

An exploratory investigation of some work related values among middle managers in Egypt

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Abstract

The authors report on the findings of a preliminary investigation into the work-related attitudes and values prevalent among a sample of Egyptian middle managers. The study utilised Hofstede's four dimensions of national culture, encompasses both Egyptian owned and Multi-national organisations and takes into account the teachings of Islam and their potential influence upon work related values and beliefs. The findings indicate some consistency with Hofstede's original findings regarding work related values in Arab countries but they also demonstrate some consistency with predicted outcomes of the process of globalisation and greater exposure to external influences. The most intriguing finding suggests that there might be reasons for questioning whether masculinity and femininity are opposite ends of a single dimension since the sample studied appear to exhibit high levels of both. The implications of these findings for work team effectiveness are also briefly discussed.

Introduction

Culture has been defined by various authors, for example, Hofstede (1991, p: 4-5) defined it as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”. Kluckhohn (1951 in Parnell and Hatem, 1999, p: 401) defined culture as “patterned ways of thinking, feelings and reacting acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups”. Erez and Early (1993 in Parnell and Hatem, 1999, p: 401) described culture as “the set of characteristics common to a particular group of people”. Different authors, such as Hofstede (1980) and Trompenaars (1993) have studied the concept of national culture and Hofstede (1991) stated in his research that he focused on values and beliefs, in particular work related values, in more than 40 different national cultures. These values and beliefs act as cultural indicators as well as influencing people's behaviour, Hofstede (1980) and Triandis (1994). To the extent that values and beliefs change over time then national cultures may change. Berry, Poortinga, Segall and Dasen (1992), Smith and Noakes (1996), Parnell and Hatem (1999), and Rahmati (2000), have all pointed out that the uniqueness of national culture might mean that work approaches and practices that are applicable to and work in one culture may or may not work in another. Parnell and Hatem (1999) argued that a review of the literature revealed only a few studies had been undertaken that investigated culture's impacts upon management practices in Middle Eastern countries. Atiyah (1992) pointed out that in Arab countries, little empirical work had been undertaken on Arab management practices. Arab speaking countries (for example: Egypt) were included in Hofstede's study in the 1970s but Yousef (2001) argued the influence of national culture on work values had received little attention in management literature in Arab countries in general, despite its important role in shaping employees' values and attitudes towards work. Nydell (1996) has asserted that Arab countries have been subjected to various pressures from the outside world, which affect the way people behave in their work place, for example; the effects of Western technologies and approaches to work, which she argued need the adoption of Western values and social practices and Rahmati (2000) has argued that work related values such as are associated with Hofstede's dimensions of individualism or masculinity might have changed since the 1970s. In this context the authors undertook a preliminary study of

work related values among a sample of middle managers working in a range of companies, Egyptian and Multinational, in Alexandria and Cairo in order to inform their research on work team effectiveness in Egyptian organisations. The results of this preliminary research are presented in this paper and will inform further research to be undertaken on work related values in Egypt.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Hofstede's initial findings (1980) enabled him to identify four particular dimensions of work-related value differences, which he labelled the power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism and masculinity-femininity dimensions. Hofstede has argued that differences between nations in the scores on these dimensions are key to explanations of differences in national social behavioural patterns. The power distance dimension is described by Hofstede (1980, p: 45) as "the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organisations is distributed unequally". Uncertainty avoidance according to Hofstede (1980, p: 45) indicated "the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations and tries to avoid these situations by providing greater career stability, establishing more formal rules", there are implications also for the propensity for risk taking. Hofstede (1980, p: 45) distinguished between individualism and collectivism as two ends of a continuum and suggests that individualism "implies a loosely knit social framework in which people are supposed to take care of themselves and their immediate families only", while collectivism is described as "a tight social framework in which people distinguish between in-groups and out-groups; they expect their in-groups to look after them". Hofstede (1980, p: 45) also identified masculinity and femininity as opposite ends of a continuum. Masculinity refers to "the extent to which the dominant values in society are masculine-that is, assertiveness, the acquisition of money and things, and not caring for others, the quality of life or people". Whereas femininity refers to a situation where the dominant values are nurturing, caring for others and the quality of life. It is also likely in masculine cultures that there will be a clear separation between the values and roles of men and women whereas in feminine cultures these distinctions are more likely to be blurred, Hofstede (1980, p: 47) argued masculinity implies "the wider the gap between its men's and women's values".

Arab countries' cultural dimensions

Hofstede (1980) classified Arab speaking countries as demonstrating high power distance, moderately strong uncertainty avoidance, low individualism and moderate masculinity/femininity. This combination would tend to imply that in Arab cultures people at work accept an unequal distribution of power and expect to be directed by their supervisors whose authority they respect, they are unlikely to expect to be consulted or to participate in organizational decision making, decision making is likely to be centralized and the management style is likely to be autocratic or paternalistic. They are also likely to welcome the security afforded by the presence of clear laws, rules and procedures governing their working lives and by working for the same organization for a long time. they are likely to adopt risk avoidance rather than risk taking approaches to their work. They will feel a sense of belonging to their employing organization and to their work group with whom they work together for survival, they will have relatively little concern for others outside the group and they will expect advancement to be based on seniority. The moderate masculinity/femininity may mean that employees demonstrate values and behaviours associated with both, for example there may be an emphasis upon assertiveness, success, money and recognition at the same time as a concern with equality in society, the quality of life, and gender roles in society and at work may be quite distinct. Al-Faleh (1987) identified common characteristics of Arab managers and in the main these were consistent with this interpretation of the implications of Hofstede's findings though there are also some signs of inconsistency or paradox which may be the product of the influence of Islam. In this latter regard Hickson and Pugh (1995) refer to a paradox between the authoritarian style that one might expect given the high power distance score, and which would seem to be the reality, and the "open door" consultative approach which is aspired to by many Arab managers and which may be the product of the influence of Islam. Hickson and Pugh suggest that consultation in this sense is the wise consultation of those in authority as distinct from power sharing and they point out that Islam also stresses obedience to a responsibly wielded authority. The paradox or duality in Arab cultures which Hickson and Pugh identify may to some extent be a reflection of the difference between the intent and the reality, the difference between what may be aspired to and what may happen in practice. Further support for the appropriateness of Hofstede's findings is also provided for example by Nydell (1996) who referred to respect for seniority in Arab countries and in Egypt, and Parnell and Hatem (1999) who noted employees often tended to agree with their

supervisors. Nydell (1996) also described people in Arab countries preferring working in the same business doing the same jobs over time, a possible reflection of the desire to avoid uncertainty.

The Religious factor in Arab countries

Arab countries including Egypt are predominantly Islamic and this is likely to have an impact upon the dominant values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of the members of these societies, this includes work related values and behaviour. A number of authors have referred to and examined the impact of Islam for example: Hickson and Pugh (1995) and Yousef (2001). One of the features of Islam is that it is a comprehensive religion covering social, political and military precepts as well as the piety of the soul and the moral aspects of individual behaviour. As Hickson and Pugh (p. 192) assert in referring to the Quran and the Shari'a law accompanying it, "Nowhere else in writings on management is there such a recurring exposition of an ethical framework for business and administration" so much so that they suggest that maltreatment of employees is likely to be regarded as sinful and not just bad practice. There are reasons therefore to suppose that this religion will impact both the work-related values and expectations of employees as well as the behaviour and approach of management. Ali (1986-1987) in Yousef, (2001 p.153) argued "Islam is one of the most influential factors which have shaped current Arab value systems". The Islamic work ethic, as it is referred to, Yousef (2001), has its origin in the Quran, the sayings and practice of the prophet Mohammed. It emphasizes and encourages hardwork, through which sins can be resolved, honesty and justice, an equitable and fair distribution of wealth in society, and it encourages the acquisition of skills and technology. The Quran is against laziness and counsels against begging and living off the labour of others, dedication to work is perceived as a virtue and people should put sufficient effort into their work. As has already been noted above the Islamic Work Ethic also emphasizes cooperation in work and consultation, the latter being seen as a way of overcoming obstacles or avoiding mistakes. Social relations at work are also encouraged, it is important to have good relationships at work with both equals and superiors, and work is seen to be a source of independence and a means of achieving personal growth, self fulfillment, self respect and satisfaction. Hard work is a virtue and those who work hard are more likely to get ahead, life without work has no meaning and engagement in economic activity is perceived as an obligation. Yousef (2001) also comments that his research suggests that those who support the Islamic work ethic are more committed to their organizations and more satisfied with their jobs. Another characteristic of Islam is an assumption that the future is best left to Allah, what Hickson and Pugh (1995) refer to as a latent fatalism, a feeling that as long as you live by the rules all will be well. Whilst in the main the Islamic Work Ethic as described stresses values and behaviour that are consistent with Hofstede's findings there are also some features of this ethic which might lead one to expect somewhat different outcomes or which might indicate paradox. For example the stress upon work as a source of personal growth and achievement might be indicative of individualism, the fatalism associated with Islam might lead one to expect a relatively low concern to avoid uncertainty, and the emphasis upon cooperation and an equitable and fair distribution of wealth in society, to the extent that it reflects a concern for others and their quality of life, might be indicative of femininity rather than masculinity. Similarly the desire or need for good social relationships at work might be seen as evidence of femininity, though as has been noted Hofstede's results for Arab countries may give grounds for expecting both femininity and masculinity to be present.

External Influences upon values and beliefs

Values, beliefs and behaviours, except in the most closed and isolated of communities are likely to be influenced by external events, forces and influences and it seems reasonable to expect that the greater the openness of society and the greater the pervasiveness of such external influences, the greater is the likelihood that values and beliefs will change in response to these external forces and over time. Culture is both learned and adaptive. Nydell (1996) has asserted that Arab countries have been subjected to various pressures from the outside world, which affect the way people behave in their work place, and in particular identified the influence of the effects of Western technologies and approaches to work, which she argued necessitated the adoption of Western values and social practices. It was also noted earlier that Rahmati (2000) has pointed out the difficulty of applying the findings of Hofstede's (1980) study, based on data from the 1970s on any cultural context in the 2000s and suggested that change might be expected on both the individualism and masculinity dimensions. Parnell and Hatem (1999) have argued that Egypt (as an Arab country) has changed since that time due to the open door policy implemented in the 1970s, which encouraged and allowed foreign investments in Egypt and which inevitably enhanced the exposure of Egyptian people to the values and beliefs held by inward investors and indeed to the management approach and practices of inwardly investing corporations. The revolution in

information and communication technology is also likely to have enhanced the opportunity for exposure to new and predominantly western (and Japanese) values, beliefs and behaviours. The impact of external influences and exposure to different values, beliefs and behaviours is also likely to be the greater the more citizens of one country travel to experience and gain education and training in another, particularly if these educational migrants then return home to put into practice what they have learned. We must expect the increasing tendency for citizens of Arab countries to travel to and obtain qualifications and experience in the developed economies of the west to have its own impact upon their values and beliefs and over time upon the values and beliefs of those with whom they work upon their return. We should also perhaps expect the recipients of such overseas education and training to occupy professional and managerial roles upon their return. It was noted above that one of the means through which Egyptians may have become more exposed to external influences is through the inward investment by foreign companies, multinationals. Multinational organisations have a range of options in the approach they adopt to the management of their overseas operations and subsidiaries. Perlmutter (1969) identified both ethnocentric and polycentric approaches, in the former the MNC tends to operate in a manner and seeks to induce a culture that is consistent with the way things are done at home, whereas with a polycentric approach much more notice is taken of local circumstances, traditions, culture and ways of behaving. Ethnocentric approaches are likely to make use of expatriates from the home country to manage overseas plants whereas the polycentric approach is much more likely to result in overseas subsidiaries being managed by host country nationals. The ethnocentric approach therefore may well induce in employees attitudes towards work and work related values which to some extent reflect the values and culture of the MNC's home country and which may therefore differ from those typical of the host country, in this case Egypt. The liberalization of trade and the opening up of previously closed markets to foreign capital are among the characteristics of the process known as Globalisation. Various authors have sought to define this process in terms of its outcomes and there is some measure of agreement that in the long run the process will result in the creation of a borderless world, Ohmae 1990 or as Needle 2000 p.45 puts it "a process in which the world appears to be converging economically, politically and culturally". If this is so then perhaps we should expect values and beliefs in Egypt to have changed since the original work of Hofstede and perhaps we should expect changes of the kind identified by Rahmati 2000 above. Furthermore if the MNCs in Egypt adopt an ethnocentric approach we might reasonably expect differences in the values and beliefs between employees working for Egyptian owned organisations and those working for Multinational organisations in Egypt.

Aim

The research reported and discussed in the remainder of this paper constitutes a preliminary investigation into the work related attitudes and values prevalent among middle managers in a number of different organizations in Egypt at the end of the 1990s. These organizations included both Egyptian owned and Multinationals to facilitate comparison between the values and beliefs of the sample in each ownership form.

Method

The sample

Parnell and Hatem (1999) have noted that relatively few studies of Egyptian management in practice had been undertaken in recent years and that this was at least in part a result of the restrictions and the difficulties that face researchers in collecting data, companies and the government tended to be uncooperative in facilitating such research. Therefore, the researchers used personal and professional contacts to gain access to a number of organisations located in Alexandria and Cairo in Egypt. The organisations involved in this preliminary study were 24 manufacturing and service organisations located in Egypt. The sample that forms the basis of this research included 18 Egyptian owned organizations and 6 MNCs. To investigate dimensions of the Egyptian culture 400 questionnaires were distributed to middle managers in different departments in the chosen organisations, of which 200 completed usable questionnaires were collected back, a 50 per cent response rate. No time limit was given for the completion of the questionnaires and they were collected by the researchers. The sample can not be claimed to be necessarily representative of middle managers in Egyptian organisations.

Research Instrument

A short form of Hofstede's original instrument as suggested by Smith and Bond (1993) and by Hoecklin (1995) was used in the current pilot study survey. Smith and Bond (1993, p: 38) presented a sample of Hofstede's questionnaire that they argued included the questions that were "the most useful in defining the meaning of each dimensions". The short form questionnaire that is used in the current study consisted of nine questions and is presented in Tables (1-5) below. Respondents were asked to respond using five-point and three point Likert style scales, only one question used the three point scale and for the sake of ease of comparison this three point scale was weighted from 5 (most positive) to 1 (least positive) as were the five point scales. The first question in the used questionnaire related to the power distance dimension. The uncertainty avoidance dimension was identified by questions two and three. The individualism dimension was identified by questions number four and five. Femininity was identified by questions number six and seven and masculinity was identified by questions eight and nine. The use of this short form instrument was based on a number of practical considerations and means that the results of this research are not directly comparable to those obtained by Hofstede, no attempt has been made to convert the results into a form comparable to Hofstede's index scores. Nevertheless the hope was that the results might indicate whether values and attitudes appear to have been substantially affected by events and developments that have taken place since the original research was undertaken.

Results

The returned questionnaires were used to compute descriptive statistics; frequencies, means and standard deviations. These are presented in tables 1-6.

Table 1: Power distance frequencies, mean and standard deviation. $N= 200$.

Q no	Statements						M	SD
		Frequently	sometimes	Don't know	seldom	never		
1	How frequently, in your experience, does the following problem occur: employees being afraid to express their disagreement with their managers?	17 8.5%	91 45.5%	11 5.5%	36 18%	45 22.5%	2.99	1.37

Table 2 a: Uncertainty avoidance frequencies, means and standard deviations. $N= 200$.

Q no	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	M	SD
2	Company rules should not be broken, even if the employee thinks it is in the company's best interest.	56 28.0%	72 36.0%	31 15.5%	31 15.5%	10 5.0%	3.66	1.18

Table 2 b: Uncertainty avoidance frequencies, means and standard deviations. $N= 200$.

Q no	Statements	Untill I retire	undecided	Not Long	M	SD
3	How long do you think you will continue working for this company?	75 37.5%	108 54.0%	17 8.5%	3.58	1.22

Table 3: Individualism frequencies, means and standard deviations. $N= 200$.

Q no	Statements	Very important	Quite important	Undecided	Of Less importance	Not important	M	SD
4	How important is it to you to have a job, which leaves you sufficient time for your personal or family life?	101 50.0%	73 36.5%	14 7.0%	7 3.5%	5 2.5%	4.29	0.93
5	How important is it to you to have considerable freedom to adapt your approach to the job?	95 47.5%	82 41.0%	12 6.0%	8 4.0%	3 1.5%	4.29	0.86

Table 4: Femininity frequencies, means and standard deviations. $N= 200$.

Q no	Statements	Very important	Quite important	Undecided	Of Less importance	Not important	M	SD
6	How important is it to you to have a good working relationship with your manager?	140 70.0%	45 22.5%	8 4.0%	4 2.0%	3 1.5%	4.57	0.79
7	How important is it to you to work with people who co-operate well with one another?	132 66.0%	47 23.5%	12 6.0%	7 3.5%	2 1.0%	4.50	0.83

Table 5: Masculinity frequencies, means and standard deviations. $N= 200$.

Q no	Statements	Very important	Quite important	Undecided	Of Less importance	Not important	M	SD
8	How important is it to you to have an opportunity for high earnings?	117 58.5%	53 26.5%	12 6.0%	13 6.5%	5 2.5%	4.32	1.01
9	How important is it to you to get the recognition you deserve when you do a good job?	129 64.5%	48 24.0%	13 6.5%	6 3.0%	4 2.0%	4.46	0.89

Table 6: Culture dimensions descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations). $N =200$ respondents from 24 different companies.

Culture dimensions $N= 200$	Q no	M	SD
1. Power distance	1	2.99	1.37
2. Uncertainty avoidance	2 and 3	3.62	0.91
3. Individualism	4 and 5	4.29	0.65
4. Femininity	6 and 7	4.53	0.69
5. Masculinity	8 and 9	4.39	0.79

The comparison between the responses of those working in Egyptian owned and MNCs was undertaken by using a t -test. Bryman and Cramer (1999) suggested that parametric tests could be used with ordinal data. Therefore, a one-tailed t -test was used and the results are shown in Table 7 for the comparison between means for the culture dimensions between Egyptian organisations and multinational organisations working in Egypt.

Table 7: *t*-test (one-tail test) for the Egyptian and multinational organisations in Egypt. *N*= 24; 18 Egyptian and 6 multinational organisations.

Culture dimensions		Egyptian companies		Multinational companies		<i>t</i> _{1,23}	<i>p</i>
		M	S.D	M	S.D		
1.	Power distance	4.68	0.66	4.68	1.16	1.29	0.12
2.	Uncertainty avoidance	4.69	0.57	4.69	0.53	0.04	0.48
3.	Individualism	4.70	0.39	4.70	0.33	-0.46	0.32
4.	Femininity	4.71	0.37	4.71	0.18	-0.77	0.22
5.	Masculinity	4.27	0.56	4.62	0.17	-1.48	0.01

General discussion

On the face of it the results from this preliminary survey into values and beliefs among a sample of middle managers in Egypt indicates that the respondents exhibit: moderate power distance, there being a net positive response to the question of whether employees are afraid to disagree with their bosses moderate to strong uncertainty avoidance high individualism strong femininity and strong masculinity. Bearing in mind all the caveats above and in the final section of this paper about the comparability of this research with that conducted and reported by Hofstede and the representativeness of the sample it is nevertheless interesting to note that this particular sample of middle managers exhibit a bundle of values and beliefs which differ in some respects from those identified in Hofstede's findings but which are also consistent in respect of others. In particular there would appear to be less or lower power distance, greater individualism and both higher masculinity and high femininity. Uncertainty avoidance remains moderately strong. The instrument used did not seek to ascertain responses to questions specific to collectivism. Perhaps the most interesting or intriguing finding of this research relates to the combination of high masculinity and high femininity since these have previously been presented as opposite ends of a continuum and one might therefore not expect to find this particular combination. It would be inappropriate on the base of this evidence to fundamentally question whether the continuum known as the masculinity-femininity dimension is a continuum rather than two separate dimensions especially given the influence of Islam in the Arab countries. It was noted in the earlier section on the influence of Islam that there were reasons to suspect that the teachings of the Qurun might encourage values and beliefs suggesting the presence of femininity and it may well be that it is in this direction that we should look for the explanation of what at first sight appears to be an anomaly or paradox. It was noted there that Islam encourages people at work to seek and preserve good relations at work between peers and with superiors and the particular question asked in the research instrument used here could be construed as addressing this issue. Cooperation is also encouraged by Islam and the second question aimed at femininity asks about attitudes towards this and so again what may seem to be femininity may more appropriately be a reflection of dominant teachings within Islam.

We have already noted the suggestion by Rahmati that exposure to external influences might lead one to expect greater individualism and masculinity now compared with 20 years ago and these results might be taken to lend support to this. The assumption underpinning Rahmati's suggestion presumably is that the external influences are likely to have been predominantly from the developed world and that these cultures exhibit greater masculinity and individualism and that these values, attitudes and behaviours would to some extent have been transferred to /adopted by people and organizations within , in this case, Egypt. We have noted earlier the opening up of Egyptian business to these outside influences via inward investment and new technologies. We have also noted earlier the definition of Globalisation by Needle, which suggests a degree of cultural convergence. Certainly Hofstede's research demonstrated that the USA and most of the European countries were characterized by high individualism and also by greater masculinity than was the case for the Arab countries at that time. There are elements of Islam which also might be taken to be consistent with a higher degree of individualism than Hofstede's work indicated for example the emphasis upon work as a source of personal growth and as a source of individual financial independence. It may also be that the sample, in that they are middle managers may be characterised by a greater determination to achieve and succeed and by what might be depicted as the leadership ideal, a characteristic of individualism, and indeed that they might value earnings, recognition, challenge and advancement, characteristics of masculinity, to a greater extent than Egyptians who work in non-managerial capacities. It must be remembered that Islam emphasizes hard work as a virtue and that those who work hard are more likely to get ahead in life. As noted earlier the research instrument used did not directly address the issue of collectivism and ordinarily, given that like masculinity and femininity individualism

and collectivism were perceived by Hofstede as two extremes of a single dimension, evidence of strong individualism would imply weak collectivism. However, the evidence of both high masculinity and high femininity counsels caution in assuming that these Egyptian managers exhibit low collectivism given the responses on individualism. Uncertainty avoidance would appear to have remained moderately strong reflecting both the immobility of the labour force, Parnell and Hatem (1999) suggested that the Egyptian people might be relatively immobile and that this might explain their apparent preference for staying with the same organization until retirement, and the Islamic belief that if you live by the rules all will be well, the latent fatalism referred to earlier. The implication however is that in the main risk avoidance rather than risk taking is the preferred approach or strategy and again this is consistent with the findings of Yousef (2001) who argued that in Arab countries consultations are encouraged among employees to avoid mistakes and overcome obstacles rather than a means of power sharing, what Hickson and Pugh p. 192 suggest is the wise consultation of those in authority. The comparison between the responses of those working in Egyptian organisations with those in multinational organisations working in Egypt suggested some differences between them in the mean scores on the various dimensions. On the power distance dimension; the mean score was higher in the Egyptian organisations whereas on the individualism, masculinity and femininity dimensions the mean scores are higher in the Multinational organisations but in none of these instances were the differences found to be statistically significant. On the uncertainty avoidance dimension the scores were almost identical.

Conclusions

The findings from this preliminary study of the work related values of middle managers in a range of both Egyptian owned and Multinational, foreign owned, companies in Egypt has produced some interesting results. Perhaps the most intriguing are those which suggest the presence of both high masculinity and femininity, two extremes of the same dimension in Hofstede's work. As has been discussed there are reasons for believing that the high femininity score might well be a reflection of the teachings of Islam as much as it may indicate a shift in values since Hofstede's work was conducted and questions are obviously raised about the appropriateness of the distinction between the concepts of masculinity and femininity as extremes of the same dimension in Islamic cultures. It may also be that these results are reflections of the paradox referred to earlier between aspiration and reality. We would be cautious in concluding that the high individualism demonstrated is an indication that collectivism is low, this would imply significant difference from the findings of Hofstede, and again there is some reason for questioning whether it is individualism or the teachings of Islam that are reflected in this outcome. The high masculinity and individualism found is consistent with predictions that globalisation and in particular the opening up of Egypt to inward investment would result in the acquisition of values and attitudes consistent with high individualism and high masculinity, and indeed that it will result in a converging of cultures, but there is little evidence to suggest that managers in MNCs have significantly different values from those held by managers in Egyptian owned organisations. The findings on the power distance and uncertainty avoidance dimensions are perhaps less radical in comparison with those of Hofstede, however, while uncertainty avoidance is still moderately strong and consistent with Islamic belief that if you stick to the rules all will be well, they do demonstrate lower power distance and while this may be indicative of cultural change it may also be related to the sample itself in that they are managers and may therefore have a different perspective on the issue of whether employees are afraid to disagree with their bosses. It is also worth pointing out that Hofstede (1980, p: 49) argued "small power distance and individualism go together with greater national wealth" so that to the extent that Egypt has become more wealthy over the years in response to this inward investment and the liberalization of trade associated with globalisation we might expect that respondents would indicate a high level of individualism and lower power distance than was evident 20 years earlier. Overall these findings do appear to be consistent with what one might expect in an Islamic country given the teachings of the Qurun and given that there has been an exposure to the outside business world unknown at the time that Hofstede conducted his research. We noted in the introduction that one of the implications of the study of culture at a national level has been to encourage debate regarding the applicability and transferability of particular management approaches and practices developed and effective in one country to operations in other countries. Commonly culture has been identified as relevant to issues such as motivation and reward, employee commitment, managerial styles, levels of decision making and appropriate organisational structures. This transferability debate is often referred to as being between the culture free and culture specific perspectives. We gained no particular insight into the appropriateness of each of these positions or viewpoints in the research reported here but as was noted earlier this preliminary study was undertaken to inform research on work team effectiveness and to the extent that these findings are an accurate reflection of current values and beliefs among middle managers in Egypt the high individualism demonstrated might well have implications for the desire to be a team member or player, the

feelings towards the team or group, commitment to the work team concept as well as to the organisation, and to managerial perceptions of the effectiveness of team or group working.

Critique of the methodology

There are some limitations to the methodology employed in conducting this preliminary research which need to be borne in mind when considering the results and which will be addressed in subsequent research. First, the present study is based on a small convenient sample of organisations that the researchers had access to and as has been noted they can not be considered as a random sample of the Egyptian organisations. The second stage of the research will engage more organisations selected and investigated randomly. Second, the questionnaire that was used in the current pilot study survey is just a part of the original instrument developed by Hofstede and therefore the results must be treated cautiously and we do not claim that this study and the results are strictly comparable to those obtained by Hofstede. Hofstede's original scale for cross-cultural survey studies consisted of 33 questions and our results are therefore limited in comparison to those obtained from the original and more comprehensive instrument. Third, this short form questionnaire contained no questions directly addressing collectivism and this is a weakness given that there may be doubts about whether individualism and collectivism are necessarily opposite ends of the same dimension in Islamic countries. Fourth, the sample was a sample of managers and Hofstede (1980) argued that all employees should be included in investigating the work-related values in any organisation in order to have a complete picture of each organisation and of society and subsequent stages of this research will address this point.

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