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Entitled

*THE INFLUENCE OF UNITED ARAB EMIRATES NATIONAL CULTURE ON LEADERSHIP STYLES IN
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS*

by

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Abstract

Academic institutions and universities are complicated organizations led by professionals and academics who owe their knowledge and skills to their experience in education and leadership (Warter, 2019). In a country like the United Arab Emirates (UAE), education leaders who come from different cultural backgrounds practice their daily duties within a context where the local national culture imposes certain assumptions, beliefs, norms, and attitudes on them, thereby controlling their understanding of leadership and shaping their behavior (Janićijević, 2019).

There has been little academic research into what constitutes the national culture of the UAE, a young, cosmopolitan amalgamation of seven Emirates, viewed internationally as an Arab, Islamic state with a patriarchal socio-economic and political structure. Indeed, different factors impact educational leadership style including various aspects of the national culture, due to the comparatively liberal policies in the Gulf context. This is reflective of the estimation that expatriates outnumber the indigenous Arab Muslims by seven to one. Nonetheless, the principles of Islam prevail and are enforced in terms of social, employment and organizational leadership status.

By taking the epistemological interpretivism position this research is conducted with an aim to identify the impacts of cultural dimensions of Hofstede on shaping the practices of leadership in UAE higher education institutions. For that, twenty-one leaders from different academic institutions operating in the UAE were interviewed. The outcomes suggested four themes that reflect the leaders' perception of leadership in relation to national cultural values which are: The leaders' concept of leadership, the challenge of leadership in academic institutions, the influence of the values of UAE's national culture on academic leadership practices and, finally, the leaders' style of leadership.

This research contributes to the theory by exemplifying the influence of the national cultural values in a multicultural country such as the UAE, where Islamic and Arabic values were assumed to have significant influence on the practice of leadership. The research findings disagreed on the cultural dimensions suggested by Hofstede, insisting that collectivism and gender dimensions could be differently interpreted. Practically, this research contributes to the practice of leadership through initiating a framework that could be used as a guideline by leaders and policymakers in the UAE academic context, to improve the practices of leadership.

The findings of this research are limited to the context of the study, the cases examined in the research, and the nature of the methodological choices made by the researcher. Further research studies have been suggested to offer a future pathway for subsequent researchers to improve the research outcomes and validate the components of the framework.

Keywords: National culture, leadership, United Arab Emirates, challenges, cultural values, power.