

Leadership Challenges in a Culturally Diverse Environment: Case Study of the  
Construction Industry in Dubai

by

Anas H. Salama

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science

Approved April 2022  
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Samuel Ariaratnam, Chair  
Mounir El Asmar  
Thomas Czerniawski

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2022

## ABSTRACT

Dubai has emerged as an important center for international business attracting significant inflows of the foreign workforce. Dubai's population is unique as nationals represent only 15% of the total population, with 200 other nationalities comprising the other 85%. Thus, Cultural Diversity is unavoidable. Cultural Diversity refers to cultural heterogeneity such as differences in race, ethnicity, language, nationality, and religion. As it is a characteristic of Culturally Heterogeneous Workgroups (CHWs), cultural diversity affects how they interact with each other. Since the core concepts of leadership are dealing, inspiring, and motivating teams, the team member's diversity directly connects with the leadership concept.

While many researchers argue whether (CHWs) suffer or benefit from cultural diversity, it is agreed that such diversity has its challenges. Diverse workgroups have been shown to suffer from poor cohesion and social integration. People who are different from their co-worker's report feeling uneasy and having less organizational commitment. Miscommunication, the development of obstacles, and improper adaptation behaviors are all possible negative impacts.

In the absence of local studies on how cultural diversity is related to leadership, this thesis questioned the connection between cultural diversity and leadership level through a quantitative research approach. This would help understand how different leaders at different levels perceive cultural diversity challenges, which would help focus on specific level(s) in future and research practical ways to address cultural diversity issues of cultural diversity. Measurement scales for leadership levels and cultural diversity challenges were developed. A survey was used to collect data from skilled workers in the construction industry in Dubai, and non-parametric statistical methods were used to analyze the collected data and answer the research question. Whereas a strong correlation was initially expected between work experience,

whether in total or within UAE, and leadership level, this was not the case. Most importantly, no significant evidence was found to support a relationship between cultural diversity challenges and both participants' leadership level and their UAE work experience.

## DEDICATION

*For my friend and amazing wife, Ayaa, without whom this thesis would have been finished one and a half years earlier. For Yazan, my favorite brother, might this inspire your dreams. Last but not least, for my wonderful parents, may I be a good parent as you were to us.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am grateful for the support and generosity of Al Ghurair Foundation for Education (AGFE) for allowing me to complete this thesis; I am honored to be your scholar and soon your alumnus. It is such a noble cause that Mr. Abdulla Al Ghurair has begun, and for that, I am truly grateful.

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Samuel Ariaratnam, for inspiring me for the thesis as well as for the courses which I have studied with him, which both were well-structured, had valuable content, and neatly presented and delivered,

Furthermore, I wish to thank members of the committee, Dr. Mounir El Asmar and Dr. Thomas Czerniawski, for accepting the invitation to join the committee.

I want to extend my appreciation to my boss Engr Khaled Elsayed who has been a great supporter from the moment I began my graduate studies until the very end and in whom I saw the true definition of a leader.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                      | Page |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| LIST OF TABLES .....                                                 | vii  |
| LIST OF FIGURES .....                                                | viii |
| INTRODUCTION .....                                                   | 1    |
| Overview .....                                                       | 1    |
| Research Hypothesis.....                                             | 2    |
| Summary of Research Methodology .....                                | 2    |
| LITERATURE REVIEW .....                                              | 3    |
| Leadership .....                                                     | 3    |
| Cultural Diversity .....                                             | 4    |
| The Connection between Cultural Diversity and Leadership.....        | 10   |
| Studies on Cultural Diversity within the Construction Industry ..... | 13   |
| Local Studies on Cultural Diversity .....                            | 14   |
| Conclusion.....                                                      | 17   |
| METHODOLOGY .....                                                    | 20   |
| Background on Dubai’s Cultural Diversity .....                       | 20   |
| Research Methodology .....                                           | 21   |
| Data Collection.....                                                 | 23   |
| DATA ANALYSIS.....                                                   | 24   |
| Data Summary .....                                                   | 24   |
| Data Analysis.....                                                   | 29   |
| Results Discussion.....                                              | 31   |
| CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS .....                 | 33   |
| Research Scope and Limitations.....                                  | 35   |

| CHAPTER                                                     | Page |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Future Research Recommendations .....                       | 36   |
| REFERENCES .....                                            | 37   |
| APPENDIX                                                    |      |
| A    SURVEY FORM .....                                      | 42   |
| B    ASU’S INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) EXEMPTION ..... | 47   |

## LIST OF TABLES

| Table                                                                                              | Page |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Pairwise Spearman Correlations (Leadership Level Vs. Cultural Diversity Challenges)<br>.....    | 31   |
| 2. Pairwise Spearman Correlations (UAE Work Experience Vs. Cultural Diversity<br>Challenges) ..... | 32   |



## LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure                                                            | Page |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Participants' Age Groups .....                                 | 25   |
| 2. Participants' Educational Level .....                          | 25   |
| 3. Participants' Project Management Certification.....            | 26   |
| 4. Participants' Total Work Experience.....                       | 27   |
| 5. Participants' UAE Work Experience .....                        | 27   |
| 6. Participants' Leadership Level .....                           | 28   |
| 7. Frequency of the Cultural Diversity Challenges.....            | 29   |
| 8. Relationship between Total Experience and UAE experience ..... | 30   |

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Overview**

Many studies debated that cultural diversity harms team cohesion and communication and may affect the team performance of culturally heterogeneous workgroups. Diverse workgroups have been shown to suffer from poor cohesion and social integration. People who are different from their co-workers report feeling uneasy and having less organizational commitment. Miscommunication, the development of obstacles, and improper adaptation behaviors are all possible negative impacts. However, others suggest that cultural diversity brings benefits such as increasing creativity and improving decision-making and outcomes. It is, however, irrefutable that cultural diversity carries challenges to the workgroups.

Being a member of Dubai's construction sector myself, the sheer extent of cultural diversity in Dubai and the construction industry, in particular, was a reality that I have lived in and dealt with spontaneously. However, different individuals must have different perceiving of to which extent cultural diversity is considered challenging. While leadership's most straightforward definition is the art of leading a group of people, it is rational to assume that leadership is connected somehow to the way people perceive cultural diversity and react toward it.

Since no previous studies investigated the relationship between leadership and cultural diversity challenges, especially in Dubai, this research aimed to fill the gap by researching the connection between one aspect of leadership, which is leadership level and cultural diversity challenges.

## **Research Hypothesis**

This research conducted a case study on the construction industry in Dubai to test the following hypothesis:

**H1 - Challenges of cultural diversity correlate to leadership level in the construction industry in Dubai.**

## **Summary of Research Methodology**

This research utilized a quantitative research approach to collect and analyze the data. Appropriate measurement scales were developed for both leadership level and cultural diversity challenges. Participants who are skilled workers within the construction sector in Dubai were then surveyed for data collection. Statistical methods were used to analyze the data collected from the survey.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews information obtained from different peer-reviewed journals, studies, researches, theses, dissertations, and books. The purpose was to collect enough data on leadership, cultural diversity, and the relationship between both. Moreover, the review aimed to shed insight into what studies have focused on this relationship within the construction industry context globally and specifically in Dubai.

#### **Leadership**

##### **Definitions**

Although there is no unified definition of leadership agreed upon by all researchers, the best effort was made to provide a general description that would fit different contexts.

**Leadership:** A simple leadership definition according to Silva (2016): “The process of interactive influence that occurs when, in a given context, some people accept someone as their leader to achieve common goals.”

**Leader:** A leader, according to Winston & Patterson (2006): is “a person who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organization’s mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted, and coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives.”

**Diversity Leadership:** According to Ayoko Oluremi and Härtel Charmine (2006), diversity leadership refers to “anyone that leads or manages a diverse or heterogeneous workgroup.” This definition is different from the term “diverse

leaders’’, which refers to leaders who are different from their group members in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture.

## **Cultural Diversity**

### **1. Introduction**

Over the past few decades, the changes in the world’s economy, from localized businesses to an increasingly competitive and globalized world economy, alongside rapid changes in demographic trends, have posed significant challenges to organizations (Johnston & Packer, 1987). Among these is the need to conduct a business relationship with people who are from a completely different culture (Canen Alberto and Canen, 2004; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2007)

In General, Cultural Diversity refers to cultural heterogeneity such as differences in race, ethnicity, language, nationality, and religion (Cox & Stacy, 1991; Martin, 2014).

All cultures, by nature, are parochial to some extent. According to Adler (1991), parochialism definition is: viewing the world solely through one’s own eyes and perspective. A person with a parochial perspective does not recognize other people’s different ways of living, and neither working nor those differences have serious consequences.

The initial perception of this cultural boundary, or difference, is the first foundation stone upon which one can struggle to build an objective vision of one’s unique culture. This initial awareness of cultural differences provides a tiny crack in the shamelessness of one’s naturally parochial perception of reality. This, in return, inevitably widens as the desire to learn about other cultures draws one into more personal experiences with people who come from cultures that are different than one’s own.

## **2. Culturally Heterogeneous Workgroups**

Culture colors people's sense of identity and their perceptions of others. According to Frey-Ridgway (1997), differences in management style and organizational behavior can often be traced back to cultural influences. Cross-cultural differences in the context of development work also involve a range of issues from an individual's cultural background and characteristics of workplaces to their values and ways of doing things which will influence their working style, interactions, and relationships at workplaces. Aspects such as communication styles, language, a person's cultural background, observations of conflict, styles and methods of doing the work, and the style of decision making will impact how individuals will act and behave in workplaces. (Mekonnen, 2015)

According to Ayoko Oluremi & Härtel Charmine (2006) and Chan (2011), culturally heterogeneous workgroups (CHWs) is the term used to describe groups that are comprised of members who are different based on ethnicity, race, value, and cultural backgrounds.

Cultural diversity can affect the workplace in numerous ways. Adverse effects might include miscommunication, the creation of barriers, and dysfunctional adaptation behaviors. Studies have shown that diverse workgroups compared to homogeneous groups suffer more from poor cohesion and social integration, conflict, turnover, low trust, low job satisfaction, stress, absenteeism, and communication difficulties (Adler, 1991; O'Reilly III et al., 1989; Tsui et al., 1992; Zenger & Lawrence, 1989) Also, people different from their co-workers in terms of race, gender, tenure, and other characteristics report feelings of discomfort and less organizational commitment (Tsui et al., 1992)

An adverse outcome of CHWs is the more prominent tendency of workers to indulge in interpersonal conflicts. Members of CHWs possess different opinions, thoughts, beliefs, norms, customs, values, trends, and traditions. When culturally diverse workers are placed in a group to collaborate to attain a mutual goal, these differences can obstruct the development of the agreement (Martin, 2014).

On the other hand, possible positive effects of CHWs can include building a wide-ranging knowledge base with in-house talent, which can make for smoother integration of the organization into foreign cultures. Some researchers represent the conflict as productive and may result in innovation and elimination of gratification (Jehn, 1997). When conflict is well managed, it can be a highly constructive force in organizations (Dreu & Vianen, 2001), facilitating problem-solving, effectiveness, and relationships.

### **3. Dynamics of Culturally Heterogeneous Workgroups**

Social identity theory (SIT) suggests that group members establish a positive social identity and confirm affiliation by showing favoritism to members of their social category (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel et al., 1979)

Social category membership provides naturally occurring outlines along which disagreement can be drawn. Categorizing individuals into different groups can provoke hostility or enmity within the workgroup. Categorization effects might appear as relationship conflict over workgroup members' personal preferences or disagreements about interpersonal interactions, typically about non-work topics such as gossip, social events, or religious preferences (Jehn, 1995, 1997)

The self-categorization pattern corresponds to SIT, defined as how individuals express their self-concept in terms of their memberships in several social groups. Hence, different aspects of a person's self-concept may become salient in response to

the distribution of the characteristics of others that are present in a situation (Cross & Markus, 1990). According to Hogg & Turner (1987), a salient social category functions psychologically to influence a person's awareness and actions and how others treat the focal individual.

To the extent that a particular in-group membership is salient, one's perceived likeness to the others in the in-group is increased (Brewer, 1979). The increasing salience of in-group membership, on the other hand, causes a reification of the self, defined as perceiving oneself as an interchangeable exemplar of the social category (Hogg & Turner, 1987). Consequently, affiliates of a salient group are more likely to liaise with in-group members and compete against out-group members (Wagner et al., 1986). Similarly, when members are part of a diverse team of which their in-group membership is unimportant, individualism rather than collectivism behavior can prevail (Mekonnen, 2015).

According to Blake & Mouton (1982) and Jehn (1997), Intra-group disagreement and clashes might be task-related or social-related, with the latter usually denoted as relationship or emotional conflict.

Negative affect and dislike are the basis for emotional conflict. As a result, it is not shocking that emotional conflict manifests itself as friction, frustration, and personality clashes within the group (Ross, 1989). It is also not surprising that some researchers report higher levels of emotional conflict in diverse than homogeneous workgroups as individuals lean towards disliking others who disagree with them or have dissimilar beliefs and values.

In contrast, task conflict is the conflict of ideas and disagreement about task content. It is the awareness that there are disagreements about the actual tasks being performed in the group (Jehn, 1997), although the group's ultimate goal may be



shared (Brehmer, 1976). Therefore, a group may experience task-related conflict even when they share the same goal and objective about the task. These conflicts can yield better outcomes for the group or lodge the group in disputes over how to achieve tasks or fail to attain better decision-making.

Conflict can increase performance quality when serious debate and open communication among members occurs regarding task-related issues (Tjosvold, 1991). Task conflict relates to value diversity in diverse workgroups (Jehn, 1997) and, by extension, CHWs. Since work orientation and work style are features that differentiate cultures, destructive task conflict is more likely in culturally diverse workgroups (Ayoko Oluremi & Härtel Charmine, 2006). On the other hand, conflict can make the work environment so uncomfortable that group members may become dissatisfied, uncooperative, and unmotivated to assist group performance.

Although diversity research has considered ethnic diversity within organizations less than other types of diversity (O'Reilly III et al., 1998), the diversity literature broadly represents heterogeneous workgroups as better than homogeneous groups in terms of innovation (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Jackson, 1992), problem-solving, creativity (Watson et al., 1993) and decision-making (Lauretta McLeod & Lobel, 1992). While other researchers view diverse workgroups as struggling more than homogeneous workgroups from conflict (Tsui et al., 1992; Watson et al., 1993), lack of cohesion, and social integration; such problems, in turn, affect group processes negatively (Adler, 1991). When diversity is well managed, the group, and the organization overall, can benefit from constructive debates and different views of the workgroup members without risking falling into diversity-related conflicts.

#### **4. Elements of Cultural Diversity**

##### **Language Barrier**

Companies fronting the scene of globalizing are sensing a more significant cultural distance and will be mindful of greater ambiguity about markets that do not share their language. Salespersons working in their second language may be seen as if they are less able, less credible, less likable, and ultimately less persuasive. Therefore, companies generally have more success selling to countries that share their language (J. et al., 2003).

Also, when buyers use their second language, they are not as confident and assertive and lose some of their relationship and negotiation power. As a result, they are less successful in securing advantageous deals. Therefore, buyers often demand conducting negotiations in their language. Companies are incompetent in dealing with the customer's language underperform relative to their more lingually able contestants. This is not limited to the commercial sector as all business compares similarly (Feely Alan & Harzing, 2003).

According to, multinational companies are more eager to hire expatriates in vital positions where the host country has a different language from the parent country. Language interfaces in these businesses typically cause miscommunication, ambiguity, suspicion, and conflict. Consequently, unless these problems are professionally managed, they will bring unfavorable consequences for the corporate and its relationships.

A study conducted in Hong Kong on 100 construction laborers, mainly from Nepal and Pakistan (Johnny & Autumn, 2014), reported that communication difficulties caused by language barriers harmed work relationships between different cultural groups on construction sites.

### **Discrimination Barrier**

They are defined as barring individuals from membership in an organization or a job because they are members of a particular group.

In a study conducted in India on 300 workers in the information technology sector, Patrick & Kumar (2012) reported that discrimination was the most frequently encountered barrier to accepting workplace diversity.

### **Other Barriers**

Other types of cultural barriers include:

- 1) Prejudice: an unfair and unreasonable opinion or feeling, primarily formed without enough thought or knowledge; an unjustified negative attitude toward a person based on their membership in a particular group.
- 2) Ethnocentrism is the tendency to regard one's group, culture, or nation as superior to others.
- 3) Stereotypes: a fixed idea about what a particular type of person is like, especially an idea that is wrong; a set of beliefs about a group applied universally to all group members.

### **The Connection between Cultural Diversity and Leadership**

As cultural diversity is a characteristic of the team members, cultural diversity has a central role in determining how members of a team process information, make decisions and execute them (Jackson, 1992). Diversity shapes the social dynamics within the workgroup. Since the core concepts of leadership are dealing, inspiring, and motivating teams, the team member's diversity, in general, directly connects with the leadership concept and the effectiveness of the leader.

According to Ayoko Oluremi & Härtel Charmine (2006), Cox & Stacy (1991), Jehn (1997), London & Chen (2007), and Mekonnen (2015), a primary reason for lack

of or poor cohesion and social integration in workgroups is the task and interpersonal conflict. Conflicts at the individual, group, or organizational levels affect diversity's outcomes beneficially or undesirably depending on how the concerned party manages them. For this reason, leaders must possess the attitudes and skills that enable them to identify and minimize destructive conflict and promote constructive conflict. By minimizing destructive conflict and promoting constructive conflict, tasks facilitation and social outcomes help transform traditional organizations into effective multi-cultural ones. They also ensure that heterogeneous workgroups operate efficiently and in a productive manner away from conflicts and other related challenges to cultural diversity.

Leaders and managers shall at least have the following essential skills to lead culturally heterogeneous workgroups effectively:

1. **Strong Leadership:** Leaders must have core capability and competencies to analyze the dynamics and challenges of a culturally diverse team.
2. **Effective Communication skills:** Studies have shown that communication is a significant issue that challenges team members in a culturally diverse team. Lack of clarity and accuracy can either result in a misinterpretation of the message or complicate the communication through the back and forth and thus harms the time and the quality of the collaboration between team members, which in turn affects the productivity of the group.
3. **Awareness of Diversity:** Diversity awareness in a multi-cultural context is vital for having a decent work environment. Differences among team members may not essentially originate from cultural background, race, age, gender, or educational status. It is, nevertheless, imperative for leaders to observe and acknowledge the

cultural diversity in their group as that will offer powerful means of managing different diversity-related difficulties.

4. **Conflict management skills:** Researchers have established that one of the most crucial barriers for heterogeneous groups in realizing their potential is conflict (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Jehn, 1995, 1997).

Conflict management skills comprise understanding the conflict cycle and the role of one's own and others' conflict management styles, which are commonly identified in the literature (Rahim, 1985) include:

- (1) Competing, characterized by high assertiveness, involves using power to gain acceptance of one's position;
- (2) Accommodation, characterized by high cooperativeness, satisfies the other party's wishes at the expense of one's own.
- (3) Collaboration, which is high in the combined styles of competing and accommodation, involves bringing all pertinent issues and concerns out to a solution that integrates all points of view.
- (4) Avoiding, which is low in competing and accommodation, involves sidestepping an issue and shying away from its open discussion.
- (5) Compromise involves splitting the difference, with both parties giving up something to find a middle ground.

As stated by Makhdoomi (2018), the support and obligation of the top management to cultural diversity are crucial. Developing sensitivity and skills to manage diverse teams effectively is becoming more critical. However, assurance towards cultural diversity is also required at other lower organizational levels.

## **Studies on Cultural Diversity within the Construction Industry**

Despite the significance of cross-cultural interaction and widespread recognition of cultural capital (Ofori & Toor, 2009) or cultural intelligence for business success, few studies investigate cross-cultural interactions in construction.

The cultural aspects highly affect the interaction between players in the construction field. (Fellows & Liu, 2006) have suggested that cultural distances among project participants significantly mediate mutual trust, negotiation, decision making, dispute resolution, and other working practices. Therefore, Ofori (2007) illustrates that these distances should involve a high degree of risk and that resources and management efforts should be invested to mitigate or reduce the cultural risk. This issue can be seen in the day-to-day interaction within the construction industry, especially in Dubai. People feel more comfortable and willing to conduct business with others who share their cultural background, language, and religion rather than dealing with people from different cultural backgrounds. Although the market tends, the competitiveness of the prices offered by the players and benefit/ risk evaluation often play a significant role in decreasing the intensity of cultural distances, the latter remains apparent.

Ofori (2007) claimed that foreign players dominate construction activity in the large-project segment. Cross-cultural interactions form a crucial role in negotiations, decision-making, problem-solving, and other aspects of business and technical operations.

Research supports the observation that cultural differences account for how management and leadership approaches are perceived and operationalized in different societies (Gerstner & Day, 1994; Loosemore & Lee, 2002).

For instance, in joint ventures study, (Norwood & Mansfield, 1999) found that the differences between Asian and Western cultures led to several problems. Giving the example of doing business in China, Wels (2002) highlights the importance of personal networks and cultural norms and values as the bases of personal networks.

The existing construction studies include those that attempted to assess culture at the team or organizational level. For example, Richard Fellows et al. (2003) examined the cultural orientation of leaders in Hong Kong. They found that Chinese culture remains to have a profound influence on local culture despite over a century of being ruled by Britain. Sillars & Kangari (2004) highlight the importance of a cultural match between partners in the internal working of joint ventures.

Other researchers investigated cultures across various countries. For instance, Mäkilouko (2004) observed cultural differences across Finnish– European, Finnish– Chinese, and Finnish–American managers. Toor & Ogunlana (2008) compared Thai managers with their non-Thai counterparts. Winch et al. (1997) investigated the cultural difference between British and French managers working on the Channel Tunnel project. A study conducted by Elron (1997) on multinational companies and their overseas subsidiaries claims a positive relationship between top management team heterogeneously, performance, level of disagreement, and cohesion.

However, according to Ofori & Toor (2009), most studies on cross-cultural interaction in construction either used simple methodologies or used cultural dimensions as their research frameworks. Moreover, most of the existing research has been conducted locally at the individual or organizational level.

### **Local Studies on Cultural Diversity**

Dubai has emerged as an important center for international business and a financial and tourism center, attracting significant inflows of foreign direct investment

and highly educated and experienced non-national workers. Dubai is a global multi-cultural city where, like any country whose doors are not closed, the forces of globalization and multiculturalism are unavoidable. These forces are felt particularly intensely within the most economically dynamic and successful nations nowadays. Dubai's population is unique as nationals represent only 15% of the total population, with expatriates comprising the other 85%.

The UAE, in general, and Dubai, in particular, have one of the world's most significant migration rates, and the workforce from India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia, the USA, among other countries, has increased significantly in the past couple decades (Al-Jenaibi, 2011). In the UAE, migrants mainly work in two sectors: construction and domestic work (Faridi & El-Sayegh, 2006).

### **A Case Study of Multiculturalism in Dubai**

A study conducted by Obaid (2009) in Dubai used mixed methods with a sample size of 1,128 and 45 ethnicities. The study used mixed methods where one questionnaire was written in English and designed for non-nationals who live and work in Dubai, intending to map the cultural diversity in Dubai and investigate non-nationals perceptions about living in Dubai and its cultural diversity. The second questionnaire was written in Arabic and designed for UAE nationals to investigate their opinions regarding cultural diversity and multiculturalism in the UAE.

The findings from the study for the non-national questionnaires were as follows:

- There is a significant relationship between the participants' nationalities and their age, education, and occupation. More than half of the non-national respondents are young Asians (52.8%), followed by Europeans aged between 35 and 44 years old (32.4%).



- There is a demographic imbalance in gender, where males represent (71%) and women (29%) of the non-nationals surveyed. According to the Dubai Centre of Statistics, males represent (70%) of non-nationals, whereas women represent (30%).
- There are multiple significant dimensions of cultural diversity: religion, language, and nationalities (ethnicities). In terms of religious diversity, the findings from the 45 nationalities in the non-national questionnaire revealed religions such as Islam, Christianity, and other beliefs such as Baha'i, Parsi, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and atheism.
- A wide range of languages and dialects are used in Dubai among family members, friends, and at work. Also, some 202 nationalities (in the labor force) live in the UAE; consequently, there is a vast diversity of languages spoken at home, with friends, and at work.
- 83 percent of the non-national respondents use the English language instead of the country's official language (Arabic) at work, which reflects the vast presence of non-nationals in the workforce and how English is the dominant language among both nationals and non-nationals in the workplace.
- Almost two-thirds (62%) of the survey sample had not experienced discrimination or unfair treatment in Dubai because of their culture, race, skin color, nationality, language accent, or religion. However, one-third of the sample population (37%) experienced discrimination from others.
- A strong attachment to their religions and their beliefs as about two-thirds of those surveyed believe that their religion is (very important) and (21%) believed that it is (important). Interestingly the non-national population surveyed also scored the

same high percentage when measuring their attachment to their religion and culture.

### **The Scope and Impact of Workplace Diversity in UAE**

An Initial Study In a study conducted Al-Jenaibi (2011) using a mixed-method approach, 450 individuals working within the UAE workforce were surveyed to critically analyze the benefits and challenges organizations face in the diverse workplaces of the United Arab Emirates.

The research found, in general, favorable views toward workplace diversity from the perspective of surveyed employees. However, when asked more detailed questions about their employer's policy, a significant segment of the participants expressed reservations about their employer's capability to implement effective intercultural communication and diversity practices.

### **Conclusion**

The changes in the world's economy, globalization, and rapid changes in demographic trends have forced organizations to conduct business with people from entirely different cultures, thus exposing them to a culturally diverse business environment more than ever.

According to Ayoko Oluremi & Härtel Charmine (2006) and Chan (2011), culturally heterogeneous workgroups (CHWs) is the term used to refer to groups that are comprised of members who are different based on ethnicity, race, value, and cultural backgrounds.

Despite limited empirical evidence (Tsui et al., 1992), many argue that greater cultural diversity offers substantial benefits such as improved decision making, increased creativity and innovation, and more successful marketing efforts (Cox & Stacy, 1991). However, this perspective tends to overlook the potential drawbacks to

global cultural diversity, including “conflict, a lack of cohesion, misunderstanding between diverse groups, trust issues, parochialism, and poor organizational performance” (Glick et al., 1993).

Cultural diversity and cross-cultural interaction bring barriers to the workgroups such as language differences, discrimination, prejudice, ethnocentrism, stereotypes, etc.

As cultural diversity is a characteristic of the team members, cultural diversity has a central role in shaping the social dynamics and determining how team members interact in the short and long term. Since the core concepts of leadership are dealing, inspiring, and motivating teams, the team member’s diversity, in general, directly connects with the leadership concept and the effectiveness of the leader. Therefore, leaders must possess the attitudes and skills to identify and minimize destructive conflict and foster constructive conflict. Among these are strong leadership, effective communications skills, awareness of diversity (also known as cultural sensitivity), and conflict management skills.

Despite the significance of cross-cultural interaction, few studies investigate cross-cultural interactions in the construction field.

The cultural aspects highly affect the interaction between players in the construction field by significantly mediating mutual trust, negotiation, decision making, dispute resolution, and other working practices. Therefore, studying this interaction is necessary to mitigate or reduce the cultural risk.

Most studies on cross-cultural interaction in the construction sector either used simple methodologies and cultural dimensions as their research frameworks or were conducted locally. However, many researchers observed that differences in

management style and organizational behavior could often be traced back to cultural influences.

Being a global multi-cultural city, Dubai is home to more than 200 nationalities worldwide. Therefore, the forces of globalization and multiculturalism are unavoidable, and it is considered a daily reality. However, regardless of being considered the most diverse city globally, no study has been conducted to examine how leadership interacts with the present cultural diversity in Dubai.

Dubai's population is unique as nationals represent only 15% of the total population, with expatriates comprising the other 85%. Given that the construction workers form nearly 18 percent of Dubai's workforce, it is interesting to study the interaction between leadership and cultural diversity in such a unique environment. There are no complete answers to the questions explored in cross-cultural studies. However, gaining an even slightly better understanding of this phenomenon is necessary would help bridge the distances cultural diversity and globalization bring to the construction industry within Dubai.

## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Background on Dubai's Cultural Diversity**

The culture in Dubai is very diverse. There are over 190 nationalities in Dubai speaking over 300 languages and dialects. Thus, the city classifies among the top 10 multi-cultural cities globally and is expected to be at the top by 2030 as economic expansion opens the door for more qualified expatriate white-collar employees.

Current population statistics show that foreigners represent 88.52% of the UAE population. With almost 65% of the population being between 25 and 54 years old, this indicates the extent of the cultural diversity among the active workforce in the country in general and Dubai city in particular as the country's economic capital. More than 200 nationalities are present in the UAE now. The majority of this workforce is foreigners who descend from different origins. The largest of which is Asia. Indians occupy the highest position with 2.77 million, followed by Pakistanis with 1.28 million. The other nationalities include- Bangladeshis, Filipinos, Iranians, Egyptians, Nepalese, Sri Lankans, Chinese, and others.

In the same context, the construction sector is the fifth largest sector in Dubai's economy, contributing almost 6.4% to Dubai's GDP through more than 4,792 currently active projects. Thus, Construction Sector is one of the main pillars of the economy. The sector also indirectly affects other sectors such as housing, medical, and recreational. These facts highlight the importance of the construction sector and the construction industry in Dubai.

Being one of the main spokes in Dubai's growth wheel, it is imperative to examine how the construction sector deals with this diverse nature and how both affect each other. Since no previous studies have examined how cultural diversity

challenges relate to advancement in leadership level within the construction industry, this study focuses on investigating the relationship between these challenges and the construction-industry workforce leadership level.

The expectation is that as people evolve in leadership, it will be easier for them to manage and handle the challenges imposed by working in a culturally diverse work environment. Thus, these challenges associated with leading a culturally diverse team would be perceived to be less significant.

### **Research Methodology**

This research followed a quantitative research approach to collect and analyze the data. It was essential to develop scales to measure leadership level and cultural diversity challenges to examine how both are connected. A leadership assessment ordinal scale was developed, resulting in four levels of leadership which are defined as follows:

- **Level 1 (Directly Contributing Knowledge Worker)**
  - Mainly solving/ dealing with technical problems
  - Outcome of your work is presented in technical documents (rather than policies)
  - You perform technical work related to the discipline.
  - Your work usually tends to be specialized in a particular field of work.
  - Performing most of the time autonomously, but keep reporting to his boss about his work.
- **Level 2 (Team Leader)**
  - You make sure that the right person answers technical problems
  - Formally recognized (i.e., appointed or elected) as the leader of a team (one or more subordinates)
  - You assign and can delegate work to subordinates
  - Your work is different from subordinates
  - You are responsible for the teamwork outcome.

- **Level 3 (Mid-Level Manager)**
  - You are responsible for the profit and loss of the unit or division.
  - You possess the ultimate decision in hiring people for your team.
  - You usually do not have to report to level 4 leaders.
  - You have specific and clear responsibility for the processes in the unit.
  - Sometimes, you communicate through hierarchical channels with (Level 2, other Level 3 leaders)
- **Level 4 (Senior Executive)**
  - You make sure the right questions are being asked and answered honestly.
  - You do not report to a higher leader/ Manager/ Boss
  - Your work has more to do with the strategic planning of the company/ firm.
  - You create or identify and follow up with new opportunities (new domains, new regions)
  - You delegate hiring (i.e., most of the hiring is done by somebody at level 3)

On the other hand, measuring how participant perceives and assesses cultural diversity challenges was done through the following process:

- 1- Challenges imposed by cultural diversity were listed,
- 2- A clear definition and terminology for each challenge were adopted,
- 3- Each challenge was measured on a 5-point frequency Likert ordinal scale  
(Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never)

Based on the pre-mentioned procedure, the challenges and their definition were as follow:

- **Cultural gaps** (Cultural gaps: differences in values, behavior, or customs between the team members, especially as a hindrance to mutual understanding and communication)
- **Language barriers** (Language barriers: difficulties in communication experienced by people or groups originally speaking different languages)

- **Bias and prejudice** (Prejudice – an opinion against a group or an individual based on insufficient facts and usually unfavorable and intolerant. Bias – very similar to but not as extreme as prejudice. Someone biased usually refuses to accept that there are other views than their own.)
- **Ethical beliefs** (Ethics reflect beliefs about what is right, what is wrong, what is just, what is unjust, what is good, and what is bad in human behavior.)
- **Religion Differences** (Religion is defined as the belief in and worship of superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods.)

### **Data Collection**

Data collection was done by surveying participants in the construction industry, specifically skilled workers who fall under the four leadership levels. The survey was sent to a group of personal connections working in the construction industry and sharing the survey through social media websites such as LinkedIn. A Google Form was used for collecting the survey responses. In addition to the measurement of leadership and cultural diversity challenges, the survey also collected complementary data on the following:

- Participant age group,
- Level of education,
- Acquiring any project management certification,
- Total work experience,
- Work experience within UAE,

Surveys were distributed to 150 individuals who are currently skilled workers in the construction industry in Dubai; this did not include unskilled labor. Responses were received from 91 participants resulting in a 60.6% response rate.



## Chapter 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

The first section of this chapter summarizes the data collected to conduct this study. Moreover, quantitative data analysis is presented in the second section, followed by reporting the findings.

#### **Data Summary**

In this section, data obtained from surveying participants (91 responses in total) is summarized to gain an insight into the characteristics of the participants. This section provides a general and summarized overview of the age, educational qualification, project management certification, work experience (in total and in UAE), leadership level, and cultural differences challenges as perceived by the participants.

#### **Age Groups**

The survey collected participants' age groups, and as expected, most of the participants (85%) were below 45 years old. This matches with the general character of Dubai's workforce since many young foreigners come from different countries to seek a job place in Dubai's construction sector. The biggest age group, almost (53%), was between 25 and 35 years old. Figure 1 illustrates the corresponding number of participants in each age group.

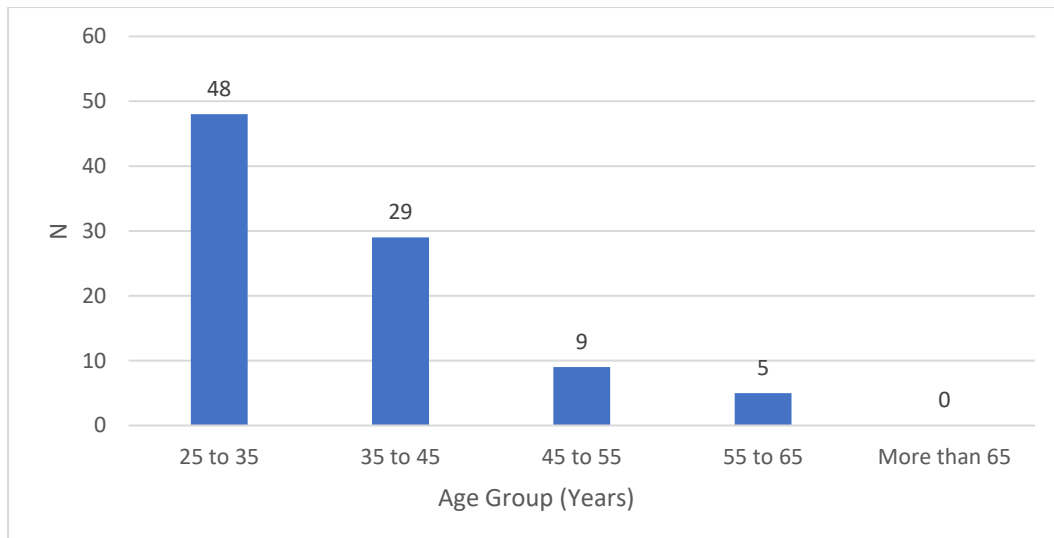


Figure 1 Participants' Age Groups

### Educational Level

Figure 2 illustrates the participant's educational level. The majority (70% corresponds to 64 participants) held a Bachelor's degree, while (25% corresponds to 23 participants) held a Master's Degree. The combined diploma and PhDs holders formed only (4%) of the participants. Thus, Bachelor's Degree is the most common level of education among participants.

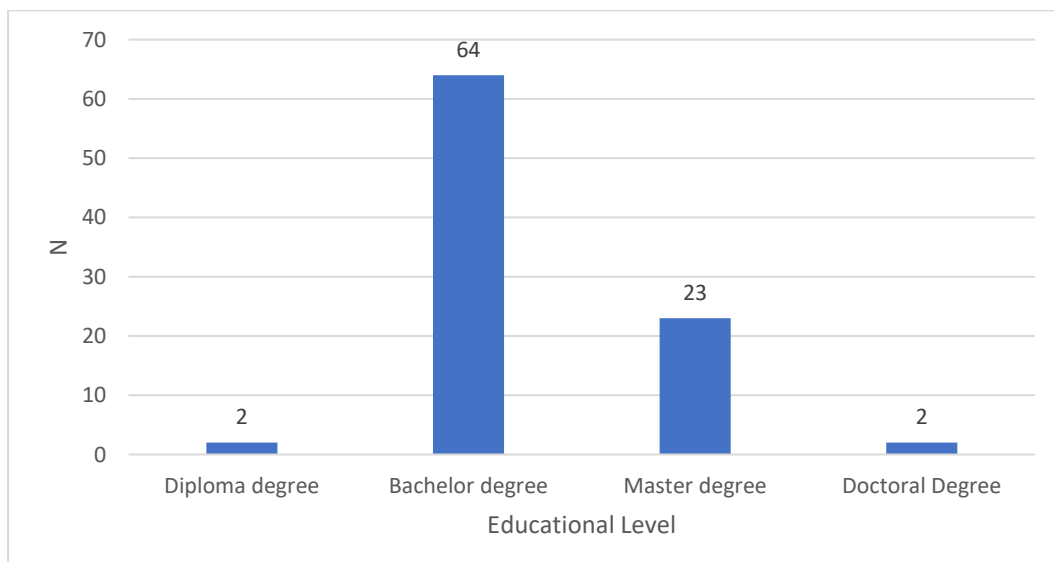


Figure 2 Participants' Educational Level

## Project Management Certification

Participants were asked to answer if they held a project management certificate. The responses indicated that only (36%) held project management certification, with the majority (64% corresponding to 58 participants) holding no such certification. Figure 3 illustrates the proportions for each category.

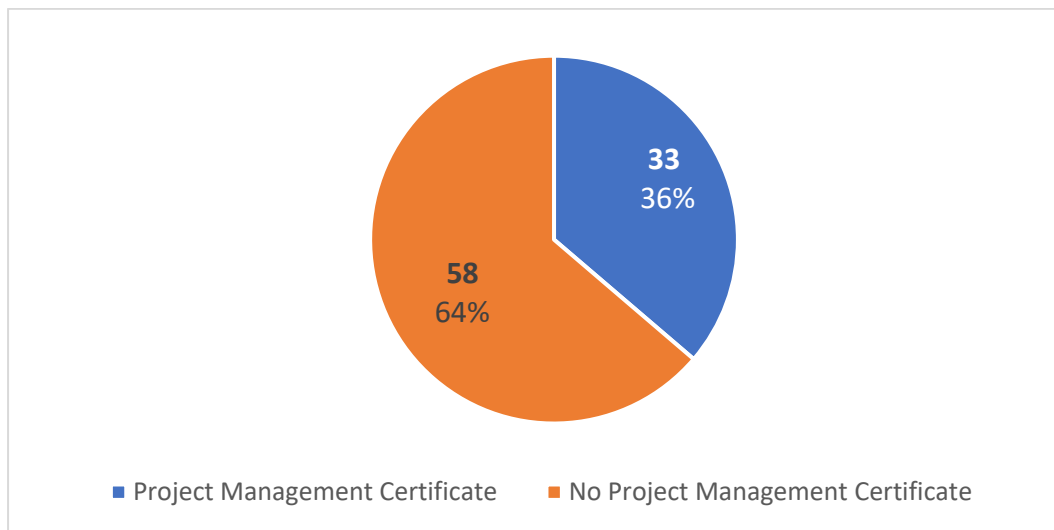


Figure 3 Participants' Project Management Certification

## Work Experience

The survey collected participants' work experience both in total and within UAE. The responses indicate that (65%) of the participants had total work experience between 5 and 20 years, while (19%) had less than 5 years of total work experience. On the other hand, (65%) had between 5 and 20 years of work experience within the UAE, and (29%) had less than 5 years of UAE work experience. Figure 4 and Figure 5 illustrate total and UAE work experience, respectively.

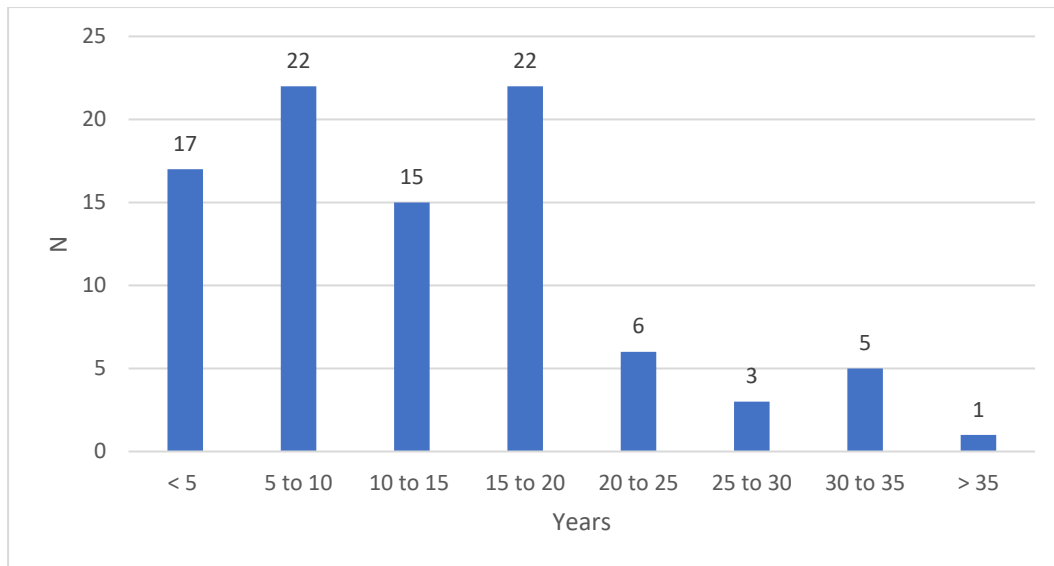


Figure 4 Participants' Total Work Experience

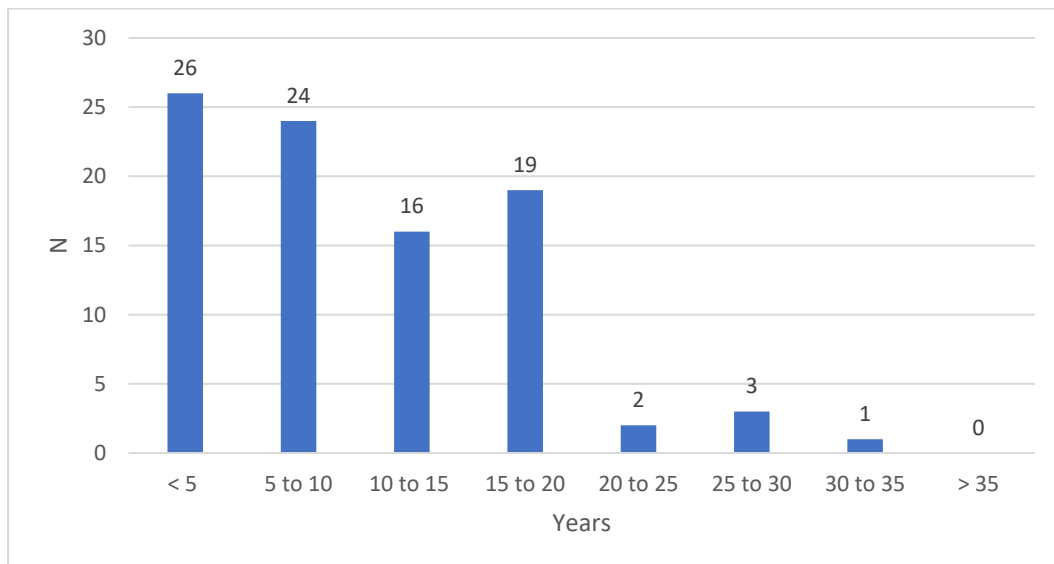


Figure 5 Participants' UAE Work Experience

### Leadership Level

The leadership scale explained in Chapter 3 was used to classify the participants' leadership levels. Responses show that the distribution is somewhat equal between levels 1 through 3; 26%, 33%, and 24%. The slightest portion was level 4 (Executive Managers), forming only (16%) of the participants. Figure 6 below illustrates the number of participants at each leadership level.

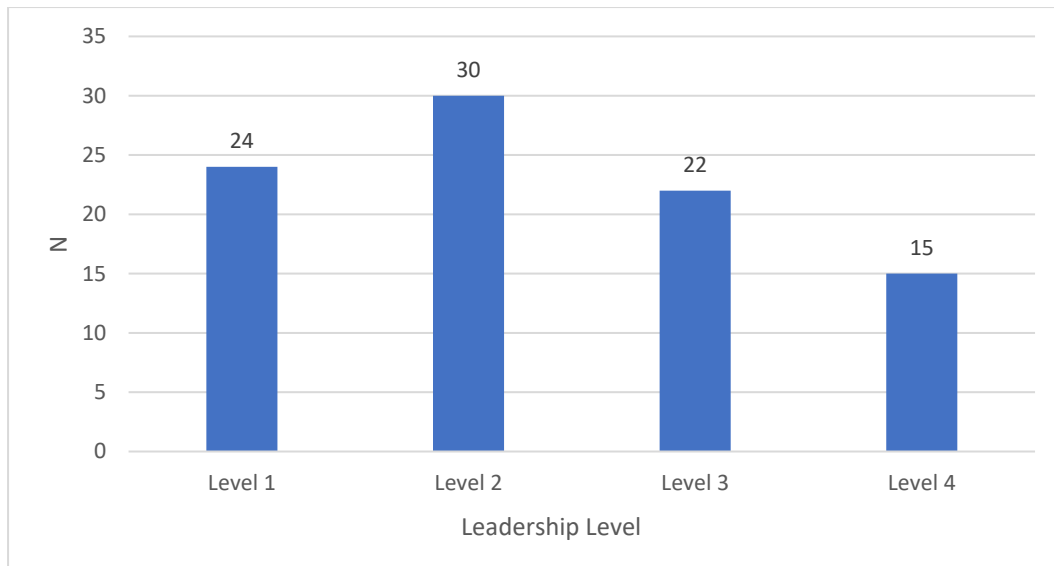


Figure 6 Participants' Leadership Level

### **Cultural Diversity Challenges**

The Likert-type scale explained in Chapter 3 was used to assess how participants assess the challenges of cultural diversity. Figure 7 illustrates the frequency of responses and indication of the percentage which corresponds to each frequency. The majority of the participants responded with sometimes for cultural gaps (52%), language barriers (37%), bias & prejudice (47%), and ethical beliefs (46%). At the same time, a larger portion of the participants responded that they rarely face difficulties in leading their teams due to religion differences (40%) and ethnicity differences (41%). Language barriers were the most challenging aspect of cultural diversity, with (36%) of the participants perceiving them as a challenge more frequently than sometimes.

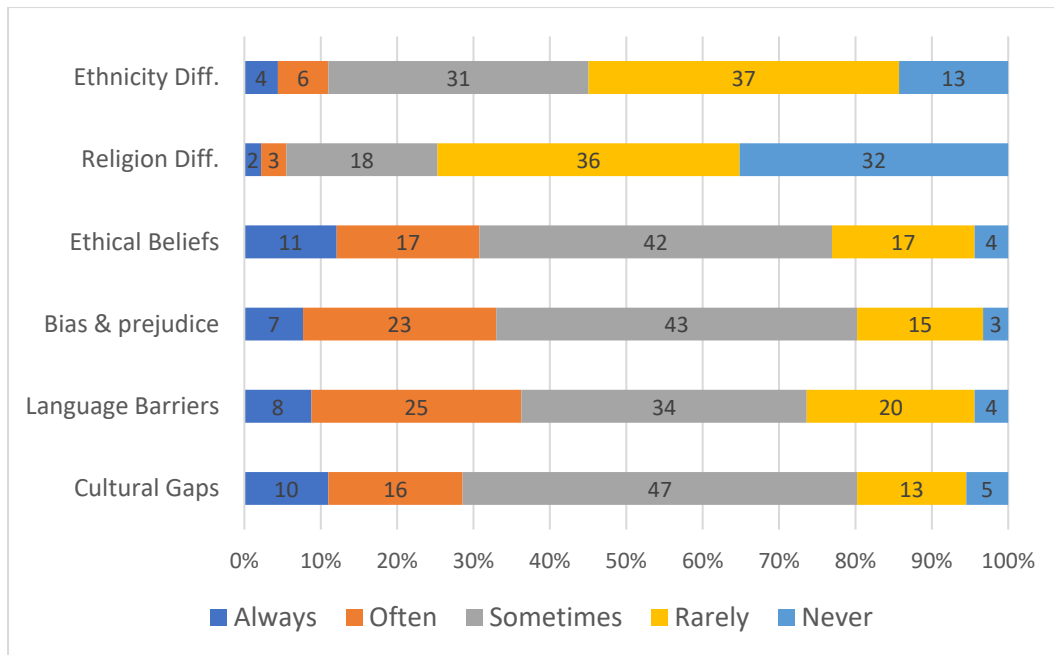


Figure 7 Frequency of the Cultural Diversity Challenges

### Data Analysis

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was adopted to analyze data collected and test if there was any monotonic relationship between the variables. Collected data, which is ordinal, were tested for correlation between leadership levels and each diversity challenge. Performing the Chi-square test required far more data points to ensure a minimum of 5 data points per scale level, and hundreds of responses are required to achieve enough data points for the test. Thus, analysis was limited to Spearman's correlation method.

To analyze the data, Minitab Statistical Software® was chosen for its reliability and simplicity. Analysis results were as follows:

- 1- As expected, Age has a **strong** positive correlation to both total work experience  $r(89) = .81, P=.000$  and UAE work experience  $r(89) = .87, P=.000$ . Moreover, the total work experience itself has a strong positive correlation to UAE experience  $r(89) = .87, P=.000$ , as indicated in Figure 8 below. This is expected as there is a dependency between both variables, and UAE experience forms a part of

total work experience.

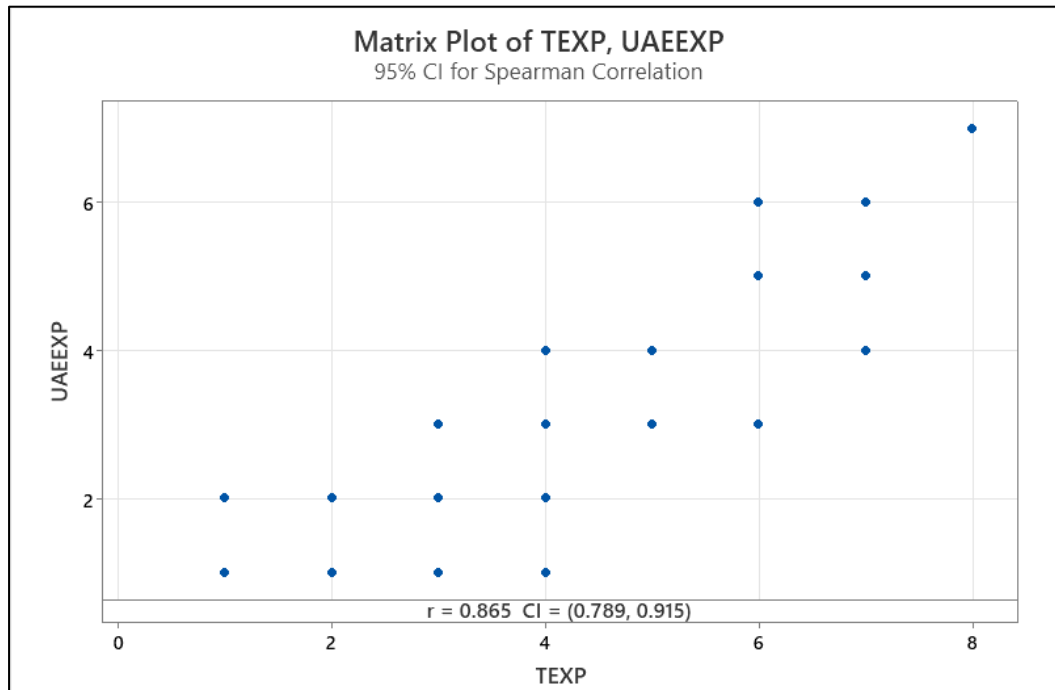


Figure 8 Relationship between Total Experience and UAE experience

- 2- Leadership level has a **moderate** positive correlation with age  $r(89) = .46$ ,  $P=.000$  , total work experience  $r(89) = .56$ ,  $P=.000$ , and UAE work experience  $r(89) = .58$ ,  $P=.000$ . This suggests that as one gets older, it does not necessarily mean that they will gain a higher leadership position and vice versa. This can also be noted by comparing Figure 1 and Figure 6, which show that the majority of the applicants fall under the first two age groups while the leadership distribution is almost, to a certain extent, equal for the four leadership levels. Subsequently, leadership is correlated moderately to age  $r(89) = .46$ ,  $P=.000$ .
- 3- A **weak** correlation was found upon testing the relationship between cultural diversity challenges and leadership level. When  $P\text{-value} < 0.05$ , a negative correlation was found, but it is a weak to very weak correlation. There is no significant evidence to claim a connection between Cultural diversity

challenges and leadership level. Even with a statistical significance, the correlation factor is weak in the case of cultural gaps, and the null hypothesis can not be rejected. Table 1 below lists the correlation between cultural diversity challenges and leadership level.

Table 1 Pairwise Spearman Correlations (Leadership Level Vs. Cultural Diversity Challenges)

| <b>Cultural Diversity Challenge</b> | <b>df</b> | <b>Correlation with Leadership Level</b> | <b>95% CI for <math>\rho</math></b> | <b>P-Value</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Cultural Gaps                       | 89        | -0.246                                   | (-0.432, -0.039)                    | 0.019          |
| Language Barriers                   | 89        | -0.178                                   | (-0.372, 0.030)                     | 0.091          |
| Bias and prejudice                  | 89        | -0.134                                   | (-0.332, 0.075)                     | 0.205          |
| Ethical Beliefs                     | 89        | -0.017                                   | (-0.222, 0.190)                     | 0.873          |
| Religion Diff.                      | 89        | 0.005                                    | (-0.201, 0.211)                     | 0.964          |
| Ethnicity Diff.                     | 89        | -0.141                                   | (-0.338, 0.068)                     | 0.183          |

## Results Discussion

Age strongly correlates to total work experience and UAE work experience.

Whereas a strong correlation was initially expected between work experience, whether in total or within UAE, and leadership level, this was not the case. The reality was that the correlation is instead considered moderate. One reasonable explanation might be that leadership levels follow a hierarchy formation. At the same time, gaining more work experience does not guarantee being promoted to a higher level. In comparison, it is still possible for individuals with less work experience to be promoted to a higher level.



A weak correlation was found between cultural diversity challenges and leadership level. There is no significant evidence to claim a connection between Cultural diversity challenges and leadership level. This generates another question: Do cultural diversity challenges correlate to the UAE's work environment rather than individuals' leadership level? Diversity is not new to the UAE, and UAE's work environment is thus diverse by nature almost since the beginning of market development. Hence, participants' UAE experience was tested for correlation with cultural diversity challenges. However, as Table 2 indicates, there is insufficient evidence to support that UAE's work experience correlates to cultural diversity challenges.

Table 2 Pairwise Spearman Correlations (UAE Work Experience Vs. Cultural Diversity Challenges)

| <b>Cultural Diversity Challenge</b> | <b>df</b> | <b>Correlation with UAE Exper.</b> | <b>95% CI for <math>\rho</math></b> | <b>P-Value</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Cultural Gaps                       | 89        | -0.162                             | (-0.357, 0.047)                     | 0.126          |
| Language Barriers                   | 89        | -0.240                             | (-0.427, -0.033)                    | 0.022          |
| Bias and prejudice                  | 89        | -0.172                             | (-0.367, 0.036)                     | 0.102          |
| Ethical Beliefs                     | 89        | -0.055                             | (-0.258, 0.153)                     | 0.608          |
| Religion Diff.                      | 89        | -0.166                             | (-0.361, 0.042)                     | 0.115          |
| Ethnicity Diff.                     | 89        | -0.167                             | (-0.362, 0.041)                     | 0.113          |

## Chapter 5

### CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

The changes in the world's economy over the past few decades, from localized businesses to an increasingly competitive and globalized world economy, have posed significant challenges to organizations, among which is the need to conduct a business relationship with people who are from a completely different culture (Canen Alberto & Canen, 2004; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2007). Cultural diversity refers to cultural heterogeneity such as differences in race, ethnicity, language, nationality, and religion (Cox & Stacy, 1991; Martin, 2014).

As cultural diversity is a characteristic of the team members, cultural diversity has a central role in determining the way members of a team process information, make decisions, and execute them (Jackson, 1992)

As the core concepts of leadership are dealing, inspiring, and motivating teams, the team member's diversity, in general, directly connects with the leadership concept and the effectiveness of the leader.

Since no previous studies investigated the relationship between leadership and cultural diversity challenges, especially in Dubai, this research aimed to fill the gap by researching the connection between one aspect of leadership, which is leadership level and cultural diversity challenges.

This research utilized a quantitative research approach to collect and analyze the data. Appropriate measurement scales were developed for both leadership level and cultural diversity challenges. Participants who are skilled workers within the construction sector in Dubai were then surveyed. Statistical methods were used to analyze the data collected from the survey.

Age strongly correlates to total work experience and UAE work experience.

Whereas a strong correlation was initially expected between work experience, whether in total or within UAE, and leadership level, this was not the case. The reality was that the correlation is instead considered moderate. One reasonable explanation might be that leadership levels follow a hierarchy formation. At the same time, gaining more work experience does not guarantee being promoted to a higher level. In comparison, it is still possible for individuals with less work experience to be promoted to a higher level.

A weak correlation was found between cultural diversity challenges and leadership level. There is no significant evidence to claim a connection between Cultural diversity challenges and leadership level. There is no significant evidence to claim a connection between Cultural diversity challenges and leadership level. This generates another question: Do cultural diversity challenges correlate to the UAE's work environment rather than individuals' leadership level? Diversity is not new to the UAE, and UAE's work environment is thus diverse by nature almost since the beginning of market development. Hence, participants' UAE experience was tested for correlation with cultural diversity challenges. However, insufficient evidence supports that UAE's work experience is associated with cultural diversity challenges.

The results of the cultural diversity question have shown that language barriers were the most challenging aspects of cultural diversity. Similarly, a study conducted in Minnesota by Bah (2015) on non-profit multi-cultural organizations reported that ten out of ten employees interviewed stated that a challenging situation in a diverse workforce or organization is communication.

Some researchers have made recommendations to overcome cultural diversity challenges. According to the Australian Multicultural Foundation, managing culturally diverse teams can be improved by clarifying the team vision, setting goals that encourage diversity skills, and rewarding teams. According to a study conducted in the health sector by Hunt (2007), poor leadership can lead to poor diversity practices, which can lead to poor diversity in the provision and delivery of patient care. Jenever & Raman (2015) suggest that overcoming cultural diversity challenges and improving cross-cultural competence could be achieved through the following methods: Cross-cultural knowledge training, language training, and enforcement of mutual benefit policy. In the end, no doubt that leaders at all levels are responsible for overcoming the challenges of leading culturally diverse teams.

### **Research Scope and Limitations**

The research scope targeted the construction industry by not targeting a specific construction sector. The study scope also did not analyze the company size. Instead, it focused on the individuals who are part of the construction industry as their accumulated experience and management level were the most critical characteristic.

The assessment of leadership level was done by adopting four different leadership levels with specific definitions of each level which may differ from one study to another. The assessment of cultural diversity challenges was subjective; thus, it is based on participants' feelings and opinions toward how cultural diversity elements frequently challenge them.

Data collection was mainly done by surveying a group of personal connections and distributing the survey through social and professional websites such as LinkedIn and encouraging participants to distribute the survey to their colleagues or other skilled workers they know. Although a great effort was made to eliminate sampling

bias, the data collection is not entirely random, and care shall be taken before generalizing the results to the population.

Analysis methodology depended on a non-parametric statistical method to analyze the connection between leadership levels and cultural diversity challenges. Method choice was mainly due to the majority of data collected being measured on ordinal scales to make it easier for participants to provide their feedback.

Leadership is an extensive material to cover within one study and is therefore governed by many dimensions and related to numerous aspects such as leadership styles, qualities, and other characteristics. Hence, only the leadership level formed part of the scope of this study as a basis on which future studies may extend.

#### **Future Research Recommendations**

Leadership is an extensive material to cover within one study and is therefore governed by many dimensions and related to numerous aspects such as leadership styles, qualities, and other characteristics. Hence, only leadership level was included in the scope of this study. Since no evidence was found to support any relationship between leadership level and cultural diversity challenges, it is recommended for future research to investigate how certain leadership qualities correlate with perceiving and dealing with cultural diversity.

## REFERENCES

- Adler, N. (1991). Communicating across Cultural Barriers. *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior*.
- Al-Jenaibi, B. (2011). The scope and impact of workplace diversity in the United Arab Emirates—An initial study. *Acta Universitatis Danubius. Communicatio*, 5(1).
- Ayoko Oluremi, B., & Härtel Charmine, E. J. (2006). Cultural diversity and leadership: A conceptual model of leader intervention in conflict events in culturally heterogeneous workgroups. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 13(4), 345–360.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/13527600610713431>
- Bah, Abraham Brima. (2015). The Impact of a Diverse Workforce on an Organization: Challenges and Opportunities. Retrieved from Sophia, the St. Catherine University repository website:  
<https://sophia.stkate.edu/maolhonors/18>
- Bantel, K. A., & Jackson, S. E. (1989). Top management and innovations in banking: Does the composition of the top team make a difference? *Strategic Management Journal*, 10(S1), 107–124.
- Billig, M., & Tajfel, H. (1973). Social categorization and similarity in intergroup behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 3(1), 27–52.
- Blake, R. R., & Mouton, J. S. (1982). How to choose a leadership style. *Training & Development Journal*.
- Brehmer, B. (1976). Social judgment theory and the analysis of interpersonal conflict. *Psychological Bulletin*, 83(6), 985.
- Brewer, M. B. (1979). In-group bias in the minimal intergroup situation: A cognitive-motivational analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 86(2), 307.
- Canen Alberto, G., & Canen, A. (2004). Multi-cultural competence and trust: a new road for logistics management? *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 11(3), 38–53. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13527600410797837>
- Chan, A. (2011). The challenges of human resource management. Retrieved February, 23, 2011.
- Chrobot-Mason, D., Ruderman, M., Weber, T., Ohlott, P., & Dalton, M. (2007). Illuminating a cross-cultural leadership challenge: When identity groups collide. *International Journal of Human Resource Management - INT J HUM RESOUR MANAG*, 18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190701639778>

- Cox, T. H., & Stacy, B. (1991). Managing Cultural Diversity: Implications for Organizational Competitiveness. *The Executive*, 5(3), 45–56.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4165021>
- Cross, S. E., & Markus, H. R. (1990). The willful self. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 16(4), 726–742.
- Dreu, C. K. W. de, & Vianen, A. E. M. van. (2001). Managing Relationship Conflict and the Effectiveness of Organizational Teams. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 22(3), 309–328.  
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/3649599>
- Elron, E. (1997). Top management teams within multinational corporations: Effects of cultural heterogeneity. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 8(4), 393–412.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/s1048-9843\(97\)90021-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1048-9843(97)90021-7)
- Faridi, A. S., & El-Sayegh, S. M. (2006). Significant factors causing delay in the UAE construction industry. *Construction Management and Economics*, 24(11), 1167–1176.
- Feely Alan, J., & Harzing, A. (2003). Language management in multinational companies. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 10(2), 37–52. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13527600310797586>
- Fellows, R., & Liu, A. (2006). Culture as a category of risk in construction. The Joint International Conference on Construction Culture, Innovation and Management (CCIM), Sustainable Development through Culture and Innovation, Edited by Dr Mohammed Dulaimi The British University in Dubai, UAE, 16–18.
- Fellows, Richard, Liu, A., & Fong, C. M. (2003). Leadership style and power relations in quantity surveying in Hong Kong. *Construction Management and Economics*, 21(8), 809–818.
- Frey-Ridgway, S. (1997). The cultural dimension of international business. *Collection Building*, 16(1), 12–23. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01604959710156925>
- Gerstner, C. R., & Day, D. v. (1994). Cross-cultural comparison of leadership prototypes. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 5(2), 121–134.
- Glick, W. H., Miller, C. C., & Huber, G. P. (1993). The impact of upper-echelon diversity on organizational performance. *Organizational Change and Redesign: Ideas and Insights for Improving Performance*, 176, 214.
- Hunt, B. (2007). Managing equality and cultural diversity in the health workforce. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 16(12), 2252–2259.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2702.2007.02157.x>

- Hogg, M. A., & Turner, J. C. (1987). Intergroup behaviour, self-stereotyping and the salience of social categories. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 26(4), 325–340.
- J., F. A., Anne-Wil, H., Feely Alan, J., & Harzing, A. (2003). Language management in multinational companies. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 10(2), 37–52. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13527600310797586>
- Jackson, S. E. (1992). Consequences of group composition for the interpersonal dynamics of strategic issue processing. *Advances in Strategic Management*, 8(3), 345–382.
- Jehn, K. A. (1995). A multimethod examination of the benefits and detriments of intragroup conflict. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 256–282.
- Jehn, K. A. (1997). A qualitative analysis of conflict types and dimensions in organizational groups. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 530–557.
- Johnny, K. W. W., & Autumn, H. Q. L. (2014). Construction workplace discrimination : Experiences of ethnic minority operatives in Hong Kong construction sites. *Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management*, 21(4), 403–420. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ECAM-09-2013-0082>
- Johnston, W. B., & Packer, A. E. (1987). *Workforce 2000: Work and workers for the 21st century*. Hudson Institute.
- Jenifer, Delecta & Delecta, G & Jenifer, G & Raman,. (2015). Cross Cultural Communication Barriers in Workplace. 6. 332-335.
- Lauretta McLeod, P., & Lobel, S. A. (1992). The effects of ethnic diversity on idea generation in small groups. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 1992(1), 227–231.
- Ling, F. Y. Y., & Lim, S. S. Y. (2006). Cross-cultural encounters when managing projects in China. *Proceedings of The Joint International Conference on Construction Culture, Innovation and Management (CCIM)*, Pp. 105-106), 26–29.
- London, K., & Chen, J. (2007). Role of cultural capital towards the development of a sustainable business model for design firm internationalisation. *CIB World Building Congress, CIBW96 Architectural Management*, 14–18.
- Loosemore, M., & Lee, P. (2002). Communication problems with ethnic minorities in the construction industry. *International Journal of Project Management*, 20(7), 517–524.
- Managing cultural diversity training program. *Australian Multicultural Foundation*. (2021, May 31). <https://amf.net.au/entry/managing-cultural-diversity-training-program/>



- Makhdoomi, U. (2018). Top Management Commitment and Diversity Challenges in Telecom Sector. 7.
- Mäkilouko, M. (2004). Coping with multi-cultural projects: the leadership styles of Finnish project managers. *International Journal of Project Management*, 22(5), 387–396.
- Martin, G. C. (2014). The effects of cultural diversity in the workplace. *Journal of Diversity Management (JDM)*, 9(2), 89–92.
- Mekonnen, M. (2015). Multicultural Team Management in the Context of a Development Work. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 9, 8.  
<https://doi.org/10.5539/jsd.v9n1p8>
- Norwood, S. R., & Mansfield, N. R. (1999). Joint venture issues concerning European and Asian construction markets of the 1990's. *International Journal of Project Management*, 17(2), 89–93.
- Obaid, A. A. (2009). Multiculturalism in the United Arab Emirates: a case study of multiculturalism in Dubai. University of Aberdeen.
- Ofori, G. (2007). Construction in developing countries. *Construction Management and Economics*, 25(1), 1–6.
- Ofori, G., & Toor, S.-R. (2009). Research on cross-cultural leadership and management in construction: A review and directions for future research. *Construction Management & Economics*, 27, 119–133.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01446190802616937>
- O'Reilly III, C. A., Caldwell, D. F., & Barnett, W. P. (1989). Work group demography, social integration, and turnover. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21–37.
- O'Reilly III, C. A., Williams, K. Y., & Barsade, S. (1998). *Group demography and innovation: Does diversity help?*
- Pant, D. P., Allinson, C. W., & Hayes, J. (1996). Transferring the western model of project organisation to a bureaucratic culture: The case of Nepal. *International Journal of Project Management*, 14(1), 53–57.
- Patrick, H. A., & Kumar, V. R. (2012). Managing Workplace Diversity: Issues and Challenges. *SAGE Open*, 2(2), 2158244012444615.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244012444615>
- Rahim, M. (1985). A Strategy for Managing Conflict in Complex Organizations. *Human Relations - HUM RELAT*, 38, 81–89.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/001872678503800105>

- Ross, M. (1989). Relation of implicit theories to the construction of personal histories. *Psychological Review*, 96(2), 341.
- Rubin, D. K., Powers, M. B., Tulacz, G., Winston, S., & Krizan, W. G. (2002). Leaders come in all shapes and sizes but the great ones focus on people construction demands new skill sets from rising stars. *ENR*, 249(23), 34.
- Sillars, D. N., & Kangari, R. (2004). Predicting organizational success within a project-based joint venture alliance. *Journal of Construction Engineering and Management*, 130(4), 500–508.
- Silva, A. (2016). What is leadership? *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*, 8(1), 1.
- Struyf, S. (2010). Leadership development in the construction engineering industry. The University of Alabama.
- Tajfel, H., Turner, J. C., Austin, W. G., & Worchel, S. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. *Organizational Identity: A Reader*, 56, 65.
- Tjosvold, D. (1991). Rights and Responsibilities of Dissent: Cooperative Conflict. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 4, 13–23.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01390435>
- Toor, S.-R., & Ogunlana, S. O. (2008). Leadership skills and competencies for cross-cultural construction projects. *International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management*, 8(3), 192–215.
- Tsui, A. S., Egan, T. D., & O'Reilly III, C. A. (1992). Being different: Relational demography and organizational attachment. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 549–579.
- Wagner, U., Lampen, L., & Syllwasschy, J. (1986). In-group inferiority, social identity and out-group devaluation in a modified minimal group study. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 25(1), 15–23.
- Watson, W. E., Kumar, K., & Michaelsen, L. K. (1993). Cultural diversity's impact on interaction process and performance: Comparing homogeneous and diverse task groups. *Academy of Management Journal*, 36(3), 590–602.
- Wels, H. (2002). Culture, organization and management in East Asia: Doing business in china. Nova Publishers.
- Winch, G., Millar, C., & Clifton, N. (1997). Culture and Organization: The Case of Transmanche-Link. *British Journal of Management*, 8(3), 237–249.
- Winston, B. E., & Patterson, K. (2006). An integrative definition of leadership. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, 1(2), 6–66.

Zenger, T. R., & Lawrence, B. S. (1989). Organizational demography: The differential effects of age and tenure distributions on technical communication. *Academy of Management Journal*, 32(2), 353–376.

## APPENDIX A

### SURVEY FORM



**“Leadership Challenges in a Culturally Diverse Environment: Case Study of the Construction Industry in Dubai”.**

**1- Please specify your age:**

- 25 to 35
- 35 to 45
- 45 to 55
- 55 to 65
- More than 65

**2- Please specify your highest level of education:**

- **Diploma degree (2 to 3 years study)**
- Bachelor degree (4 to 5 years study)
- Master degree
- Doctoral Degree

**3- Please specify if you have successfully earned a certification in Project Management:**

- Yes
- No

**4- Please specify how many years for professional experience you have in total:**

- Less than 5 years
- Between 5 and 10 years
- Between 10 and 15 years
- Between 15 and 20 years
- Between 20 and 25 years
- Between 25 and 30 years
- Between 30 and 35 years
- More than 35 years.

**5- Please specify how many years for professional experience you have in working in UAE:**

- Less than 5 years
- Between 5 and 10 years
- Between 10 and 15 years
- Between 15 and 20 years



- Between 20 and 25 years
- Between 25 and 30 years
- Between 30 and 35 years
- More than 35 years.

**6- Please specify the leadership ROLE you currently performing, select the level which definition applies the most for you:**

- **Level 1 (directly contributing knowledge worker)**
  - You mainly solving/ dealing with technical problems
  - Outcome of your work is presented in technical documents (rather than policies)
  - You perform technical work related to the discipline.
  - Your work usually tends to be specialized in certain field of work.
  - Performing autonomously at most of the time, but keep reporting his boss about his work.
- **Level 2 (Team Leader)**
  - You make sure that technical problems are answered by the right person
  - Formally recognized (i.e. appointed or elected) as the leader of a team (one or more subordinates)
  - You assign and can delegate work to subordinates
  - Your work is of different nature from subordinates
  - You are responsible for the team work outcome.
- **Level 3 (Mid-level manager)**
  - You are responsible for profit and loss of the unit or division.
  - You possess the ultimate decision in hiring people in your team.
  - You usually don't have to report to level 4 leaders.
  - You have a specific and clear responsibility for the processes in the unit.
  - Sometimes you communicate through hierarchical channels with (Level 2, other Level 3 leaders)
- **Level 4 (Senior Executive)**
  - You make sure the right questions are being asked and answered honestly.
  - You do not report to a higher leader/ Manager/ Boss
  - Your work has more to do with the strategic planning of the company/ firm.



- You create or identify and follows up with new opportunities (new domains, new regions)
- You delegates hiring (i.e. most of the hiring is done by somebody at level 3)

7- As a leader, how often you feel that the following represent a **CHALLENGE** in leading others at your work?

- **Cultural gaps** (*Cultural gaps: differences in values, behavior, or customs between the team members, especially as a hindrance to mutual understanding and communication*)

|                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Always                   | Often                    | Sometimes                | Rarely                   | Never                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- **Language barriers** (*Language barriers: difficulties in communication experienced by people or groups originally speaking different languages*)

|                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Always                   | Often                    | Sometimes                | Rarely                   | Never                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- **Bias and prejudice** (*Prejudice – an opinion against a group or an individual based on insufficient facts and usually unfavorable and/or intolerant. Bias – very similar to but not as extreme as prejudice. Someone who is biased usually refuses to accept that there are other views than their own.*)

|                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Always                   | Often                    | Sometimes                | Rarely                   | Never                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- **Ethical beliefs** (*Ethics reflect beliefs about what is right, what is wrong, what is just, what is unjust, what is good, and what is bad in terms of human behavior.*)

|                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Always                   | Often                    | Sometimes                | Rarely                   | Never                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- **Religion Differences** (*Religion is defined as the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods.*)



|                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Always                   | Often                    | Sometimes                | Rarely                   | Never                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- **Ethnicity Differences** (*Ethnicity is: the fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition*)

|                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Always                   | Often                    | Sometimes                | Rarely                   | Never                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**8- Please specify your ethnic background (Originally you are from):**

- North America
- South America
- Europe
- Middle East or North Africa
- Africa
- Asia
- Australia

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the survey, in case you would like to receive a copy of survey results/ conclusion, please insert below your email ID (Your email ID will be used only to share the survey results/ conclusion as per your request:

Optional Field: ..... (Participant email ID)

APPENDIX B

ASU'S INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) EXEMPTION





EXEMPTION GRANTED

[Samuel Ariaratnam](#)  
[SEBE: Sustainable Engineering and the Built Environment, School of](#)  
480/965-7399  
Samuel.Ariaratnam@asu.edu

Dear [Samuel Ariaratnam](#):

On 9/22/2021 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of Review:     | Initial Study                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Title:              | Leadership Challenges in a Culturally Diverse Environment: Case Study of the Construction Industry in Dubai                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Investigator:       | <a href="#">Samuel Ariaratnam</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| IRB ID:             | STUDY00014464                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Funding:            | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Grant Title:        | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Grant ID:           | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Documents Reviewed: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cover-letter05-09-2021.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li><li>• IRB Social Behavioral 2019_final 03262020_updated 04072020 REV.3.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;</li><li>• Research Survey 12-09-2021.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li><li>• Response to Clarification Requested by Metosky, Susan Beth.pdf, Category: Other;</li><li>• Template-short-consent-12-09-2021.pdf, Category: Consent Form;</li></ul> |

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 9/22/2021.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at [research.integrity@asu.edu](mailto:research.integrity@asu.edu) to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

REMINDER - All in-person interactions with human subjects require the completion of the ASU Daily Health Check by the ASU members prior to the interaction and the use of face coverings by researchers, research teams and research participants during the interaction. These requirements will minimize risk, protect health and support a safe research environment. These requirements apply both on- and off-campus.

The above change is effective as of July 29<sup>th</sup> 2021 until further notice and replaces all previously published guidance. Thank you for your continued commitment to ensuring a healthy and productive ASU community.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Anas Salama