

A Shift in Employees' Perception towards Leadership Practice: An Egyptian Case Study under Cross-Cultural Settings

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Abstract

Employees' work related values change as their cultural values change over time, specially as their societies experience unusual social changes. Changes in employees work related values may increase the need for remarkable modifications in companies' leadership practices and approaches. This research takes Egypt as an example of a host-country that is undergoing unusual social changes. The study aims to explore the impact of changes on employees' perception towards best leadership practices, in cross-cultural settings. Two case studies were conducted with replication logic. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with Egyptian employees working in two multinational companies, operating in Egypt. The study findings regarding best leadership styles and practices contradict with literature's classification for Egypt as high power distance and masculinity culture. This indicates that companies should reconsider employees' cultural values that impact workplace. However, further researches should be conducted on such cultural aspects to reach more generalizable findings. This paper is among the few studies that tackled Egypt business environment from a cross-cultural perspective. Egypt presents a good example for cultural changes, since it has undergone major social changes since the year 2011. The research not only presents the recommended leadership practices but also emphasizes on their managerial implications. Further, the research is among the few studies that addressed the impact of national culture on leadership with reference to other contextual factor.

Keywords: leadership, national culture, Egypt, power distance, masculinity, contextual factors

1. Introduction

The best leadership styles mainly depend on employees' perception based on their cultural values (Hofstede 1980; Lau & Ngo 1996; Kirca et al. 2009). This fact increased the need for adequate awareness of cultural differences in international operations (Suutari 1996b). The good understanding of international cultural variations will reduce expatriates' failures (Van Oudenhoven 2001). This will help, companies operating in cross-cultural settings in successfully facing competition and growing in different countries (Jing & Avery 2008).

Nevertheless, employees' perception towards outstanding and disruptive leadership practices may change, since that their cultural beliefs, expectations, and values change over time (De Bono et al. 2008, 2006). From an academic perspective, there are many calls for considering the impact of cultural changes on leadership, especially when countries experience unusual social changes (House et al. 2002; Dickson et al. 2003). From a professional perspective, companies should always examine subordinates' perception towards their leaders' practices and identify factors that cause variances.

Few researches tackled Egypt business environment from a cross-cultural point of view (Leat & El-Kot 2007). More importantly, Egyptian employee's work related values had changed in the few past years. One reason for such change is the exposure of the Egyptian employees to the values and beliefs held by foreign companies operating in Egypt (Lau & Ngo 1996). Another reason is the unusual social changes that Egypt is undergoing since 2011 (Nafie 2012). Based on this, the researcher believes that this potential change in national culture may cause a shift in employees' perception towards best leadership practices.

The research has three main objectives. The first is to explore employees' perception toward best leadership practices. Thus, the research main question is what are the best leadership styles and practices, according to the Egyptian employees' perception? The second is to explore and describe the impact of cultural changes on employees' work related values. Thus, the researcher compares and contrasts employees' recommendations for best leadership practices to literature recommended leadership practices. The third is to refine the study working propositions, to be used for further studies.

The case study research was employed to explore employees' perception towards best leadership practices, based on employees' cultural concerns. The qualitative approach guided the process of data collection, analysis, and report writing. Data were collected through conducting one-to-one interviews with Egyptian employees working in multinational companies operating in Egypt, during the years 2011, 2012, and 2013.

2. Review of literature

2.1 *Leadership Practices Universal or Contingent?*

Many researches focused on the feasible leadership styles across cultures (Suutari 1996b). One of the cross-cultural leadership researches' main concerns was to determine whether leadership aspects are 'universal' (etic) or 'culture-specific' (emic) (Suutari 1996a ; Dickson et al. 2003). Researchers found that employees' attitude towards supportive leadership, contingent reward, and charismatic leadership tend to be universally endorsed. On the other hand, their reactions towards directive leadership and contingent punishment behaviours were culturally specific. Also, contingent punishment had positive effects in some countries and negative impacts in others. Nevertheless, the idea of universality of leadership skills gained slight support in literature (Dickson et al. 2003).

2.2 *Leadership Styles and Practices Based On National Cultural Dimension*

Recent researches focused on leadership aspects based on national culture (Dickson et al. 2003). Mostly researches based their suggestions, for leadership practices, on Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

2.2.1 Leadership styles associated with individualism and collectivism.

In individualistic cultures, leaders tend to focus on individualized consideration. They tend to focus on each individual's "needs and hopes" (Suutari 1996a). Also, researchers suggest that transactional leadership practices are more viable in this culture, where leaders clarify roles and highlight rewards (Zhu 2007). On the other hand, collectivistic cultures need transformational leaders who motivate individuals to fulfill the objectives of the group (Zhu 2007).

2.2.2 Leadership style associated with uncertainty avoidance.

High uncertainty avoidance cultures need leaders who focus on role-clarification (Suutari 1996a). On the other hand, in low uncertainty avoidance cultures, leaders are expected to tolerate ambiguity and encourage employees to innovate and take risk (Frese et al. 1999).

2.2.3 Leadership style associated with masculinity and femininity.

Masculine cultures need achievements-oriented leaders who focus on performance and effectiveness (Suutari 1996a ; Harris & Carr 2008). On the other hand, femininity cultures need leaders who focus on individual consideration and relationship-oriented practices (Suutari 1996a ; Frese et al. 1999; Harris & Carr 2008).

2.2.4 Leadership style associated with power distance.

Power distance is related to participating in decision making, allowing autonomy and delegating power to subordinates (Suutari 1996a). High power distance cultures value authoritative leadership practices (Hofstede 1980). Subordinates need leaders who give orders and impose decisions (Flynn & Saladin 2006). On the other hand, low power distance cultures need democratic leaders and value those who consult them in the decisions (Hofstede 1980; Frese et al. 1999; Dickson et al. 2003).

2.2.5 Leadership style associated with long-term/short-term orientation.

Long-term oriented cultures value leaders who focus on long-term objectives, while short-term oriented cultures value leaders who focus on current requirements (Harris & Carr 2008; Lord et al. 2008).

2.3 Leadership Styles Associated with Egypt National Culture

Focusing on Egypt, its culture is classified as part of the Arab countries (Leat & El-Kot 2007). Such countries exert high level of power distance, collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity (Hofstede 1994). Most of researches that tackled leadership practices in Egypt are in line with Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

In Egyptian organizations decision making process is highly centralized (Sayed 2004). Leaders require total obedience, and rarely delegate authority. Subordinates are expected to obey their leaders rather than question them whenever disagreement occurs (Light 2003). Employees do not expect leaders to involve them in decision making (Leat & El-Kot 2007). Leaders are expected to punish those who do not follow rules (House et al. 2006). This matches to Egypt classification as a high power distance culture.

Based on this, the researcher formulated the following working proposition: Employees' recommendations for best leadership practices reflect cultural values associated with high power distance.

In Egypt, people value social interactions and formation of groups (Mostafa & El-Masry 2008). Also taking care of others is highly important (Javidan et al. 2006). Egyptians value leaders who care about them and focus on nurturing relationships (Mostafa & El-Masry 2008). They also expect leaders to avoid conflict (Javidan et al. 2006). Leader-subordinate relationship is highly important (Javidan et al. 2006). The decision making process tends to be subjective and based on personal relations. Managers tend to favour hiring and promoting relatives and friends (Mostafa 2005; Javidan et al. 2006). Also in Egypt status tends to be ascribed (Rugman & Hodgetts 2003, 139). This matches to Egypt classification as a collectivistic culture.

Based on this, the researcher formulated the following working proposition: Employees' recommendations for best leadership practices reflect cultural values associated with collectivism.

In Egypt, people tend to be risk-averse (De Bono et al. 2008, 203). Leaders focus on formalizing rules and

regulations and standardizing work procedures and employees' actions (Rugman & Hodgetts 2003, 145; Sayed 2004). Further leaders tend to avoid delegation to decrease risk taking (Sidani 2006). This matches to Egypt classification as a high uncertainty avoidance culture.

Based on this, the researcher formulated the following working proposition: Employees' recommendations for best leadership practices reflect cultural values associated with high uncertainty avoidance.

Further, as Egypt is classified as one of the masculinity culture, the researcher formulated the following working proposition: Employees' recommendations for best leadership practices reflect cultural values associated with masculinity.

3. Research Method

This research was conducted on two multinational companies operating in Egypt. Each company presents a case study. Thus, two case studies were conducted with literal replication logic, to reach more robust findings (Yin 2003, 46; Payne et al. 2007). In replication logic the researcher conducts a case study based on which further cases can be replicated to test the validity of the first case study's findings. The first case study validity is high if the further cases present similar results. Further, a cross-cases comparison was conducted to present more comprehensive findings and description (Yin 2003, 46).

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to expand the structured questions upon the interviewees' responses (Burgess & Dyer 2009). This helped in considering any rival explanation in order to maintain data verification and dependability (See the interview questions in the Appendix).

3.1 Sample Procedure and Sample Size

This study intended to consider employees along the organizational hierarchy, instead of focusing only on middle managers' perceptions as some previous studies did (see Suutari & Tahvanainen 2000; Jepson 2009). Thus, 'purposive' sampling was employed (Creswell 1994, 148; Silverman 2000, 104). The researcher conducted one-to-one interviews, that lasted for 30 minutes minimum and 2 hours maximum, with Egyptian managers and their Egyptian subordinates in different business units, functions, and departments along the organizational hierarchy. In the first case study the researcher conducted interviews with 18 employees which present 60% of total employees. In the second case study the researcher conducted interviews with 35 employees which present 40 % of total employees. Only employees who were interested in the study and willing to participate were selected (Ghosh & Chakraborty 2008).

3.2 Interviews Transcribing and Coding

First, the researcher created transcripts for the interviewees' testimony and sent them back to participants to get their feedback on how their statements were recorded. Second, the researcher grouped participants' answers based on the interview questions. Third, the researcher processed data collected using different interview analysis techniques. Fourth, cross-case synthesis technique was employed (see Yin 2009, 156).

3.2.1 Interview analysis techniques

The researcher employed three techniques to analyze interviews. The first is categorization of meaning which helped in discovering the different categories that participants highlighted based on their own words, regardless of the percentage of participants who confirm or disagree with them. The second is condensation of meaning which helped in reducing the large interview texts into succinct statements (see Kvale 1996, 192). The third is structuring of meaning through narratives which helped in reconstructing the different stories told by the different participants to reach a more comprehensive story, rather than depending on scattered stories highlighted by each single interviewee (Kvale 1996, 199).

The researcher displayed the outputs of such analysis techniques in tables that include participants' quotes, categories developed based on such quotes, and the researcher description for all quotes. In order to, maintain anonymity interviews were not displayed or presented in the paper. However each quote was preceded by the code of the participant who stated it. This would help the readers trace the different statements that each participant mentioned. (Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4)

3.2.2 Case study analysis technique

Cross-case synthesis technique was employed to identify and clarify the unique patterns of each case study and reach comprehended generalizable patterns across both cases (see Huberman & Miles 2002, 18). The researcher presented the cross-cases analysis in the main report, and presented a sample of the cases studies' findings later in the tables section (see Yin 2003, 116). The cross-cases discussion depended on argumentative rather than statistical interpretation (see Yin 2003, 137).

4. Cross-Cases Findings' Analysis

This section presents the main categories discussed by participants, supported by some of their quotes. It also highlights the evidence that may present a rival explanation to participants' stories. In table 1, table 2, table 3, and table 4, the researcher presents more samples for participants' quotes for each case study individually. Findings

were stimulated by interview questions regarding recommended and un-recommended leadership practices (See interview questions in the Appendix).

4.1 Leadership Practices and Implications

4.1.1 Macro managing employees and involving them in decision making

Participants emphasized on leadership practices that focus on participating in decision making, and giving space in implementing objectives. They believe that imposing decision and giving directive orders increase employees' resistance, decrease their response, inhibit their capabilities, and decrease their motive and performance on the long term. They believe that leaders should macro manage employees and avoid giving close directions and directive orders, or centralizing decision making. As mentioned by one of the first case study's participants, "[leaders should] macro manage rather than micro manage as long as the results are fulfilled." Another one commented that "imposing decision may lead to negative consequences. In this case subordinates will follow their leaders' words, yet they will be de-motivated to create their own way and have their own added value." Also, as mentioned by one of the second case study's participants, "good leadership creates loyalty, commitment, and ownership such as sharing in the process of decision making."

4.1.2 Maintaining clarity

Participants believe that leaders should provide them with clear instructions, guide them towards objectives, clarify requirements and performance parameters, follow up on their performance, and give them continuous feedback. As supported by one of the first case study participants "structured situations are better; they help in decreasing ambiguity for subordinates, and consequently decrease mistakes." As elaborated more by another participant, "the follow up is important. It helps employees focus on the target and make sure that they are on the right track." Also, as supported by one of the second case study participants "we tend to feel that we need a road map; we don't want to make mistakes so as to avoid risk. Employees tend to value leaders who provide clear instructions." As enlightened more by another participant, "[people need leaders who] teach them the best way to fulfil required tasks. Also, help them to reach objectives in the most effective way."

4.1.3 Managing conflicts and avoiding confrontations

Participants believe that conflicts affect employees' emotions as they are taken on a personal level. This creates tension and blocks communication between employees. This may cause a slowdown in work progress and negatively affect employees' performance at work. As mentioned by one of the first case study participants, "People tend to be more sensitive, and emotional. Thus, conflicts and confrontations are avoided, as conflicts may be taken on a personal level which may be reflected in workplace." They also believe that confrontation decreases employees' ability to realize their mistakes. As supported by another participant "unfortunately, people get offended and take it as a criticism; they do not consider it a feedback or an opinion." Also supported by one of the second case study participants, "In Egypt people tend to avoid confrontation and conflict to avoid clashing [...]. This may create tension and increase sensitivity which may negatively affect work relations which in turn may cause a block in communication."

4.1.4 Socialization and Nurturing healthy relationships

Participants believe that socialization and building good relationship increases trust. This helps people understand each other better, keeps team spirit up, and helps people become supportive and get over personal issues. This also facilitates the work flow and helps employees improve their performance. Further, this increases employees' sense of security for working in a healthy and friendly work environment. This increases their motive and commitment to work. As mentioned by one of the first case study participants, "it is important to have good team spirit, thus socialization is important. It helps people understand each other." Also, as supported by one of the second case study participants, "socializing at workplace is important. It makes us feel that it is a better place. People feel motivated more to work with people who they feel happy with."

4.1.5 Considering individuals' differences

Moreover, considering subordinates personal situation and understanding their personal circumstances make them feel more secured and supported. This also increases their motive to pay more efforts, and become more productive. As supported by one of the first case study participants, "understanding subordinates' situation help them understand the company situation and motivate subordinates to give it all what it takes whenever they feel that they are considered." Also, as mentioned by one of the second case study participants, "people achieve more as they feel supported, because it helps them feel more secured."

4.2 Discrepant Evidences and Rival Explanations: Factors Affecting Employees' Perception

Some participants highlighted a number of factors which present discrepant evidence or rival explanation for employees' preference for the above leadership practices. Such evidences are presented based on the main categories highlighted based on participants' quotes.

4.2.1 Employee's personality

Employee's personality affects their attitude towards outstanding leadership. For example, some employees tend

to believe that their leaders should consult them while others believe that their leaders should deal with them in an autocratic way. Also, some employees believe that leaders should provide general guidelines and give them space to work in their own way, while others believe that leaders should give specific directive orders to work well. As mentioned by one of the first case study participants, “some employees like direct instructions, while others do not like the micro-management.” Also as mentioned by one of the second case study participants, “it depends on the person, people tend to like having someone who is directing them. Yet others would rather to have their space.”

4.2.2 Style of education

Also, style of education affects employees’ attitude towards outstanding leadership. For example, some people were used to receiving orders without discussing them or expressing their opinion at schools. It also affected employees’ need for highly clear situations and tolerance towards ambiguity, as some people were used to depend on specific sources and methods to study in order to avoid committing mistakes and to succeed. Moreover, it affects people tolerance and attitude towards confrontation and negative feedback. The way of handling mistakes pushed people to focus on refusing criticism and discarding any negative consequences, rather than to learn how mistakes can help them improve. As mentioned by one of the first case study participants, “education affects people’s communication in life and at work, especially when it comes to accepting negative feedback”. Also, as mentioned by one of the second case study participants, “people in Egypt were not rise to accept criticism. Unfortunately, some people consider criticism as something bad.”

4.2.3 Way of rising people

Moreover, the way of rising people affects employees’ attitude towards outstanding leadership. For example, the country norms imposed certain ideas for self-image that caused burden on people which affected the way they handle negative feedback. People focus on improving their self-image rather than learning from mistakes and negative feedback. As mentioned by one of the first case study participants, “this is mainly due the way we are raised, and education in schools. People cannot accept negative consequence of their negative reactions.” Also, as supported by one of the second case study participants, “people do not like to be criticized. May be it is part of our culture, it may be rooted in how we are raised, or our educational system.”

5. Discussion

This section first, answers the research main question. Second it compares findings to literature in order to highlight the impact of cultural changes on employees’ perception towards leadership styles and practices. Second, it revisits the study working propositions.

5.1 Best Leadership Styles and Practices, According To the Egyptian Employees’ Perception

The research main question focused on the best leadership styles and practices, according to the Egyptian employees’ perception. Participants’ recommendations included practices that focus on involving subordinates in decision making; giving them space to do things in their own way based on guidance; maintaining clarity; managing conflicts and avoiding confrontations; approaching employees’ mistakes in an indirect way; nurturing healthy relationships; and considering individuals’ differences.

However, participants’ recommendations were dependent on some factors that affect employees’ perception towards best leadership practices. Such factors are employees’ personality, style of education, and the way people were raised.

5.2 A Focus on Cultural Changes and Work Related Values: Recommendations and Implications

In order to highlight the impact of cultural changes on employees’ work related values, this section compares findings to literature. The researcher contrasts employees’ recommendations for best leadership practices to literature recommended leadership practices.

5.2.1 Macro management and participation in decision making

Participants’ recommended leadership practices regarding macro managing employees and involving them in decision making fit into the participative and democratic leadership styles. Participative leaders consult subordinates in decisions that will affect them (Hofstede 1980; Dickson et al. 2003). Democratic leaders focus on coaching and guiding employees rather than giving them directive orders, at work to get commitment from employees (Rivenbark 2006). However, this fits into literature recommendations for low power distance cultures. It contradicts with scholarly classification for Egypt as one of the high power distance countries.

Based on literature lower power distance cultures value participative leadership as leaders consult them in the decisions that will affect them (Hofstede 1980; Dickson et al. 2003). Also in such societies, leaders should emphasize on democratic leadership style (Frese et al. 1999). On the other hand, high power distance cultures value leaders who give them orders and impose decisions (Flynn & Saladin 2006), which fits into autocratic leadership style (De Bono et al. 2008, 20).

This may be attributed to the change in the country situation that affects people’s concerns and emphasis. In

general people in Egypt shifted from accepting unequal distribution and centralized power structure to a more decentralized power. They focus on their role, as a nation, in determining the ruler behavior. This was clear since 25th of January 2011, where the Egyptian revolution caused President Mubarak to step down. This new trend may be justified since that people beliefs, expectations, and attitudes can change over time (De Bono et al. 2008, 206; Nafie 2012). In addition to the unusual social changes, this notion may be due to the exposure of Egyptian employees to the values, beliefs, and the managerial approaches and practices, of the foreign investing corporations (Lau & Ngo 1996). This may explain the discrepancy between literature classification for Egypt as a high power distance company, and the research findings which indicates that employees tend to reject high power distance practices, such as expecting employees to adhere to principals, and following directive orders.

5.2.2 Providing clear and structured work environment

Participants' recommended practices that focus on providing clear instructions and feedback fit into transactional practices. Leaders set clear objectives, clarify role and tasks requirements, emphasize on rules and procedures, and coordinate group work (Suutari 1996a; Wilderom et al. 1999; Dickson et al. 2003). This fits into high uncertainty-avoidance cultures (Van Eeden et al. 2008).

Based on literature, in high uncertainty-avoidance cultures, leaders should focus on facilitating employees' tasks through providing clear objectives and helping subordinates develop specific plans (Dickson et al. 2003).

5.2.3 Focus on human aspects

Participants recommended leadership practices focus on team building activities, nurturing trust, decreasing tension from conflicts, supporting subordinates, and considering their needs and personal aspects. Such recommendations fit into human-oriented or social-emotional leadership style. Such style focuses on human consideration, support and improving interpersonal relations at work (Grotenhuis 2001). These recommendations are associated with collectivistic and femininity cultures.

Participants' recommend leadership practices also fit into transformational and affiliative leadership. Transformational leadership practices emphasize on the importance of group harmony and focusing on collective interests (Zhu 2007). Transformational leaders also pay attention to their subordinates' concerns and needs. They consider individuals' differences and provide individualized consideration (Bass & Avlio 1993). Affiliative leadership practices focus on acting as a mediator in conflicts, creating and maintaining harmony and nurturing good relations in the workplace, and paying attention to the impact of subordinates' personal life on work (Rivenbark 2006).

Such recommendations fit into literature recommendations for collectivistic cultures, which tend to value transformational leaders who motivate individuals to fulfil the objectives of the group (Zhu 2007). On the other hand, participants' recommendations contradict with literature classification for Egypt as a masculine culture, which value leaders who are achievements-oriented and focus on performance and effectiveness (Harris & Carr 2008). Contrarily, femininity cultures need leaders who focus on individual consideration, and relationship oriented practices (Suutari 1996a ; Frese et al. 1999). Such discrepancies could be attributed to one of two reasons. The first is that Egyptian employees work related values are affected with companies work values. The second is that both cultural dimensions contain some common elements.

5.3 Factors Affecting Employees' Perceptions

As a matter of fact, besides culture, there are other contextual factors that can affect employees' perception towards the outstanding leadership practices (Zhu 2007). Employees' perception towards best leadership practices that fit into people emphasis and concerns is subject to employees' personality, style of education, and the way people were raised. This was also mentioned in literature (see Byrne & Bradley 2007). However, most of researches lack the deep analysis of the context of leadership (Jepson 2009).

5.4 Revisiting the Study Working Propositions

This research proposed some working propositions that may be refined based on the study findings. The first one states that employees' recommendations for best leadership practices reflect cultural values associated with high power distance. Based on findings, employees tend to resist high power distance practices. This contradicts with literature. Egypt is classified as one of the high power distance countries (Hofstede 1994). These findings were highlighted in the first case study and the second case study. Based on findings, the researcher believes that this working proposition is invalid.

The second working proposition states that employees' recommendations for best leadership practices reflect cultural values associated with uncertainty avoidance. Based on findings, employees at workplace tend to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity. These findings were highlighted in the first case study and the second case study. Based on findings, the researcher believes that this working proposition is valid.

The third working proposition states that employees' recommendations for best leadership practices reflect cultural values associated with masculinity. The research findings regarding people tendency to focus on human aspects contradict with researchers who classified Egypt as one of the masculine culture (Hofstede 1994).

Masculinity cultures are task-oriented (Suutari 1996a). Masculine cultures focus more on earning formal recognition more than relationships (Russell 1997). Contrarily, based on research findings, employees' tendency towards human aspects is more associated with femininity cultures. They tend to value relationships, considering people exceptional circumstances and situations, and nurturing and harmony (Russell 1997; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 1998, 49; Jones & George 2003, 202). This also fits into literature classification of particularism cultures. Such cultures focus more on relationships and consider the exceptional nature of present situation, or circumstances (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 1998, 49). This was highlighted in the first case study and the second case study. Based on findings, the researcher believes that this working proposition is invalid.

The fourth working proposition states that employees' recommendations for best leadership practices reflect cultural values associated with collectivism. The degree of collectivism was demonstrated in people tendency towards managing conflicts and avoiding confrontations, focusing on socialization and nurturing healthy relationships, and considering individuals' differences. Living in a collectivistic society, people in Egypt have high need for affiliation (Sidani 2006). They focus on socialization and nurturing relationships. They also care about friends and considering their personal circumstances (Javidan et al. 2006). This aspect is similar to the previous aspect based on literature description as well as participants' recommendations for best leadership practices. This was highlighted in the first case study and the second case study. Thus the researcher suggests that the third and the fourth working propositions should be combined to form a new one. It states that employees' recommendations for best leadership practices reflect cultural values associated with human-oriented aspects.

Further, employees' recommendations for best leadership practices are mainly affected with people personality, style of education, and the way people were raised. These findings were highlighted in the first case study and the second case study. To help in elaborating more on the impact of such aspects in workplace, the researcher suggests adding the following working proposition. Employees' attitude towards outstanding and disruptive leadership practices differs based on contextual factors, other than culture.

6. Theoretical Implication of the Research Findings

Employees' new attitude towards power distance needs further research, in different contexts. This new tendency may be justified since that people beliefs, expectations, and attitudes can change over time (De Bono et al. 2008, 206; Nafie 2012).

Hofstede's femininity and collectivism cultural dimensions contain some common elements. Thus, both dimensions may be combined to form a new cultural dimension that focuses on humane-aspects versus material-aspects. This however requires further researches to be conducted on such cultural aspects.

7. Practical Implications

Arguments presented against Egypt classification as a high power distance culture, indicates that companies should reconsider employees' cultural values related to such dimensions. For example they should reconsider employees' attitude towards work autonomy and participation in decision making. Furthermore, companies should reconsider employees' attitude towards the nature of interaction between employees in the organization, conflicts and confrontation, and considering individuals' differences. Such recommendation are presented due to new trend towards globalization which affected employees' workplace values due to the exposure to the values and beliefs held by foreign investors and the managerial approaches and practices, of the multinational corporations (Lau & Ngo 1996). The changes in employees' work values may be applicable to other settings in Egypt business environment, other than multinational companies work environment. For example, HRM department may form surveys to inquire about individuals' main concern and emphasis based on Egypt national culture; the outstanding and disruptive leadership styles and practices according to subordinates' perception; while considering the major factors that may affect employees' perception towards outstanding and disruptive leadership styles (Ibrahim 2014).

8. Limitations and Recommendations

The generalizability of case study findings is largely restricted to similar organizations and locations (Payne et al. 2007). Different organizational context could yield different results, thus applying this research to multinational companies with different origins or in different sectors might show different results. Thus, to reach more generalizable findings further studies should be conducted on the national cultural aspects that impact workplace, and employees' recommendations towards best leadership practices in privately held businesses and publicly held organizations in Egypt. These recommendations are mainly suggested based on such companies' new trend to focus on improving organization's effectiveness and competing globally (Karp consulting group 2003; Leat & El-Kot 2007).

Also, interviews are form of self-report in which the researcher must assume that the information given by the interviewee is accurate (Appleton 1995). Thus, it is advised to conduct such study with expatriates. It is better to describe a culture from the standpoint of another culture (Suutari 1996b).

Appendix

Interview questions

- Opening questions
 - What does good/successful leadership look like? Would you please give an example?
 - What does poor/unsuccessful leadership look like? Would you please give an example?
- The outstanding and disruptive leadership styles based on such cultural concerns
 - What are the leadership styles that are recommended to be applied in the Egyptian subsidiary?
 - What are the leadership styles that are not recommended to be applied in the Egyptian subsidiary?

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Tables

Table 1: Sample of Case Study I findings and analysis: Recommendation

Subunits	Description	Participants quotes
Macro management	Imposing specific approaches and giving too much details inhibits employees potentials for creativity Employees, value having space for implementing things in their own way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TL5: Forcing specific approaches inhibits the good potential that subordinates have. Sup3: Give employees space to work, create and innovate; Sup3: Macro-manage rather than micro manage as long as the results are fulfilled.
Participation in decision making	Participation in decision making increase employees' support and commitment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sup3: It would be better to call for a brain storming session, and consulting all affected parties to discuss the rule before imposing it. Thus, when rules are created people will be willing to accept and even support them because they take into consideration their different needs.
Managing conflicts and avoiding confrontation.	Conflicts create uncomfortable feeling at work, which may demotivate employees, negatively affect performance and decrease the progress flow of work. Good leaders should avoid blaming employees. Confrontations may cause people to feel offended and decrease their ability to understand or consider other opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TL1: people tend to be more sensitive, and emotional. Thus, conflicts and confrontations are avoided, as conflicts may be taken on a personal level which may be reflected in workplace TL7: Usually conflict causes uncomfortable feelings that may lead to slowing down progress. TL7: Unfortunately, people get offended and take it as a criticism; they don't consider it a feedback or opinion.
Criticism		
Nurturing good relationship	Socialization and team building activities help employees understand each other and increase trust. Help employees focus more at work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tl5: making sure that employees are happy, improve their achievements Sub1: Team building activities Sub3: For people to get involved more in work, they have to trust people around them. So sometimes socializing and getting over general personal issues may be good.
Individual consideration	Considering subordinates' situation help them understand the company situation. It will also increase their motive to work and prove their performance. Leaders should understand their subordinates nature to approach them in the best way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TL4: Reaching the best results comes from highly motivated subordinates, and to have highly motivated subordinates, leaders need to consider each subordinate's conditions. Tl7: leaders, who treat subordinates strictly according to book of work without showing flexibility, will find that subordinates will not give them the best results. They will fill in the checklist requested, just in a satisfactory manner.

		They give just what is requested.
Structured situations	People need structured situations to decrease ambiguity and mistakes, and get satisfactory rewards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T13: structured situations are better; they help in decreasing ambiguity for subordinates, and consequently decrease mistakes. T14: we have good potentials in Egypt. They pioneer only when they operate in an effective and a productive system, with clear satisfactory rewards • Sup4: structured situations are more valued, as lack of clear rules leads to ambiguity and conflicts
Maintaining clarity	Lack of clear rules leads to ambiguity and conflict.	

Source: participants' quotes

Table 2: Sample of Case Study I findings and analysis: Factors affecting employees' perception

Subunits	Description	Participants quotes
Employees' nature	Some employee's value leaders who macro-manage them while others need leaders who micro manage them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sup6: some employees like direct instructions. While others don't like the micro-management.
Style of education	Education affects the nature of interaction between people. It affect people tendency towards accepting negative feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sup6: education affects people's communication in life and at work. Especially when it comes to accepting negative feedback
Way people were rise	It affects reaction towards negative feedback and the consequences of negative actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sup6: this is mainly due the way we are raised, and education in schools. People can't accept negative consequence of their negative reactions.

Source: participants' quotes

Table 3: Sample of Case Study II findings and analysis: recommendation

Subunits	Description	Participants quotes
Macro management	Don't micro manage Give employees space to implement tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P3.7: Micro management is not recommended because people like flexibility; as people may become really creative to avoid this tight control
Participation in decision making	Participation in decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P5.9: Good leadership creates loyalty, commitment, and ownership such as sharing in the process of decision making.
Avoiding conflicts	<p>conflicts are taken on a personal level. This may create tension which negatively affect their work relations, and may block communication.</p> <p>Leaders should approach employees in an indirect way to inform them with their problems. Leaders should avoid criticizing employees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P3.6: In Egypt people tend to avoid confrontation and conflict to avoid clashing, as people tend to take them on a personal level. This may create tension and increase sensitivity which may negatively affect work relations which in turn may cause a block in communication. P3.6: In some cultures leaders can approach employees in a direct way to inform them with their mistakes or problems they caused. While in Egypt some employees tend to be so sensitive. Thus leaders may find it more effective to approach them in an indirect way to help them realize their fault and learn how to improve. P4.6: Yet, criticizing employees for their mistakes may block them; they will not accept it. In Egypt people tend to be emotional. Thus, don't blame and criticize, instead show and guide employees to avoid mistakes and learn from them.
Socialization and Nurturing relationships	<p>It is important to establish trust and strong relationships, which make people feel more secured at work</p> <p>This makes employees more comfortable and trust to work with each other.</p> <p>This help them become more productive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P1.5: Thus, building good team spirit will facilitate this process of decision making, decision acceptance, and decision implantation. P1.3: Human relationships are important to establish trust and strong relationships which make employees feel more secured at work. P3.6: Leaders should build a strong team member spirit. Developing strong and healthy relationships among the team help members become more productive.
Considering individuals' circumstances	<p>employees feel appreciated and consequently pay more efforts at work</p> <p>and improve their performance</p> <p>Leaders should protect and support employees. They should consider their needs and respect their lives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P5.2: People achieve more as they feel supported, because it helps them feel more secured. P5.7: It is important for leaders to consider subordinates needs, and respect their life. Leaders are those who realize that considering employees personal issues is important, because they will affect their ability to work. Some people believe that professional means to be a task oriented person at workplace. However, great leaders taught us that being professional means understanding people circumstances; be human relationship oriented, in order to get great outcomes, to balance with achievement orientation.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P1.4: Coaching and mentoring employees; this includes understanding employees' emotions, and consider their individual needs
<p>Guidelines</p> <p>Performance parameters</p> <p>Guidance</p> <p>Feedback</p>	<p>People focus on avoiding mistakes and risks.</p> <p>Unclear instructions may cause people to get stuck</p> <p>They are not flexible with issues that they are not familiar with</p> <p>They need clear rules to be on the right track</p> <p>They need leaders who provide them with continuous feedback , and coach them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P5.3: we tend to feel that we need road map; we don't want to make mistakes so as to avoid risk. • P3.2: In Egypt you have to be very determined, things should be listed clearly.; P3.2: Gray area may create conflict ; P3.2: Absence of clear rules may cause people to debate a lot;P3.2: We are bureaucratic; if things are out of structure, we don't know clearly what to do • P3.7: Lack of transparency lead to inconsistent results as employees are not aware of what exactly to be done. P3.7: lack of positive feedback leads to confusion as employees will not be able to realize what to adjust or improve. • P5.5: Leaders are expected to provide clear guidelines rather than giving general headlines. • P4.5: follow up, coach and teach them from A to Z, teach them the best way to fulfill required tasks.

Source: participants' quotes

Table 4: Sample of Case Study II findings and analysis: Factors affecting employees' perception

Subunits	Description	Participants quotes
Subordinate's nature	Some people need directive leaders, while others need more space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P5.8: It depends on the person; some people tend to like having someone who is directing them. Yet others would rather to have their space
Way people are raised and norms	<p>Norms force people to avoid uncertainty.</p> <p>People attitude towards criticism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P1.5: Due to this rigid culture, some people are framed they need to learn how to think out of the box. This is highly linked to the uncertainty avoidance they need to learn how to do things differently. • P4.1: We are efficient and hard worker, yet in handling problems and mistakes people become more emotional than professional. This is mainly due to the way we are raised. People in Egypt were not raised to accept criticism. Unfortunately, some people consider criticism as something bad. And each one refuses it and try to prove that s/he is not wrong. This is mainly due to the lack of appropriate behavioral discipline at schools.
Style of Education	<p>Education impact the way people handle criticism. People may focus on proving that they are not wrong</p> <p>The educational system did not help students develop their own view or opinion.</p> <p>They were only expected to follow instructions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P5.5: People don't like to be criticized; maybe it is part of our culture; rooted in how we are raised, or our educational system. • P4.1: In Egypt we are [...] This is mainly due to the lack of appropriate behavioral discipline at schools. • P5.3: Employees tend to value directive leaders who provide clear instructions. This is mainly due to our education system, no creativity, no way to give our opinion. Students just receive from books and teachers without thinking. That is why we tend to feel that we need road map, we don't want to make mistakes so as to avoid risk. • P5.8: That differs based on education and background, which gives more insight and other options.

Source: participants' quotes

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