. The prevalence of Islam and of the Arab language throughout the region has also encouraged many commentators to generalize about shared aspects of Arab culture (Gregg, 2005). However, we need to consider the extent to which the distinctive political, economic and religious experiences of differing Arab nations may have elicited distinctive patterns of response, just as has been found for the beliefs of persons in Confucian-heritage cultures (Leung and Bond, 2004). Is it any more defensible to speak of 'Arab leadership' than it would be to generalize for instance about 'European leadership' or 'Asian leadership'?

Even though most Arab nations share the same religion (Islam) and the same language (Arabic), they differ in many other aspects such as their history, social norms, traditions, dialects, political and economic systems, religious denominations (*Mathahib*) and presence of substantial minorities. In a recent study, Dwairy et al. (2006) found significant differences in parenting styles reported by adolescents from eight Arab populations drawn from seven nations. In relation to nations that are included in the present study, Saudi parents were perceived as more authoritarian, while Lebanese parents were seen as more permissive.

Managers and Work Events

The present study compares self-reported actions by leaders and managers within

samples drawn from four Arab nations, and examines whether the reported effectiveness of their actions varies between these samples. It does so by drawing on a comparative database of self-reported actions by middle managers in 62 nations (Smith et al., 2002), now including additional data from Arab samples. The conceptual basis of this survey is provided by a focus on 'event meaning management' (Peterson and Smith, 2000). The task of the middle manager is seen as one of contending within an unceasing stream of events, each of which has to be assigned a meaning that will enable it to be handled in a way that benefits the organization. In assigning meanings, a manager may draw on his or her own experience and training, or may rely on a variety of alternative sources of guidance, such as superiors, subordinates, formal rules and so forth. Prior studies have shown variation between nations in the extent of reported reliance on eight different sources of guidance (Smith et al., 2002).

The guidance sources employed by Arab middle managers, like those elsewhere, may be related to a variety of personal, organizational and cultural determinants. In focusing on factors thought to be distinctively cultural, it is first important to determine the extent to which cultural factors are more or less influential than factors known to have universal relevance to organizational processes. Guidance sources employed by managers may reflect, for instance, their gender, their age, their seniority, the type of work in which they are engaged and the type of ownership of the organization by which they are employed. Where these factors are associated with use of particular guidance sources, they must be controlled statistically before cultural differences can be assessed.

If demographic sources of variance are discounted, the next priority in examining the available data must be to determine the degree to which responses from Arab managers differ from those obtained elsewhere.

Three aspects of the prior literature can provide the basis for hypotheses.

First, several authors have asserted that Islamic beliefs and the Islamic work ethics (Ali, 1988, 1992) provide a core basis for understanding Arab organizational behaviour and leadership, and studies using a measure of the Islamic work ethics within organizations in the Emirates have also shown significant effects (Yousef, 2000). In the present survey, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they rely on guidance from 'beliefs that are widely accepted in my nation as to what is right'. This measure does not refer to religious belief in itself and could be endorsed in any location where there is perceived to be uniformity of belief. It could also refer to other traditional patterns of belief relevant to organizational behaviour in Arab nations, such as belief in the efficacy of nepotistic practices like *wasta* (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). Nonetheless, given the studies cited above, it is advisable to test the extent to which this source of guidance is relatively salient to Arab respondents:

Hypothesis 1: Arab managers will report relying on beliefs that are widespread as to what is right more strongly than will non-Arab managers.

A second characterization of Arab managers in some published sources (e.g. Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001) has been that they have a strong concern for their interpersonal relationships. In Western nations, concern for interpersonal relationships is often understood in terms of a preference for informal relations rather than for following prescribed rules and procedures. However, in collectivist and high power distance contexts such as are found in the Arab nations (Hofstede, 1980), we may expect concern for interpersonal relations to be expressed in different ways depending on the more differentiated nature of role relationships (Smith et al., 2006). It will be important to behave in procedurally correct and respectful ways toward one's seniors and in nurturant ways toward

one's juniors. Within one's peer group it will be important to act in informal and collaborative ways. Considering this range of relationships as a whole, there are thus reasons to expect Arab managers to report relying more strongly on formal rules and procedures, on unwritten rules and on consulting more frequently with others such as their co-workers and their subordinates. Conversely, since concern for interpersonal relations is strong in Arab nations, we can expect reliance on one's own experience and training to be less strong than is found in more individualistic nations.

Hypothesis 2: Arab managers will report relying more strongly on formal rules and procedures, co-workers, subordinates and unwritten rules than those from other nations. They will report relying less strongly on their own experience and training

A prediction relating to reliance on one's superiors requires separate consideration. The relationship between hierarchy and using one's superior as a source of guidance has been found to be complex in earlier analyses based on the event meaning management survey of Smith et al. (2002). For instance, in several high power distance nations in Latin America, reliance on one's superior as a source of guidance was rated much lower than elsewhere. Discussion with local informants suggested that this was because managers sought to show respect to their superior managers by using more indirect ways of resolving difficulties (Smith et al., 1999). In other high power distance nations within the Smith et al. sample, for instance Turkey, reported reliance on superiors was high. There are evidently factors that vary between nations as to how best to relate to one's superiors in a context of high power distance. Relevant issues include differing bases for authority (Weber, 1921/1947), the nature of paternalism (Aycan, 2006), preservation of face (Ting-Toomey, 1988) and culturally permitted forms of upward influence such as *guanxi* in China and *wasta* in some

Arab contexts (Smith, in press). As a first step in identifying a prediction relevant to the Arab sample, a focus group of 12 part-time MBA students in Saudi Arabia was asked to discuss factors guiding their reliance on their superiors in solving managerial problems. The main factors provided by the students were face-saving, unwillingness to bother their superiors and unwillingness to show weakness. This phenomenon is to be expected within Arab cultures that can be classified as collective societies. On this basis, we enter a nominal hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Reported reliance on superiors will be less among Arab managers.

Tests of the differences between Arab and non-Arab managers can provide only a preliminary characterization, given the diversity of managerial behaviours that is found in other parts of the world. In achieving the central purpose of the present article, it is important to develop and test further hypotheses that there is significant diversity rather than uniformity in Arab managerial styles, even after demographic sources of variance have been controlled. This pattern may be reflected in differing degrees of reliance on particular sources of guidance, or in differing evaluations of the effectiveness of relying on any particular source of guidance. The best available basis for predicting differences is provided by the literature on modernity and globalization. On the basis of data from the World Values Survey, Inglehart and Baker (2000) have identified global trends over the past two decades away from reliance on traditional authority and toward greater self-expression and reliance on rational-legal authority. We may expect these trends to be present within the present samples to the extent that each has been open to external influences. Lebanon has a long history of exposure to Western influence. As noted above, Dwairy et al. (2006) found permissive parenting more favoured in Lebanon than in Saudi Arabia. Qatar has

had more recent exposure to the large-scale presence of expatriates. The present Omani sample is employed by a multinational company. Saudi Arabia has not been immune to globalizing influences, but their impact has thus far been less. We can therefore predict that the guidance sources reported by the three non-Saudi samples will put less emphasis on the traditional pattern of sources of guidance specified in Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, and more emphasis on reliance on one's own experience and training and on one's superior.

Hypothesis 4: Reliance on formal rules, informal rules, co-workers, subordinates and widespread beliefs will be less strong in the non-Saudi samples, whereas reliance on one's own experience and training and on superiors will be stronger.

It is more difficult to predict how respondents will evaluate reliance on the different sources of guidance, because there is no strong basis for knowing the extent to which they endorse the changes that globalization is inducing. The simplest assumption must be that all respondents favour these changes, and will therefore endorse the source of guidance that is most favoured in modern individualistic societies:

Hypothesis 5: Reliance on one's own experience and training and on one's superior will be rated effective, while reliance on all other sources will be rated ineffective.

Method

Middle managers in Beirut, Lebanon, Qatar, Oman and Saudi Arabia were asked to rate how they handled eight different, frequently occurring work events. A second sample of more senior Saudi managers also completed the survey. Both Saudi samples were drawn from a wide range of locations within the country. Within the context of a survey to be completed by managers from many nations, it was necessary to select events that are likely to occur in the work of almost any

manager in most types of organization. The eight work events selected were:

- 1 The appointment of a new subordinate
- 2 The handling of good work by a subordinate
- 3 The handling of poor work by a subordinate
- 4 The obtaining of needed equipment or machinery
- 5 The management of relations with other departments
- 6 The handling of disagreement within one's own department
- 7 The introduction of new work procedures
- 8 The evaluation of new work procedures.

In the handling of each of these events, respondents were asked to what extent they relied on each of eight sources of guidance. These potential sources of guidance were: my own experience and training, formal rules and procedures, informal norms as to 'how things are usually done around here', co-workers, specialists, subordinates, my superior, and 'beliefs that are widely shared in my country as to what is right'. Responses on five-point scales ranged from 'to a very large extent' to 'to a very small extent'. For each event, respondents also completed two further ratings, evaluating how well that event had been handled when it had occurred. Finally, they rated their job satisfaction using four items derived from Cole (1979). The survey was translated into numerous languages, with checks made for translation accuracy (Smith et al., 2002). Participants from Arab nations responded in Arabic, except in Oman where the company language was English.

Demographic details of the survey respondents were also collected and details of the 538 respondents comprising the Arab samples are provided in Table 1. Non-Arab data were available from 8376 respondents located in 58 further nations. These included 23 from Europe, 14 from Asia, six from the

Table 1 Details of samples

	Lebanon	Oman	Qatar	Saudi middle-level	Saudi senior-level
N	133	24	64	148	170
Mean age	37.1	39.8	31.9	37.1	44.0
above sMean level	2.7	3.3	3.4	2.8	1.7
% Moslem	17	96	98	98	100
% male	51	87	79	84	99
% state owned	28	100	32	52	32
% private company	51	0	59	24	49
% over 1000 employees	10	100	24	38	34
% in production	12	17	14	15	12
% in sales	41	33	14	28	21
% in personnel	2	12	8	11	8
% in finance	7	17	24	6	4
D&R in %	8	4	12	9	0
% in general management	26	4	10	12	41

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 since miscellaneous and less frequent categories are omitted.

Americas and six from Africa (listed in full by Smith et al., 2005). Respondents were drawn from middle management levels, and a broad range of organizations was sampled in almost all nations. No record was made of how many different organizations were sampled within each nation. However, the Omani respondents all worked for the same organization, which was formally government-owned, but was closely associated with a specific multinational organization. As can be seen from Table 1, the demographic profiles of the samples varied substantially.

Data from respondents who stated that they had not experienced a particular event were discarded for that event. Because of a typographical error, Qatari respondents were not asked to what extent they relied on their superiors as a way of handling events. The inclusion of eight different work events within the survey makes it possible to estimate the reliability with which leaders' reliance on each source of guidance has been assessed. Reliability across events was ade-

quately high in almost all the countries sampled, as were the reliabilities for the rated effectiveness with which events had been handled and for job satisfaction. Within each of the Arab samples, values of Cronbach alpha for reliance on each guidance source exceeded 0.70 and the majority exceeded 0.80.

Comparison of mean scores for different nations was based on a two-step process. First, differences in the degree of acquiescent response bias were discounted, using an estimate of response bias derived from each individual's overall mean responses (Smith et al., 2002). This yielded scores for reliance on each guidance source that were relative to the mean score. Separate regressions for each guidance source were next conducted using the individual-level data from all 62 nations, in order to determine the effects of demographic variability. The variables examined were age, gender, organization size, state ownership, number of levels of hierarchy above the respondent, and working in a

department whose function was production, sales, R&D, personnel or finance. Stepwise regressions were then computed in which demographic predictors found to have a significant effect were entered at step 1, followed by a dummy variable distinguishing Arab and non-Arab respondents at step 2.

Results

We may expect that demographic variables will affect reliance on guidance sources among Arab managers, as they do elsewhere. Within the present Saudi sample, Achoui (2006) compared the responses of 172 executives to those of 156 middle managers from both public and private sectors. He reported that responses differed significantly on the following sources of guidance in making decisions: unwritten rules, subordinates, peers, one's own experience and friends. These differences were attributed to sub-cultural differences as well as to personal and organizational variables.

To conduct the present comparisons, variance resulting from demographic factors must first be discounted. Table 2 shows the demographic variables that were found to be significant predictors for reliance on each source of guidance in the total sample. After these effects were discounted, the column headed step 2 in the table also indicates that for all eight sources of guidance, significant additional variance was explained when the Arab responses were contrasted with the non-Arab responses. The means given on the right of the table show predicted scores with demographic variance discounted. Since the scores had been standardized, they vary around a mean of zero. Negative scores for a particular source of guidance thus indicate that it was employed less frequently than those that have positive scores. Arab respondents reported relying on widespread beliefs less frequently than the average for other nations. Hypothesis 1 is therefore not supported. They also reported relying more than

non-Arabs on formal rules, unwritten rules, their co-workers and their subordinates, which gives support to Hypothesis 2, and on specialists, for which no prediction had been entered. Their low reported reliance on their own experience and training is also consistent with Hypothesis 2, whereas low reliance on superiors is consistent with Hypothesis 3. The values for adjusted R^2 in the table indicate that the most strongly significant effects are those for higher reliance on co-workers and lower reliance on superiors and one's own experience and training.

The four Arab samples differ substantially in size, so these tests of Hypotheses 1–3 may have been unduly influenced by the data from Saudi Arabia. A second test of these hypotheses was therefore made by comparing nation-level mean scores for each source of guidance. These analyses showed that nation-level means averaged across the four Arab samples differed from nation-level means averaged across the rest of the sample only in respect of reliance on co-workers (standardized Arab mean = $-.02$; standardized non-Arab mean = $-.25$; $p < .001$). We must consider why the other differences are less robust.

The difference between the results from tests of Hypotheses 1 to 3 at the individual and at the nation level could be a result of the greater statistical power of the individual-level analysis. However, it could also be caused by diversity across the unequally sized Arab samples. This possibility was examined by testing Hypothesis 4. Table 3 shows tests of whether the regression slopes for the three smaller samples differ from that for the larger Saudi sample. Significant differences are found for six of the eight guidance sources. Lebanese respondents reported relying on their superiors more, and on unwritten rules and co-workers less, than did Saudi respondents. Qataris relied on their co-workers even more than the Saudis, but relied on unwritten rules and widespread beliefs less. The small Omani sample showed more

Table 2 Arab leader styles compared to those in the rest of the world

Guidance source	Step 1: Demographic predictors	Adjusted Rsquare	Step 2: Rsquare change	Arab mean	Non-Arab mean
Formal rules	State owned More levels above Finance, not production	.037***	.001*	.38	.27
Unwritten rules	Young age Not state owned	.012***	.001**	.05	-.07
Subordinates	Older age, male Not state owned Not finance, sales, R & D	.025***	.003***	.00	-.12
Specialists	More levels above Production	.001***	.001*	-.37	-.43
Co-workers	Young age, R & D	.016***	.006***	-.01	-.25
Superiors	Young age, male Production, R & D Personnel, sales, finance	.055***	.005***	.26	.48
Own experience	Older age, male Fewer levels above Not state owned, not sales	.062***	.005***	.34	.61
Widespread beliefs	Older age, not R and D Fewer levels above State owned	.009***	.002***	-.63	-.46

Note: Means are standard scores; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 3 Reliance on each guidance source among the Arab samples

Guidance source	Demographic predictors	Rsquare	Rsquare change	Lebanon β	Oman β	Qatar β
Formal rules		ns	ns			
Unwritten rules	Sales	.024**	.082***	-.20***	-.25***	-.23***
Subordinates		ns	.053***	-.08	-.17**	.12
Specialists		ns	ns			
Co-workers	More levels above Not sales	.039**	.195***	-.20***	-.10	.34***
Superiors	More levels above	.094***	.168***	.39***	.26***	-
Own experience	Older age	.016**	.024***	.08	.14**	.09
Widespread beliefs		ns	.045***	-.02	-.09	-.22***

Notes: Values of beta for each nation show the difference from the regression slope for Saudi Arabia; ns = not significant; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 4 Correlations between guidance sources, rated effectiveness and job satisfaction

	Lebanon		Oman		Qatar		Saudi	
	EFF	SAT	EFF	SAT	EFF	SAT	EFF	SAT
Formal rules	.14	-.13	.05	.10	.09	-.06	.21***	.09
Unwritten rules	.19	.15	-.10	-.37	.13	.15	.09	-.14*
Subordinates	-.01	.13	.19	.12	-.31*	-.09	.10	.14*
Specialists	-.09	.01	.43*	.11	-.40**	.15	-.09	-.02
Co-workers	.22*	.24*	.04	.09	.06	-.31*	-.08	.02
Superior	.04	.07	-.31	.08	-	-	-.16**	-.10
Own experience	.36***	.01	-.03	-.06	.34**	-.01	.15*	.06
Widespread beliefs	-.26**	-.23*	-.44*	-.02	-.05	.04	-.16*	-.05

Notes: EFF = Effectiveness; SAT = Job Satisfaction. N = 95–101 (Lebanon), 22–24 (Oman), 58–62 (Qatar), 253–268 (Saudi).

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

reliance on superiors and on their own experience and less reliance on unwritten rules and subordinates.

Nine of these 10 significant effects are consistent with the predictions based on modernity that comprised Hypothesis 4. However, not all effects are found in all nations. Thus, to understand these effects more fully, we should need to examine in more detail the nature of contemporary influences in each location. We can gain some indications of the meaning of the differing Arab profiles by examining associations between reliance on particular guidance sources and respondents' evaluations of outcome. To test Hypothesis 5, correlations were computed between residuals from the earlier analyses (i.e. with demographics variance discounted) for respondents' reported reliance on each way of handling events (averaged across events) and their evaluations of how well these events had been handled, as well as their overall rated job satisfaction. Table 4 indicates that, in three of the four samples, reliance on one's own experience is associated with positive event outcome, and reliance on widespread beliefs is associated with poor event outcome. These results

resemble those from many other nations (Smith et al., 2002).

However, beyond this finding, there is no consistency: reliance on formal rules is favoured by Saudis, reliance on co-workers is seen positively in Lebanon, while reliance on specialists is highly rated in this Omani sample. The results for rated satisfaction are equally diverse. For instance, satisfaction is high in Lebanon but low in Qatar among those who rely on co-workers. These results provide some support for Hypothesis 5 in that reliance on one's own experience and training is significantly linked with rated effectiveness in three out of four samples, whereas reliance on other sources is only rated effective in two out of 28 instances. The correlations with job satisfaction show greater diversity.

Discussion

In testing for the homogeneity of Arab managerial styles, the present study did not include representation of Arab data from Nile Valley nations or the North African states of the Maghreb. However, within the three Gulf State samples and the single

sample from the Fertile Crescent, both similarities and diversity were observed.

Across the pooled overall sample of Arab respondents, we did find the expected pattern of high reliance on formal rules, unwritten rules, on co-workers and on subordinates, as well as low reliance on one's own experience and training and on one's superior. Wider sampling may show this profile to be particularly characteristic of the Gulf State region. Against expectation, we also found low reported reliance on widespread beliefs as to what is right. This is more likely to reflect a rejection of *wasta* rather than of Islamic work beliefs. High reliance on formal rules was not attributable to the somewhat higher percentage of respondents working in state enterprises within the Arab samples. Indeed, further analysis of the Saudi data indicated that reliance on formal rules was substantially higher among the Saudi executives (standardized mean = .49) than among the Saudi middle managers (standardized mean = .27), even though many more middle manager respondents were working in state enterprises.

There was also substantial variation between the two Saudi samples in reported reliance on widespread beliefs. Among middle managers the predicted above average reliance on widespread beliefs was indeed found (standardized mean = -.39, compared to the non-Arab mean of -.46), whereas among senior managers it was not (standardized mean = -.60). Thus we found evidence for a diversity of managerial styles, even within Saudi Arabia. The results from the other smaller samples showed additional divergences.

The profile for the Saudi middle managers came closest to the predicted pattern. Particularly striking was their low reported reliance on superiors, the lowest recorded from any of the 64 nations that have been sampled using these measures. This may seem surprising, in view of frequent portrayals of Saudi Arabia as a nation high in

power distance. However, as we have argued, leadership in a high power distance context need not necessarily entail direct seeking of guidance from one's superiors. It can equally involve anticipating one's superior's wishes, relying on written rules and consultation with one's peers and others as to how best to satisfy one's superior. Smith et al. (1999) found a similar effect in high power distance nations such as Colombia in Latin America. Another possibility is that the result reflects the nominal role taken by royalty, princes and members of rank within some Saudi organizations.

All the non-Saudi samples showed significantly less reliance on unwritten rules, and both Lebanon and the small Omani sample showed much higher reliance on superiors. The data collected in Oman also included responses from 13 expatriate employees. Their data were excluded from the analyses reported above, but in fact their responses were not markedly different from the Omani profile. Evidently, these responses were more indicative of the company culture than of national culture. The high technological emphasis of this organization is reflected in respondents' positive endorsement of reliance on specialists. The Lebanese profile may also reflect a greater diversity of cultural influences. The Qatari data resembled that from the Saudis in showing strong reliance on others at one's own level, but there is a stronger suggestion of desire for change in their profile. In fact, Qataris reported stronger reliance on co-workers than those from any nation sampled, but at the same time reliance on co-workers was significantly linked with job dissatisfaction.

This article began by discussing the characterization of Arab leadership that has been provided by the GLOBE researchers (House et al., 2004). It was suggested that their results may have been influenced by insufficient control of response bias and by omission of attributes that have particular relevance to Arab leadership. The present data can con-

tribute to the evaluation of these suggestions. In controlling for acquiescent bias in this study, an estimate of its magnitude was computed for each sample by averaging across respondents' ratings of all sources of guidance for all events. The estimate for the Saudi sample was the second highest recorded within the 64-nation sample. The Lebanese was fifth highest, while the Qataris ranked ninth. Oman was less extreme.¹ This information supports the argument presented earlier that the relatively positive evaluation of negative traits by Arab respondents in the GLOBE survey may be explicable in terms of uncontrolled response bias. Acquiescence may well be a valid indicator of culturally differing styles of communication (Smith, 2004), but we nonetheless need to control for it to understand other aspects of cultural differences.

However, acquiescence cannot explain the lesser enthusiasm expressed by Arabs for charismatic traits. Here we must draw on the alternative explanation that if qualities associated with an Islamic work ethic had been included, they would have attracted a stronger endorsement. The measure of widespread beliefs used in the present study was designed to be applicable across a broad range of cultural contexts, and proved insufficiently specific to test the impact of these types of beliefs in the present case.

Our conclusion that there is substantial diversity in managerial styles within Arab samples is derived from a set of unmatched samples. Thus the conclusion stands or falls on the basis of whether the demographic variations between the samples were adequately controlled. It is possible that demographic variables that were not recorded also affected the mean scores obtained. However, the relatively small amounts of variance explained by those demographics that were controlled suggest that additional demographic variability is not a major challenge to our conclusions. To gain a fuller understanding of the reasons for the specific expressions of increased modernity that were found,

development of culture-specific measures will be required.

Notes

We are grateful to Michael Bond for comments on an earlier draft.

- 1 It is possible that the absence of ratings of reliance on superiors could have affected the computation of the rating of acquiescent bias for Qatar. Bias ratings for the other three nations were recomputed omitting the data for reliance on superiors. The change in estimates of bias was minimal.

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