

# The Relationship Between Leadership, Educational Level And Emotional Intelligence : A Case Study In Bahrain

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## ABSTRACT

The concepts of Leadership and Emotional Intelligence (EI) are recognized to be important elements in organizations today. These concepts include vision creation, goal accomplishments, ambition, self-awareness, character and skills in tuning into others' emotions through the ability to establish relationships and bonds. Little material is available on EI and leadership in the Gulf area. This paper examines the relationship between these two concepts within the context of the national and organizational culture in Bahrain. The research examines the relationship between leadership styles and the components of emotional intelligence (Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness and Social skills) as identified by Goleman (2000), in five major organizations in Bahrain. The research adopted a deductive approach using mixed methods of questionnaires (Emotional Competency Inventory and Managerial Style Inventory) and interviewed 103 executives and managers. The research findings established that : a) There is a relationship between the six leadership styles and emotional intelligence; b) Six leadership styles are used and applied; and the executives showed moderate levels of emotional intelligence; c) National and corporate culture influenced the relationship between leadership styles and emotional intelligence; d) The standardized tests used should be adjusted to suit the culture of Bahrain.

**Keywords :** Culture, Cultural Differences, Emotions, Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, Leadership styles.

**JEL Classification :** L2

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## INTRODUCTION

The concepts of leadership and emotional intelligence have been debated among many scholars and practitioners (such as Goleman, 2004; Fineman, 2003; Caruso, Mayer & Salovey, 2001; George, 2000). Leaders are required to clarify their values, develop new strategies, learn new ways of operating businesses, focus on corporate social responsibility, manage people and at the same time, be emotionally intelligent (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2001). Different authors define leadership in different ways, but they appear to share common ideas or keywords like: creating a vision, accomplishing goals, taking charge, developing others and having character (Pagonis, 2000; Bennis, 1999; Goleman, 1998; Kotter, Cummings & Worley, 1993). Smith (1996) viewed leadership as 'the following part of a leader'; entailing leaders to learn how to follow their vision, and to encourage people to fulfil the organisation's vision. Research goes further by pointing out that effective leaders do not rely on one leadership style, but a combination depending on the situation (Goleman, 2000). Other writers emphasize emotional intelligence along with leadership as key elements in organizational success (Merlevede, Bridoux & Vandamme, 2001; Orme, 2001; Goleman et al., 2001; Orme & Cannon, 2000; Goleman, 1998).

It is important to clarify what exactly is meant by emotional intelligence. Orme (2000, p.7) referred to it as an "advanced common sense"; some people have a great deal of common sense without realizing that it is emotional intelligence, they just seem to know what to do at the right moment and at the right situation. It has been stated by many authors that emotional intelligence is about tuning into our emotions, understanding them and being aware of our emotions, managing them or taking appropriate action (Orme, 2001; Mayer & Salovey, 1999; Higgs & Dulewicz, 1999; Goleman, 1998; Goleman, 1996). Having knowledge of emotional intelligence can help make people realize how to establish strong relationships and bonds, increase self-awareness, improve social skills, and simply be happy (Hein, 1996). Considerable literature on the concept of leadership and emotional intelligence has originated from the West based on research carried out in the context of advanced industrial economies. Limited research has been conducted in the field in the Arabian Gulf countries and consequently, there is a dearth of research on the subject of

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leadership and emotional intelligence. The present study is an attempt to extend the knowledge base and to explore the concepts of leadership and emotional intelligence. It is expected that the findings can also provide a foundation for further research in the Gulf area in the field of leadership, which is important to any organization's performance and its relationship to emotional intelligence.

## **THE BAHRAIN CONTEXT**

It is assumed that Bahraini executives or managers live and work in a society whose social structure, with all its diversity, has some distinctive features that have a considerable impact on them (Alhashemi, 1987). Hofstede (1991) described a national culture as a reflection of the overall general culture; a mere extension of the general culture with no visible tension between the two. Bahrain's culture is characterized by Islamic beliefs, traditions, and norms of behaviour. It is a culture in which traditions and the extended family are powerful enough to reflect themselves both in its institutions and the interpersonal relationships of its members. The influence of both the nuclear and extended family is based on a strong patriarchal system, ensuring that the father is always a towering figure (as explained by the Follow-up Bureau for GCC Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs Council, 1994). This implies that a manager relies heavily on personalized and informal methods and styles in the management of his organization. It can be argued that an executive or a manager in the Gulf area is viewed as a person who is at the helm of his organization, which is perceived as an open social system embedded in the larger system of community and society (Muna, 2003). Viewed from this perspective, one may regard the manager as being both a target and an agent of social influence and change (Muna, 2003). According to AlHashemi (1987), social pressures as well as business pressures impinge on the attitudes and behaviour of a typical manager. The term social pressure refers here to the expectations, constraints or demands which society places on individuals. These pressures originate from, and are shaped by socio-cultural values, norms and mores that seem to have their roots in a long history of tradition, religion, and popular belief systems.

The social cohesion in the Gulf area has proven its resilience over time, but it is coming increasingly under pressure and is faced with a lot of challenges. These range from the pressures of modern living having its toll on family ties, to materialistic and individualistic values propagated through the following : consumerism; exposure to international media; widening the gap between old and young; the increasingly demographic imbalance created mainly by having about two thirds of the population below the age of thirty years, not to mention the demographic strains created by having to host sizeable expatriate contingents (AlHashemi, 1996). Therefore, this context provided an interesting arena to explore the Western concepts of leadership and emotional intelligence. This study aimed to explore these concepts using Goleman's leadership styles and emotional intelligence in Bahrain, bringing out both national and corporate issues.

## **AIM OF THE STUDY**

The main aim of this study is to examine the relationship between six leadership styles (Coercive, Authoritative, Affiliation, Democratic, Pacesetter and Coaching), and the different components of emotional intelligence (Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness and Social skills) identified by Goleman (2000).

In addition, this paper examines the relationship between leadership styles used by Bahraini managers, their level of emotional intelligence and their educational level.

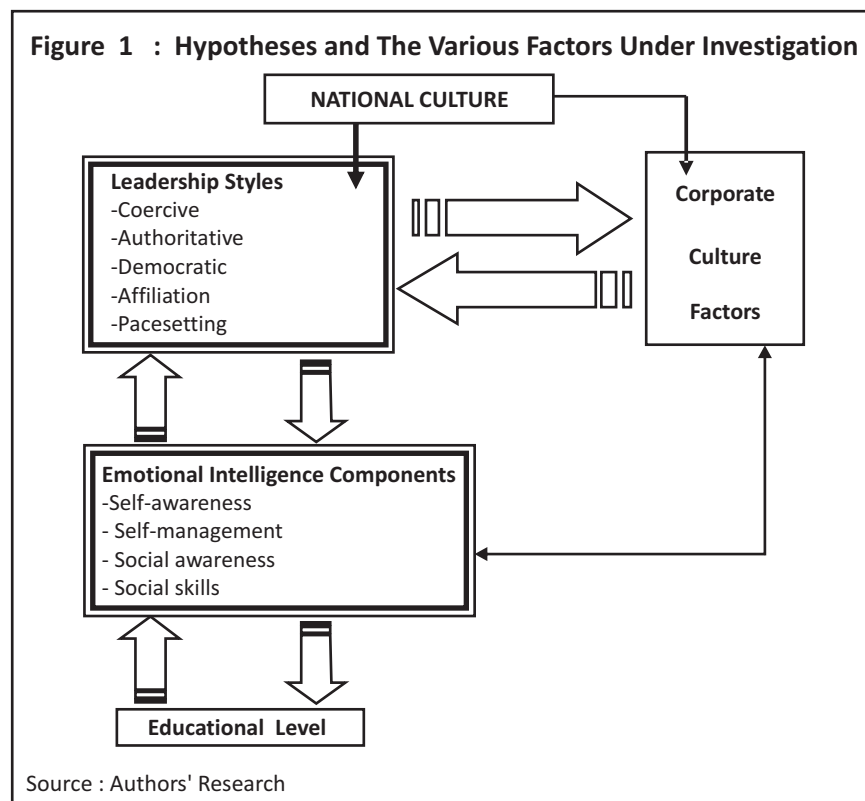
## **METHODOLOGY**

The study used multi-case research design with five major organizations in Bahrain covering the following sectors: Manufacturing, Telecommunications, Banking, Ship repair and Petrochemicals, were selected for the study due to their reputation and success stories. The research approach followed a deductive approach using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Since the topic touches on aspects of emotions and because the researchers were wishing to gain participants' views on the appropriateness of the questionnaires and leadership styles, so qualitative methods were used to gain an insight into their feelings and experiences. Using mixed methodologies allowed the researchers to explain causal relationships and at the same time, gain more insight into the feelings as well as the opinions of the respondents. The data collection started with the quantitative method, as it was crucial to look for relationships between the variables in testing the hypotheses - but later, these were presented as

questions. The research took place between 2005 and 2007, as there were interviews involved and surveys in five major organizations. The questionnaires adopted included: Managerial Style Inventory (MSI) and Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI). These instruments are considered to be popular standardized tests which are valid and reliable (Anderson & Zhu, 2002). Such tests are used for evaluation purposes by many organizations in different parts of the world, particularly in the United States ([www.eiconsortium.com](http://www.eiconsortium.com); [www.ei.haygroup.com](http://www.ei.haygroup.com) accessed in June 2007). The strength of using standardized tests is based on their reliability and comparability, despite being administered in different settings and at different times. Therefore, these tests were considered relatively suitable for the national and corporate culture in Bahrain, as well as served the purpose of this study. Although these tests are considered to be standardized tests designed and applied in a Western culture, its applicability to Bahrain and the Gulf Region gave insight into other factors not taken into consideration in the original questionnaires, such as: organizational politics, corporate culture, and work attitudes (Al Ismaily, 2006).

The results were analyzed using SPSS statistical tools, so that causality may be explained, and accurate prediction becomes possible (Morse & Field, 2002). The qualitative method utilized for this study was in the form of interviews, followed by data analysis and data interpretation. This enabled the researchers to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participants' feelings and emotions, getting a clearer picture of the interpretation of analysis, allowing room for a descriptive presentation of the data. The approach also enabled a better understanding of what is applicable and useful in the organizations under study, and what needs to be modified with respect to leadership and emotional intelligence issues. Furthermore, for this study, qualitative analysis was important because it provided a clearer picture of the experience of managers (whether Bahrainis or non-Bahrainis), and their point of view on the various issues raised on emotional intelligence and leadership styles. These instruments were administered to the general managers, executives, CEOs, supervisors and section heads of the five organizations under study. This was accompanied by follow-up interviews in order to get feedback, comments and queries from respondents regarding the instruments. The research attempted to address three specific questions, which are as follows:

- 1) Is there a relationship between leadership styles and emotional intelligence?
- 2) Is there a relationship between leadership styles and educational level?



3) Is there a relationship between emotional intelligence and educational level?

The above questions led to the following hypotheses :

**(1) H1 : There is a relationship between the six leadership styles (identified by Goleman, 2000) and emotional intelligence in organizations in Bahrain, within the Islamic cultural setting.**

**(2) H2 :There is a relationship between the six leadership styles, emotional intelligence and educational levels in organizations in Bahrain.** (Refer to Figure 1 for an outline of the hypotheses and the purpose of the research.)

As indicated above, two instruments were utilized in this study, the ECI and MSI to measure the relationship between the emotional intelligence competencies with the six leadership styles.

❖ **Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI) :** The ECI comprises of 110 items measured on a 6-point scale and 30 separate work related emotional competencies, covering both personal and social competencies. It is not just a self-report test, but relies on feedback from other respondents. It looks into four aspects of emotional intelligence: *Self-awareness*, includes measures of Emotional self-awareness, Accurate self-assessment and Self-confidence. *Self-management* measures Self-control, Trustworthiness, Conscientiousness, Adaptability, Achievement orientation, and Initiative. Social awareness, consists of Empathy, Organizational awareness and Service orientation. *Social skills* looks at Developing others, Leadership, Influence, Communication, Change catalyst, Conflict management, Building bonds, Teamwork and Collaboration.

❖ **Managerial Style Inventory (MSI) :** Richard Mansfield designed the MSI at McBer & Company in 1986, based on an earlier instrument that was used in the 1970s (Anderson & Zhu, 2002; Kelner, Rivers & O'Connell, 1994). The instrument is based on Litwin and Stringer's 1968 research on motivation and organizational climate (Anderson & Zhu, 2002). Managerial style describes a person's characteristic or typical way of acting in various managerial situations. It is used to evaluate how a manager performs the classic functions of management: planning, organizing, motivating, controlling and coordinating in terms of key management behaviours. The instrument has six dimensions (Coercive, Authoritative, Affiliative, Democratic, Pacesetter, and Coaching), which are based on theoretical conceptions derived from use of the earlier instrument, clinical knowledge and factor analysis. It consists of 68 items, providing participants with a profile of their perceived managerial styles, with two versions: a self-rating version for the managers to evaluate their style, and a version for the employees (or direct report) to rate their managers. All of the six styles are more or less effective depending on the characteristics of the situation: employee experience, task complexity, the risk associated with the task, resources available, and so forth. The items are not repeated and are independent of each other as far as rating is concerned. The MSI was validated for construct validity, content validity and criterion validity, as stated by Anderson & Zhu (2002).

This research covered five major organizations in Bahrain namely: Gulf Petrochemicals (GPIC), Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO), Bahrain Telecommunication Company (BATELCO), Arab Ship Repair Yard (ASRY), and Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait (BBK). Probability sampling was chosen due to the nature of the research and the need to make inferences from the sample about a population (Mann, 1998).

Within probability sampling, stratified sampling techniques were applied. The respondents in this research were divided into three significant strata (sharing managerial positions): Top management (CEOs, general managers, executives and managers) ; Middle management and supervisors (section heads, superintendents) ; and Subordinates or assistants. The target population consisted of: 250 full-time executives and managers. The number of respondents who participated in the research questionnaire was 103 (including the managers and their subordinates), occupying the top, middle and supervisory management positions. From the sample size (n=103), interviews were conducted with 33 managers and supervisors (out of which 16 were senior executives in the five organizations mentioned earlier). The participants occupied the following managerial ranks: 31% were managers, 16% - Superintendents, 12% - Specialists, 10% - Senior Managers, 6% - Supervisors, 5% - Auditors, 5% - Administrators, 2% - Assistant General Managers, 2% - Engineers, 2% were Trainers, and 6% did not report their position. It is important to note here that the questionnaire was not translated into Arabic, hence retaining its originality and avoiding misinterpretation.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

According to Goleman (2000), emotional intelligence has an impact on leadership styles supporting the first hypothesis :

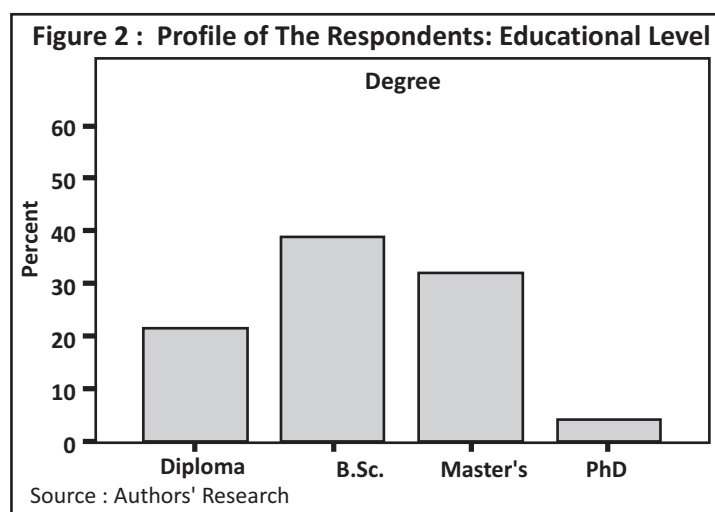
❖ **H1 : There is a relationship between the six leadership styles (identified by Goleman, 2000) and emotional intelligence in organizations in Bahrain, within the Islamic cultural setting.**

To test the hypothesis and to answer the above research question, correlations were used to determine the degree of relationship between the Managerial Styles (MSI) and the Emotional Intelligence Competencies (ECI). The findings revealed a relationship between the six styles of leadership and emotional competencies. The correlations ranged from weak, to a fair degree of relationship according to the conservative rule of thumb identified by Fink (1995). The Table 1 provides the detail of these correlations.

Table 1 : Size of The Correlation	
0 to + (-) 0.25	Little or no relationship
+ or (-) 0.26 to + or (-) 0.50	Fair degree of relationship
+ or (-) 0.51 to + or (-) 0.75	Moderate to good relationship
Over + or (-) 0.75	Very good to excellent relationship
Source: Fink, 1995 p.36	

The relationship between leadership styles and emotional intelligence competencies is shown in the Table 2. Weak correlations were identified for the following styles: Coercive (.007), Pacesetter (.037) and Affiliative (.198). A fair degree of relationship was found with the Authoritative (.451), and Democratic (.314) styles.

Table 2 : Correlations Between Managerial Styles and the Four Clusters of Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI)						
Clusters	Coercive	Authoritative	Affiliative	Democratic	Pacesetter	Coaching
Self-Awareness	.011	.382(**)	.265(**)	-.218(*)	-.039	-.271(**)
Self-Management	.036	.382(**)	.126	-.291(**)	-.006	-.304(**)
Social Awareness	-.025	.374(**)	.087	-.260(**)	-.026	-.182
Social Skills	.005	.456(**)	.190	-.358(**)	-.058	-.351(**)
Emotional Competency Inventory	.007	.451(**)	.193	-.317(**)	-.037	-.314(**)
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Source : Authors' Research						



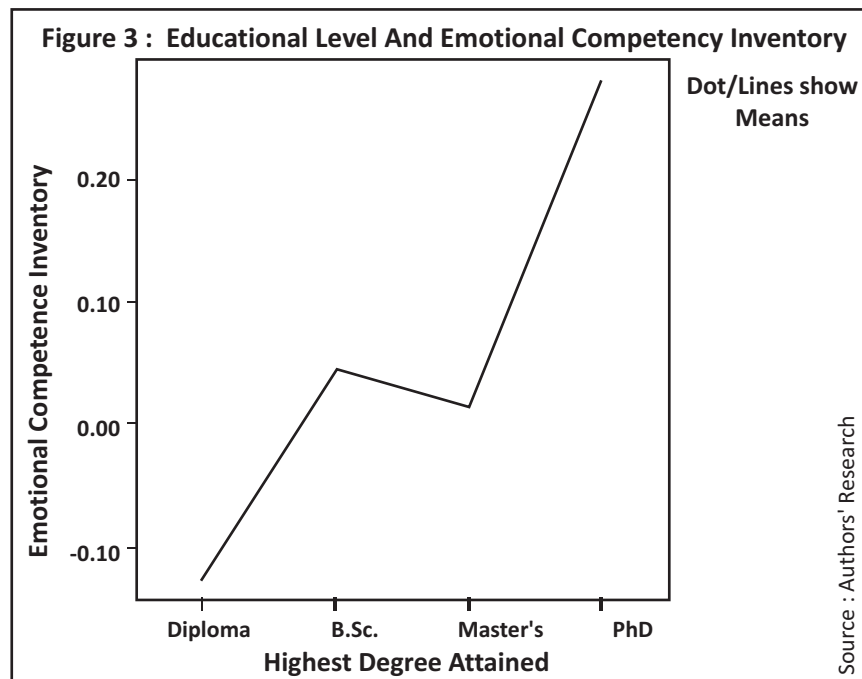


❖ **H2 : There is a relationship between the six leadership styles, emotional intelligence and education in organizations in Bahrain.**

To test this hypothesis and to answer the research questions, the following were used : mean, standard deviation and correlations. A majority of the respondents were B.Sc. holders (37%) and the minority were PhDs (2%). Master's degree holders consisted of 32% of the sample and 19% were Diploma holders. This sample appeared to be well educated, with all the managers possessing a high, post-school qualification.

<b>Table 3 : Mean and Standard Deviation of Educational Level</b>				
<b>Leadership Style</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Coercive	Diploma	20	3.4375	.70068
	B.Sc.	38	3.6380	.69996
	Master's	33	3.7614	.53707
	PhD	2	4.3125	.44194
	<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>3.6532</b>	<b>.65172</b>
Authoritative	Diploma	20	3.9111	.54146
	B.Sc.	38	3.7304	.51684
	Master's	33	3.6595	.52192
	PhD	2	3.7222	.07857
	<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>3.7439</b>	<b>.52107</b>
Affiliative	Diploma	20	3.2208	.55559
	B.Sc.	38	3.4898	.49119
	Master's	33	3.3387	.36568
	PhD	2	3.5625	.26517
	<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>3.3799</b>	<b>.46892</b>
Democratic	Diploma	20	2.9443	.74144
	B.Sc.	38	3.2271	.64568
	Master's	33	3.0996	.64631
	PhD	2	4.1429	.40406
	<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>3.1407</b>	<b>.67983</b>
Pacesetting	Diploma	20	3.4893	.61019
	B.Sc.	38	3.3528	.55841
	Master's	33	3.4076	.49882
	PhD	2	3.6429	.10102
	<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>3.4078</b>	<b>.54116</b>
Coaching	Diploma	20	3.1750	.76563
	B.Sc.	38	3.2149	.68872
	Master's	33	3.1899	.67523
	PhD	2	3.9167	.82496
	<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>3.2125</b>	<b>.69934</b>
Source : Authors' Research				

In terms of educational level and its relationship with the six styles of leadership, no significant finding was found to link them strongly together (Table 3). Overall, the most preferred styles were the Authoritative and Coercive styles, with the Democratic style being the least used regardless of the education level. Starting with the Diploma respondents, they had a higher mean for Authoritative style when compared with other respondents of higher educational level. Respondents with a Bachelor's degree seemed to prefer the Authoritative style among other styles



of leadership. Master's degree holders, on the other hand, seemed to have a preference for the Coercive style as they had a higher mean (3.8). When comparing the educational level for each style, PhD holders yielded a higher mean for the Affiliative, Democratic, Pacesetting and Coaching styles. Therefore, one can draw a conclusion here that the people with the highest degree used more styles of leadership. Hence, one can conclude that the Coercive style seemed to be the predominant style of PhD and Master's degree holders. The Authoritative style seemed to be favoured by the Diploma holders and Bachelor's degree holders ; whereas, the Affiliative style was being adopted more by the PhDs and the BSc degree holders. As for the Democratic style, it had a wide range of means, but the highest mean was scored by the PhDs and the lowest mean was scored by the Diploma holders. The Pacesetting style yielded similar means for all the educational levels, but PhDs had a slightly higher mean than the rest. Finally, the Coaching style was being adopted by the respondents with the highest educational level.

To illustrate the relationship between the emotional intelligence competencies and education, the Figure 3 shows PhD holders having the highest emotional competencies when compared with other educational levels. On the other hand, Master's degree holders had lower competencies than the PhDs and BSc degree holders. The lowest levels of competencies were those of the Diploma holders.

## DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The results of this research proves the hypothesis that there is a moderate relationship between the six leadership styles identified by Goleman (2000) and the various components of emotional intelligence and educational level. Managers possessed moderate to high levels of emotional intelligence, but it was not directly linked to educational level. The analysis showed that corporate culture (which is part of and is influenced by national culture) plays a role and can influence some of the leadership styles and components of emotional intelligence. The results also suggest that national culture is an important element to be taken into consideration when designing and applying standardized measurements or tests. The study revealed the six leadership styles that were being used and applied by managers in Bahrain depending on the situation at hand, the nature of managerial activity, and the tasks to be accomplished. The Coaching and the Democratic Styles were the least used and the least preferred styles out of the six, and they had negative correlations. This is justified by the influence of national culture, where democracy has recently been introduced and is gradually taking shape. As pointed out by the 16 executives, the corporate culture in Bahrain was changing towards a more democratic and open approach. The managers interviewed agreed that employees nowadays are given the opportunity to express their opinions freely, participate in the decision-making process and

planning. Furthermore, they also said that the managers are becoming more transparent in dealing with changes and leadership styles. Nevertheless, there still remain some difficulties such as confronting employees or leaving matters being 'swept under the carpet'. They indicated that this shift is gradually taking place, and that it would take some time when more democracy is practiced at various levels in all organizations in Bahrain. The managers also expressed their concern towards the minority of people who had negative attitudes towards democracy and change, which may be linked to their educational level, and which may hinder progress. They stated that they strove to make the workplace appealing for employees, through activities that help bring employees together, especially after working hours. Another unexpected result came from the positive correlations of the Coercive leadership style that is normally associated with negative correlations. The Affiliative style yielded low correlations, but was expected to have a stronger relationship with the emotional intelligence competencies due to the nature of the style. In terms of the emotional competencies, the managers showed high levels of competencies such as empathy, developing others, inspirational leader, and influence. Various issues and concerns were raised by the 33 managers (in an interview) with regards to components of the questions in the questionnaire, the challenges that were faced by the managers in Bahrain, the style of leadership followed in their organization and in other organizations in Bahrain. The challenges that were faced by the managers in Bahrain (as pointed out by the managers) included : coping with the speed of change, creating a healthy working environment, globalization, competition, training and human resources, leadership styles used, diversity, political environment, lack of natural resources, increase in population, economic constraints, and labour unions. A majority of the managers emphasized the internal challenges occurring in the country such as changes in the laws and shifts in people's needs. The questionnaires and interviews indicated clearly that managerial behaviour in the Gulf region is heavily influenced by the social structure, and by values, norms and expectations of the people. What is sometimes overlooked is that deep-rooted values and norms are slow to change, particularly when managers find themselves in an uneasy situation when introducing change in leadership styles or are required to be up-to-date with scientific methods in their organizations. It can be assumed that managers in the Gulf region have been conditioned or socialized by common managerial practices and problems, and that they are aware of and are influenced by a commercial tradition that dates back to many centuries (Badawy, 1980). The use of personal ties and connections is evident in a wide range of activities (Al Ismaily, 2006). This has become an important and necessary means of doing business. However, managers share with each other exposure to modern business conditions through formal education and/or interaction with other Arabic and Western businessmen. The analysis also revealed that the majority of the executives were gradually changing with the change in the new political environment, as one executive said, "so such managers will have to try to adapt to this change, or they will find it very difficult to survive. Such managers must realize that in this new setting, they will have to learn to be perhaps more approachable and be more open, setting an example for others to follow."

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