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Lucky to reach the top? Gendered perspectives on leadership acquisition across Qatar and Denmark

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Abstract

Purpose: As organizations aim to become increasingly diverse, it is important to understand how perspectives of potential future leaders vary across culture and gender. This study aims to advance our understanding of the persistent gender-gap in management.

Methodology: Samples from the gender-segregated Qatar and the co-ed Denmark present a unique opportunity to investigate the potential effects of gender. Here, 115 Middle Easterners and 121 Scandinavians rated perceived importance of job-related skills, networking upward and serendipity in leadership acquisition.

Findings: Effects of gender showed that compared to men, women across cultures expected that serendipity has less to do with leadership acquisition. Middle Eastern women also showed low expectations regarding networking with people in powerful positions. Nevertheless, both genders showed conviction of meritocracy by rating job-related skills as the most important factor in leadership acquisition. Cross-culturally, Scandinavians presumed job-related skills to be more important than Middle Easterners.

Implications: Despite meritocracy beliefs, it appears that gender differences in perceived possibility of leadership acquisition contributes to the gender-gap in management. Scandinavian women relied more on networking than Middle Eastern women, but still lacked faith in serendipitous opportunities compared to male peers. Perceived luck enhances achievement motivation. If men rely more on luck than women, they are more confident in succeeding and more ambitious about pursuit of leadership. Women's lack of faith in serendipity might affect their career ambitions negatively even in societies emphasising equality.

Originality: This is the first study that directly focuses on gender differences in perception of opportunities for leadership acquisition through serendipity.

Keywords: leadership, serendipity, luck, networking, meritocracy, control, gender, culture

Introduction

When leaders are appointed, there is something appealing about the idea of *meritocracy*: a social system in which merit or talent is the basis for sorting people into positions and distributing rewards (Scully, 1997, p. 413). However, as shown in a recent study of recruitment by Nielsen (2015), the principal of meritocracy is often at odds with how selection actually works. Numerous factors, other than job-related skills, are involved in leadership acquisition and some of them are affected by gender norms. Indeed, a metanalysis by Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell and Ristikari (2011) showed that masculinity is still perceived as a dominate feature of a leader across cultures. In accordance, numerous studies show gender bias in recruitment, with male applicants being evaluated more positively than female applicants despite similar degrees and seniority (Castilla & Benard, 2010; Isaac, Lee & Carnes, 2009; Ottsen, 2018; Steinpreis, Anders & Ritzke, 1999). Furthermore, several studies show that, women are paid less and advance at a slower pace compared to their male peers despite identical qualifications (Dobele, Rundle-Thiele & Kopanidis, 2014; Metz, 2009; Vinkenbureg, van Engen, Eagly, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011). This suggests, that women's underrepresentation in leadership positions cannot be explained by meritocracy alone. Perception of factors less controlled by the candidates needs to be explored too.

Networking opportunities is one of these factors. Indeed, studies have shown a gender bias favoring male junior employees' informal access to powerful business connections, which partially accounts for men's fast track to leadership (Ibarra, Carter & Silva, 2010; O'Brian, Biga, Kessler & Allen, 2010). If networking facilitates leadership acquisition, then being in the right place at the right time constitutes an informal pathway to power. This creates the impression that luck plays a role in leadership acquisition, so in addition to job-related skills and networking upwards a simple belief in serendipity (i.e. luck, chance, fortunate surprise) might encourage some people more than others to pursue a goal of leadership.

Pursuit of career goals are affected by cultural norms (Ajzen, 1991). The influence of culture is characterized by a conflict between pursuit of personal goals versus goals controlled by societal norms. According to Heine (2010) this conflict is a key difference between individualistic and

collectivistic societies. In a recent study Ottsen, Koppel, Johannessen and Berntsen (2016) found that goals are differently affected by norms for gender across these cultures. Compared to Scandinavians, Middle Easterners showed greater gender difference in perceived control from societal norms. Thus, perspectives on the importance of externally controlled factors in leadership acquisition across these cultures can advance our understanding of the gender-gap in management.

The current study presents cross-cultural data from a new generation of potential leaders. A sample from collectivistic societies in the Middle East (predominantly Qataris) is compared to a sample from more individualistic societies in Scandinavia (predominately Danes). The differing external control beliefs across gender in these cultures present a unique opportunity to explore interactions between culture and gender (Ottsen et al., 2016). The specific purpose of this study is to investigate how male and female university students in these two cultures perceive the controlling impact of i) job-related skills, ii) networking upward and iii) serendipity in achieving a leadership position. By taking this perspective, the study represents a novel approach explaining the lack of gender diversity in management.

Leadership Acquisition

Job-related skills, networking upward and serendipity are all factors that can influence leadership acquisition. According to Levenson (1981), the opportunity to network upward towards powerful business connections, as well as random chance (framed positively as serendipity) both represent *external* factors, in that these factors are unpredictable or controlled by others. Conversely, job-related skills represent an *internal* factor because it is perceived within the control of an individual to enhance abilities and talent through hard work and long hours. This variable is associated with meritocracy by reflecting a justice belief that status differences in a society is merited through skills and personal achievements (McCoy, Wellman, Cosley, Saslow and Epel, 2013). In the following, I briefly review these three factors.

Job-related skills: The meritocratic belief that everyone has an equal chance to advance based on their skills and efforts, regardless of their gender, race, class, or other non-merit factors is

dominant in modern societies (McNamee and Miller, 2004). A recent study by Kim and Choi (2017) showed that, despite increasing focus on non-meritocratic elements in access to opportunities, meritocracy is still an evolving system across both Western and Eastern societies. Principles of meritocracy is especially recognized as positive in Western cultures and they have become a symbol of the “American Dream”. A meritocratic system is intuitively attractive for high-status group members, but often it also appeals to low-status group members because it allows them to dream about improving their social status, by supporting the belief that everyone has an equal chance of succeeding if they put in effort and acquire the relevant skills (McCoy et al., 2013). Therefore, the meritocratic belief in leadership acquisition through job-related skills persist in organizations, despite studies showing that merit-based programs do not hinder workplace inequality among equally performing employees (Castilla & Benard, 2010).

Networking upward: Personal connections are often undervalued as a pathway to leadership and studies show that the mentees of powerful sponsors often advance more quickly from a first-level managerial position (Ibarra et al., 2010). Allies from higher up in the hierarchy can ease the climb up the corporate ladder and help young leaders sidestep disasters and gain visibility. Therefore, it is crucial for ambitious junior employees to establish a network of powerful sponsors (Nielsen, 2015). Yet, this is not always as controllable as it might seem. Cultural norms affect interaction across gender and make networking with potential male sponsors especially challenging for women in the gender segregated societies of the Middle East (Tlaiss, 2014). Even in Western societies formalized mentoring programs tend to match gender in same-sex pairs (Ibarra et al., 2010). This poses a challenge, because a meta-analysis of mentoring found that male mentors report providing more career development mentoring than female mentors (O’brian et al., 2010). Additionally, male mentors usually rank higher than female mentors, so young women often end up with lower-ranking and less powerful sponsors. Indeed, a study by Ibarra et al. (2010) showed that even though more women than men join mentoring programs in the US, men are still more likely to

achieve leadership through mentorship. This might, however, be less of a problem in societies with overlapping norms for gender roles – e.g. Scandinavia (Hofstede, 2001).

Serendipity: Sometimes something as simple as being in the right place at the right time constitutes an informal pathway to power. A study by Ibarra et al., (2010) showed that when powerful colleagues informally choose to sponsor a younger employee they met in a casual setting, they are more likely to advocate for their mentee than when a junior employee is assigned to them through a mentoring program. Therefore, a chance encounter outside office hours can become a serendipitous opportunity (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin & Sumberg, 2010). Male employees have more opportunities than females in this regard and the gender segregation in Middle Eastern countries pose an obvious obstacle to informal encounters across gender (James-Hawkins, Qutteina & Yount, 2016). Such inequality of opportunities is likely to create a gender difference in perceived serendipity when pursuing goals of leadership. Perception of serendipity has been tied to professional success in a literature review by Hafer and Gresham (2008). Based on locus of control theory they argue that perception of luck is an adaptive cognitive strategy that enables the individual to be agentic about goals that may not be achievable solely through own efforts and abilities. So, if cultural context makes men more inclined to attribute leadership acquisition to serendipity, it might encourage them to be more ambitious in goals of leadership acquisition compared to women.

Attribution of control across gender and culture

Expectations of control dictated by societal norms impose a continuous influence on what we perceive as possibilities in life; which goals we find attainable and how we go about achieving them including the goal of becoming a leader (Ajzen, 1991). Perception of control can be operationalized through the multidimensional locus of control scale. *Locus of control* refers to the subjective appraisal of factors that we hold accountable for the outcome of the events we experience. As outlined above, such variables can be divided between factors that represent internal control - e.g. job-related skills, and factors that represent external control - e.g. Serendipity (Levenson, 1981).

Previous studies have shown that women tend to score higher than men on perceived external control when locus of control is measured as one dimension (see Sherman, Higgs & Williams, 1997 for review). However, scales that divide locus of control into its component parts offer a more nuanced depiction of perceived control. Indeed, Levenson (1981) found that internal control is not the inverse of external control. Empirically it is possible to score high on both dimensions, but various studies across cultures have found that scores on the internal control scale are higher than scores on the external control scale (Dyal, 1984). External control beliefs can be categorised into either random external forces or ordered external forces. In order to acknowledge this, the multidimensional locus of control scale divides external control into two separate scales. The chance scale measures to what degree a person believes in an unordered and random nature of the world – i.e. serendipity. The powerful others scale measures beliefs in an ordered world where societal systems are in control – i.e. networking with powerful business connections (Levenson, 1981).

Only few studies have found gender differences on the internal control and chance dimensions (Sherman et. al., 1997 for review), but various studies across cultures have found that the powerful others dimension show the opposite effect of gender compared with one-dimensional scales: men perceive higher control by powerful others than women's in their own culture (Christopher, Saliba, & Deadmarsh, 2009; Levenson, 1981; Sherman et. al., 1997; Walkey, 1979). This finding was replicated by Ottsen et al., (2016) who found that men in Qatar perceived more external control by powerful others and by chance than Qatari women (all $ps < .006$). The Danish sample, however, showed no significant gender difference on any of the scales (all $ps > .316$). If men rely more on powerful connections than women, they might also expect more serendipitous opportunities. Therefore, the gender difference in external control is likely to influence men and women in pursuit of leadership differently in the Middle East, while Scandinavians might pursue leadership in a more similar way across gender. The following sections gives a brief overview of gender norms in these societies.

Culturally controlled norms for gender

The cultural context provides information about appropriate gender roles, and when entering adulthood, girls and boys are faced with expectations to commit to culturally ascribed social roles. Recent findings show that norms for gender has a structuring effect on plans for the future (Ottsen & Berntsen, 2015). These plans might include goals of leadership acquisition, thereby making it relevant to explore cultures with markedly different views of gender roles.

The cultural values in Middle Eastern societies are intertwined with Islam and characterized by collectivism and masculinity. The latter being defined by a strict differentiation between gender roles according to Hofstede (2001). Consequently, the Middle East reflects non-secular and gender-segregated societies. Many public institutions have assigned weekdays for women and children to visit during which time men are not allowed and some of the campuses at the universities are gender divided (Ottsen & Berntsen, 2014). The Middle Eastern societies value a patriarchal family structure in which males are the breadwinners and females the homemakers. Therefore, the education of women is primarily perceived as a tool to make them better wives and mothers. Raising children is a female responsibility and ambitious goals for family-life and work-life are often perceived as mutually exclusive for women (James-Hawkins et al., 2016).

Scandinavian culture contrasts Middle Eastern culture by being characterized by the individualistic and feminine dimension on Hofstede's cultural index (2001). The latter defined by overlapping norms for gender roles, and equal educational opportunities for men and women. A key element in the implementation of gender equality has been high-functioning childcare institutions and paid parental leave. Such initiatives have made OECD highlight the Scandinavian model as a good solution to problems regarding family-work balance (Borchorst & Siim, 2008). The most visible gain from this model has been Scandinavian women's participation in the labour force, which is among the highest in the world, but when it comes to closing the gap between men and women in top-management Scandinavian countries still have some way to go (World Economic Forum, 2017).

The present study

The aim of the present study is to examine belief in leadership acquisition across gender and cultures, thereby providing new data to aid our understanding of the gender-gap in management. Based on the strong beliefs in meritocracy and internal control across cultures, it is expected that participants will perceive job-related skills as the most important factor in leadership acquisition across cultures and genders but also that Scandinavians will focus even more on the importance of job-related skills than Middle Easterners, due to the positive perception of meritocracy in Western societies. The prediction for external control is that Middle Eastern men will be more confident than Middle Eastern women that connections to powerful people and opportunities created by chance will facilitate their leadership acquisition, while this difference will not be significant in Scandinavia.

The hypotheses are:

- H1) Men and women across cultures will rely more on job-related skills to facilitate leadership acquisition than on factors less controlled by themselves. This main effect will be even more evident in Scandinavia than in the Middle East.
- H2) Middle Eastern men will be more confident than Middle Eastern women that networking with powerful others will create opportunities for leadership acquisition. Scandinavians will show no gender difference, causing a statistical interaction between culture and gender.
- H3) Middle Eastern men will believe that serendipity plays a larger role in leadership acquisition compared to women in their own culture, while Scandinavians will show no gender difference. Again, causing a statistical interaction between culture and gender.

Method

Materials

All participants completed the multidimensional locus of control scale (Levenson, 1981). This scale is ideal for cross-cultural exploration because data from societies that differ on the individualism index gain validity from a construct that measures internal control and external control on separate dimensions (Cheng, Cheung, Chio, & Chan, 2013; Ottsen et al., 2016). The multidimensional locus of control scale addresses the participant's attribution style: their subjective appraisal of factors that account for the outcome of events in their life. Here, the specific focus is on the questions regarding achieving a leadership position. The internal control dimension reflects *job-related skills*, "Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability." The powerful others dimension reflects *networking upward*, "Although I might have good ability, I will not be given leadership responsibility without appealing to those in positions of power." The chance dimension reflects *serendipity*, "Whether or not I get to be a leader depends on whether I am lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time." All items were rated on a Likert scale (-3 = Disagree, 3 = Agree).

Study Populations

The countries of Qatar and Denmark were chosen as representatives of Middle Eastern and Scandinavian societies, respectively. These two countries score above and below average on Hofstede's index of individualism and they differ with regard to gender roles and religious views, but they are similar in other ways, thus making for a good comparison. Both countries are geographically small and are among the countries with the highest gross domestic product (GDP) in the world. Likewise, in both countries, education is high on the political list of priorities. Schooling is publicly funded, and women outnumber men at the state universities (Borchorst & Siim, 2008; James-Hawkins et al., 2016; Kronfol, Ghuloum, & Weber, 2013; Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011; Zieler, 2014). These structural similarities strengthen a comparison of perceived control across culture and gender, because they isolate the main cultural difference in

view of gender roles and impact from societal norms. In that regard, this study resembles a natural experiment by investigating cultures that vary on factors relating to gender differences in perceived locus of control and perspectives on leadership acquisition, while keeping other aspects of the two cultures constant.

Participants

The Middle Eastern sample included 115 participants – 55 women and 60 men ($M_{\text{age}} = 21.2$, $SD = 2.2$), with an age range of 17-29 years. The Scandinavian sample included 121 participants recruited from one university in Denmark – 70 women and 51 men ($M_{\text{age}} = 22.1$, $SD = 2.1$), with an age range of 18-29 years. The initial sample consisted of 124 Middle Eastern participants and 130 Scandinavians. In accordance with the literature, leadership experience at a young age is regarded as a prerequisite for senior management positions (Oakley, 2000). Therefore, university students above the age of 30 are presumed less likely to be part of the next generation of leaders. Sixteen participants ages 30-55 were therefore eliminated.¹ In the final Middle Eastern sample 61% of the participants were Qataris. Other nationalities represented were primarily Palestinians, Jordanians, Syrians and Yeminis. Two German participants were eliminated from the Scandinavian sample. The remaining participants were predominantly from Denmark, but Sweden and Norway were also represented. All participants received cinema tickets for the approximate amount of 100 Danish kroner (equivalent to \$15) in appreciation of their cooperation.

Procedure

Local student assistants collected all data under the author's supervision. The measures reported here were part of a larger survey regarding cultural knowledge, personal goals and perceived control (for prior publications based on the same data collection but not overlapping with the present study, see Ottsen & Berntsen, 2015; 2016). A professional translator translated the Qatari

¹ The pattern of results was the same when these excluded participants were included in the analyses, with the exception of a main effect of gender on Networking Upward, which was insignificant in the current study ($p = 0.064$), but would have been rendered significant if participants age 30 and over had been included $F(1,247) = 4.99, p < 0.03$.

questionnaire from English into Arabic. After back-translations, the questionnaires were checked and compared with the English version of the scales by two local students. In each sample, the questionnaire was initially distributed in class, and participants subsequently filled out the questionnaire at home, with no prior instructions apart from the guide to the test battery.

Results

First, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the three variables combined to show discrepancies between internal and external control. This analysis had the control related variables as a repeated-measure factor with three levels; *job-related skills, networking and serendipity*. Second, a 2 (gender) x 2 (culture) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on each control related variables separately. Table 1 shows means, standard deviations and effects across culture and gender for each of the three control variables.

Hypothesis 1 was confirmed. Comparison of the three control related variables showed that participants were significantly more inclined to believe that job-related skills would facilitate leadership acquisition rather than networking upward and serendipity, $F(2,462) = 105.35, p < .001, \eta^2 = .31$. Follow-up t-tests confirmed significant differences for both men and women in each culture (all $ps < .009$). As expected, a main effect of culture showed that Scandinavians viewed job-related skills as more important to leadership acquisition than Middle Easterners (Figure 1). This reliance on the internal control measure is in line with the dominant conviction of meritocracy often found in Western cultures (Kim & Choi, 2017). The variable measuring perceived importance of job-related skills showed no main effect of gender in either culture (Table 1). Men and women were similarly confident that their own merited skills would be a factor in leadership acquisition.

Hypothesis 2 regarding networking with powerful business connections was confirmed by showing gender difference in the Middle East. The variable networking upward was qualified by an interaction between culture and gender (Figure 1). Follow-up t-tests showed that Middle Eastern women deviated from Middle Eastern men by estimating that networking with people in positions of power would not increase their chances of achieving a leadership position ($p < .018$). The scores

for Scandinavian women's perceived importance of networking were similar to the scores of the men from both cultures (all $ps > .365$).

Hypothesis 3 regarding serendipity was partially supported. As expected Middle Eastern men were significantly more inclined to believe that becoming a leader depends on luck than women in their own culture. However, counter to expectations the main effect of gender was not qualified by an interaction between culture and gender (Figure 1). Follow-up t-test showed a significant gender difference in the Middle East ($ps < .014$) and in Scandinavia ($ps < .046$). A main effect was found for culture showing that Scandinavians were less inclined than Middle Easterners to believe that serendipity would land them a leadership position (Table 1). This is in line with the Western ideology of independence in which people are responsible for "creating their own luck" (Shepherd, Chartrand & Fitzsimons, 2015).

Discussion

Few studies have examined gender difference in the perspectives of future leaders across cultures. This study begins to fill the gap in the literature by investigating how male and female university students in two very different cultures perceived the importance of personal job-related skills versus the less controllable factors of networking upward and serendipity when seeking to achieve a leadership position.

Participants from both cultures relied more on internally controlled job-related skills than on the externally controlled factors for acquisition of leadership. No gender difference was found regarding the perceived importance of job-related skills in either culture, but cross-culturally, a higher focus on skills in the Scandinavian sample suggested that Scandinavians have a more meritocratic view of leadership acquisition than Middle Easterners. Gender-segregation in the Middle Eastern society was reflected in men's reliance on networking and serendipity, while Middle Eastern women did not believe that either people in positions of power or serendipity would increase their chances of achieving a leadership position. The Scandinavian women rated networking with powerful business connections to be as important in leadership acquisition as men

across cultures. Nevertheless, Scandinavian women resembled Middle Eastern women by showing significantly less faith in serendipitous encounters than men in their own culture. This suggests, that belief in serendipity is a separate factor for expectations of leadership acquisition among men and women independent of culture. In the following implications of these findings are discussed. The primary focus will be on women, since the aim of this study is to advance our understanding of their underrepresentation in management.

Women across cultures showed high reliance on job-related skills and low faith in serendipity, but they differed significantly in perceived importance of networking upward. Middle Eastern women perceived networking upward to be less important to their advancement than did any of the other groups. In the Middle East structural barriers control the interaction across gender (Ottsen & Berntsen, 2014). This limits the opportunities for women to build networks with powerful business people unless they have a family relation within the company. Indeed, “wasta”, which loosely translates into nepotism, is a strategy used by women to get ahead in the Middle East (Tlaiss, 2013). However, networking through family connections to achieve leadership is a delicate matter in a patriarchal culture where women’s primary responsibility is to raising children (James-Hawkins et al., 2016). Therefore, the underrepresentation of women in leadership is not surprising in the Middle East, neither is the Middle Eastern men’s high reliance on external societal control through networking and serendipity, since cultural norms facilitate male leadership (Tlaiss, 2013). In Scandinavia the continued gender-gap in leadership is more surprising, because of the long history of policies emphasizing gender equality (Borchorst & Siim, 2008). Scandinavian women are not formally restricted in interaction across gender, but Western women still have fewer lucky encounters with powerful business connections than their male peers (Hewlett et al., 2010). So even though, Scandinavian women find networking as important as men, the current findings show that they are not as confident that serendipitous opportunities will arise.

The lack of belief in serendipity might leave Women across cultures to rely primarily on job-related skills in pursuit of leadership, while men rely on externally controlled factors too. Indeed, a

study by Hewlett et al. (2010) found in a Western sample that more women than men point to their job-related skills – i.e. track record and credentials – to help explain their most recent promotion. Conversely, more men than women stated that personal connections had a controlling impact on their career advancement. The pitfall of relying on own abilities is that meritocratic beliefs puts the responsibility on the individual, without considering the influences of externally controlled factors in leadership acquisition (Major, Kaiser, O'Brian, McCoy et al., 2007). This is a disadvantage for low-status groups – in this case women because femininity is not perceived as a natural fit with the stereotypical image of a leader (Ashcraft, 2013).

Partial reliance on luck is an adaptive cognitive strategy in achieving business success, because it eases acceptance of a possible negative outcome (Hafer & Gresham, 2008). Thus, perceived serendipity represents a coping mechanism that relieves the blame and responsibility meritocratic principals puts on the individual (Major et al., 2007). Day and Maltby (2005) found that a belief in luck is positively related to agency in goal-oriented thinking. In accordance, a study by Young, Chen and Morris (2009) showed that belief in luck is significantly related to achievement motivation. When luck is perceived as a stable force it can be used as a personal resource to enhance feelings of agency and confidence in succeeding. This leads to increased efforts in the face of challenges with a safeguarding possibility of attributing failure to the externally controlled circumstance of luck (Hafer & Gresham, 2008).

When women rely less on serendipity than men it might increase their sense of responsibility for failure and thus induce reluctance in pursuit of leadership. This gender difference is especially likely to create a disadvantage for low status groups with dominant meritocracy beliefs. Indeed, a series of studies by Major et al., (2007) showed that meritocracy beliefs were negatively associated with self-esteem in low status groups who felt discriminated against. So, even though Scandinavian women do not encounter the same structural barriers for networking as women in the gender-segregated Middle East, their low reliance on luck is likely to affect their leadership ambitions negatively.

Conclusion and perspectives

In conclusion, the current findings show that despite marked differences in networking opportunities, women across cultures relied less on serendipity in leadership acquisition than men. This cross-cultural gender difference in perceived serendipity might affect career ambitions, i.e. boosting men and discouraging women in pursuit of leadership. If so, these findings reflect unseen and continuing barriers against achieving gender equality in leadership beyond geographical and cultural differences. Thereby, this study may help to explain why the gender-gap in management, persists even in societies that emphasize gender equality.

Findings highlight the need for human resource practices that counter perceptions of unequal opportunities through informal encounters. Future researchers should explore the prospect that women's lack of reliance on externally controlled factors discourages them from pursuing leadership roles, by seeing if women's lack of belief in serendipity or networking upward is related to self-reported lack of motivation to pursue leadership roles. Future studies could also explore if an association between career ambitions and expected responsibility for failure to achieve leadership is stronger in societies with a dominant meritocracy ideology.

Limitations

Limitations of the present study are primarily related to sampling. A sample of young adults seemed ideal to draw out cultural differences in the perception of what it takes to be appointed to leadership before an actual leadership position had been acquired. University students were chosen primarily because they are more likely seek leadership in organizations than their non-university educated peers. The Qataris live in a relatively closed society, so access to participants is difficult and therefore samples differed slightly across cultures. The Scandinavian sample was primarily Danish, whereas only 61% of the Middle Eastern sample was Qatari. Yet, the majority of the Middle Eastern participants had been living in Qatar for most of their lives, and they all shared a religious background through Islam. Therefore, we believe each sample can be taken as having a sufficiently shared cultural background.

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Table 1

University students' perceptions of the importance of factors in leadership acquisition (n=236)

	Scandinavia				Middle East				Main Effects					
	women		men		women		men		Culture		Gender		Interaction	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	η^2_p	F	η^2_p	F	η^2_p
Job-related Skills	2.31	.84	2.04	.96	1.24	1.71	1.35	1.45	27.99 ***	.11	.23	.00	1.35	.01
Networking Upward	.71	1.52	.67	1.51	-.51	2.05	.42	2.09	9.52 **	.04	3.47	.02	4.26 *	.02
Serendipity	-.96	1.54	-.35	1.74	-.51	1.96	.44	2.06	6.66 **	.03	10.44 ***	.04	0.52	.00

Note. df range (1,229-232), * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 1

Panel A shows a main effect of culture in the perceived importance of Job-related Skills in leadership acquisition. Panel B shows an interaction between culture and gender for Networking Upward. Panel C shows main effects of both culture and gender for Serendipity (Error Bars: $\pm 1SE$).