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LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS IN KUWAIT

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Abstract

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Key words: Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), effectiveness, leadership, organisations, perceptions, Kuwait, qualitative, model.

This research explores leadership effectiveness in organisations in Kuwait from the perspective of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). This is an area that has been neglected by the extant literature, and no integrated model for assessing CEO effectiveness exists for us to fully understand the phenomenon. Based on a positivist qualitative research approach, evidence was drawn from 16 CEOs using semi-structured interviews. The evidence was corroborated by using data obtained from participant observations of two CEOs working in the same organisation as the researcher. The results indicated that CEOs perceive leadership effectiveness as driving execution and not necessarily the realisation of goals themselves. Their experiences of leadership lead to CEOs in Kuwait believing that leadership effectiveness depends on their leadership style, relationship with the Board and the Executives, experience and family ground, societal and organisational culture, the business environment and CEO characteristics. On the basis of the participants' perceptions of leadership effectiveness, it is recommended that CEO leadership development in Kuwait should focus on these areas, as this should equip CEOs to be effective in formulating clear visions and executing strategies to enable economic development of the country, and this should help them to compete globally. As the study focused on private and public companies, future research could consider CEOs from governmental and not-for-profit organisations to expand the sample of CEOs.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Understanding leadership and CEO effectiveness

This introductory chapter explains the rationale for conducting this study. Fundamentally, the researcher's personal academic and practical experiences of organisational leadership and of working with Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in Kuwait led to an interest in exploring how effective CEO leadership effectiveness (hereinafter CEOL) is understood by CEOs working in Kuwait and the lessons that can be drawn for leadership development. Understanding CEOL and its relationship to organisational success remains elusive for academics and practitioners. The evolution of leadership theories in general has revealed three major issues:

1. The majority of leadership research and studies have been carried out with a generic focus on leadership behaviours, not specifically at the CEO level. As Davies (2003) stated, it is not always easy to distinguish the characteristics of good leadership from those of strategic leadership.

2. Leadership theories have mainly been developed in a US context (Yukl 1998), and they have tended to ignore the implications of other cultural and geographical contexts, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC, including Kuwait). While businesses in different contexts generally reflect the same forms, the way in which they function differs according to the particular context.

3. Thirdly, many studies on leadership have traditionally used quantitative approaches that do not clearly explain the concept from the perspectives of the leaders themselves, an issue this study endeavours to tackle using a positivist qualitative research approach (Creswell 2013).

From an academic perspective, the main study aim was to explore CEO perceptions of effective leadership behaviours in Kuwaiti organisations with the view to conceptualising a model for CEOL, based on CEOs' own understandings and experiences. From a practitioner's perspective, the intention was to assist CEOs to become more effective by operationalising the dimensions of CEOL, and in turn realising organisational performance and maximising shareholder

value. In other words, this thesis aims to use experienced CEOs' interpretations, understandings and insights about leadership to support less-experienced CEOs to develop leadership effectiveness.

Charan (2008: 119) acknowledges that CEO jobs are different from conventional employment roles in that "CEOs live in a world where no one provides guidance, encouragement, or connection". Their perceptions of attributes and characteristics of leadership that are important and influence CEOL were therefore examined in this research. Myatt (2007) stressed that the effectiveness of CEOs depends on their ability to become true leaders by displaying integrity and character, and understanding the value of being approachable and human, but it is not known if the model implicit in this statement, which reflects prevailing leadership theory, is supported in practice. An examination of the extent to which the CEOs reflect the theoretical models and framework in the ways they lead involves study of the language, understanding and application of different leadership models and frameworks, with regard to the elements that drive and/or hinder CEOs in their endeavours to run their organisations effectively.

Many other studies have examined relations between CEOL and the business environment, including Miller and Toulouse (1986), Finkelstein and Hambrick (1996) and Nadkarni and Herrmann (2010). Drucker (2007) and Ulrich et al. (2009) expanded on this, emphasising the way in which the CEO is the link between the inside (the organisation) and the outside (society, the economy, technology, markets and customers). Societal and organisational culture must be investigated in terms of the CEOs' leadership relations with those cultures. Koontz et al. (1980) suggested that effective management practices have a universal identity, irrespective of culture, but others argue that national differences are instrumental in leadership due to distinct cultural values, political and historical legacies, economic systems and characteristics of tasks and organisations (Hofstede 1980; Ali 1995). This study explores the commonalities and differences observed among the CEOs and their behaviours in private and public Kuwaiti organisations.

1.2 Cultural overview

This research focuses on CEOs working in organisations in Kuwait; the contextual variable of interest was Kuwaiti culture and its impact on leadership. Hofstede (1993) noted that effective leadership processes must reflect the national culture in terms of cultural clusters concerning language, beliefs, values, religion(s) and social life.

The three-phase Globe study of 62 countries conducted over 20 years (Dorfman et al. 2012) attempted to understand the relationship between national culture and leadership expectations, effectiveness and behaviour. It identified what societies expect from their leaders, how leaders behave in different societies and what it takes to succeed as a leader in different cultures. Among the main findings in phases one and two was the culturally endorsed theory of leadership and specific leadership attributes (21 primary and six global), with 10 national clusters for 62 countries, including Kuwait. Phase three investigated the nature of CEOs' strategic leadership and the relationship between previously determined culturally-preferred leadership styles and actual executive behaviours. It revealed empirical evidence that leaders behave in a manner consistent with the desired leadership found in that culture, and that leaders who behave according to expectations are more effective, although national culture does not predict leadership behaviour.

The cultural factors and the implications of the Globe study, along with other cultural models such as those of House et al. (2004), are discussed in more detail in the following chapters, but at the outset, it is useful to understand the general outline of the Kuwaiti culture.

Kuwait has a high power distance societal culture (Hofstede 1993) with unique characteristics from both historical and modern research viewpoints. The adventurer Villiers (1940), who spent his life writing about his voyages as a crew member in a Kuwaiti dhow, stated that the seamanship culture of Kuwait was based on sailing and travelling for merchandise reasons, with command orders coming directly from a ship's captain within this male-dominant culture. The general consensus is that the culture in Kuwait's organisations is influenced by that early history, that is, it is generally male dominated and hierarchical.

Since national oil wealth emerged in the mid-20th century Kuwaitis have traditionally been given sinecures in the public sector, but growing alarm about the long-term economic future of Kuwait in a post-oil global economy has increased efforts to diversify the economy and wean Kuwaitis off their dependence on the state. Governments throughout the GCC have applied affirmative action programmes with quotas to increase the employment of nationals (*Kuwaitisation*), attempting to attract nationals into the private sector, which they generally avoid. As a result of *Kuwaitisation* and other nationalist policies, most top leadership positions in the private and public sector are now occupied by Kuwaitis. Foreign firms operating in Kuwait are also obliged to have a national (individual or company) as a guarantor. This arrangement provides Kuwaitis with an easy and secure means of income generation. Consequently, all of these factors help to reinforce a culture that appreciates affluence and leisure, rather than hard work and efficiency, in contrast with the maritime culture described by Villiers before the discovery of oil.

In terms of organisational culture, this is represented in Kuwaiti values, norms, beliefs and understandings that are shared by the organisation's members and taught to newcomers. This culture could be understood as values that are standardised and described in company competencies to ensure that employees have the same pattern of beliefs and values to maintain consistent work standards, in addition to various unwritten patterns iterated by the expectations of management and employees.

From an academic perspective, the culture of Kuwait is fundamentally different from the Western cultures within which most studies of leadership have been conducted, thus it is important to explore the extent to which culture influences CEO perceptions of leadership effectiveness.

1.3   Research aim and objectives

The research aims to explore CEO perceptions of effective leadership behaviours in Kuwaiti organisations with the view to conceptualising a model for CEOL, using experienced CEOs' interpretations, understandings and insights about leadership to support less-experienced CEOs' leadership effectiveness.

The specific study objectives include:

1. To critically review the extant leadership literature and contribute to knowledge on CEOL, particularly within the context of a developing country such as Kuwait.
2. To investigate the dimensions that influence CEOL and conceptualise a model that explains CEOL.
3. To appreciate the predominant leadership styles of CEOs.
4. To appreciate the contextual factors that may influence CEOL in Kuwait's public and private sector companies.
5. To understand the influence of societal and organisational culture on CEOL.
6. To explore the commonalities and differences in the understanding of CEO perceptions of leadership effectiveness.

The researcher hopes, by meeting the above objectives, to give clear direction and specificity to CEO perceptions of effective leadership behaviour in Kuwaiti organisations, as detailed in Section 4.2.

1.4 Research questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

- ❖ *RQ1: How does the extant literature define CEOL and how do CEOs in Kuwait perceive leadership effectiveness?*
- ❖ *RQ2: How do individual CEOs perceive the skills, capabilities and behaviours that are required from effective CEOs, in terms of their leadership?*
- ❖ *RQ3: To what extent do the identified CEO leadership behaviours reflect existing leadership styles?*
- ❖ *RQ4: What are the contextual factors that drive and/or hinder the success of CEOs to run their organisations?*
- ❖ *RQ5: To what extent is there a relationship between culture and CEOL?*
- ❖ *RQ6: What are the commonalities and differences regarding leadership effectiveness as perceived by CEOs in leading companies in Kuwait?*

By answering these questions, it will be possible to obtain a clear picture of the conceptualisation and practical implementation of CEOL from Kuwaiti organisations' perspectives. Moreover, answering these questions will allow the researcher to make recommendations about how CEOL practices in Kuwait can be improved. The detail behind the questions stated above is explained further in Section 4.3.

1.5   Research methodology

From the above sections, it is evident that there is minimal theoretical knowledge on the subject of CEOs in Kuwait, and there is no consensus on a definition of CEOL, thus an exploratory approach was adopted with a subjective ontology and positive epistemology. Data was obtained from 16 semi-structured interviews with CEOs from different industries, and participant observation was also employed to corroborate and gain a better understanding of the social setting within which CEOs construct their understanding of leadership. Data was then analysed through content analysis. The detailed design and methodology of the study is discussed in Chapter 4.

1.6   Importance of study

The importance of this research stems from the current era of globalisation, which is affecting major economic and political developments and increasing the challenges facing CEOs to maintain business stability and enhance organisational performance, which is the key function of their effectiveness. CEOL has gained prominence since the 2008 financial and economic crisis, which was largely attributed to complacency and negligence amongst top management (Lewis and Einhorn 2009), hence there is a need to pay more attention to the effectiveness of CEOs, in order to minimise the occurrences of such events in the future. This is in addition to the longer-term interest in the subject, which has developed as a result of the proliferation of globalisation and the need to optimise resources, as well as the implications it has on business environmental changes, particularly outside Western business environments (Dorfman et al. 2012).

The main rationale for undertaking this study is the lack of a universal consensus on what CEOL means and the need to understand its contributory dimensions. Various studies have focused on leadership in general, but few have considered the person at the helm of the organisation. The CEO's role in particular has not received sufficient research attention and there is limited work on executive leadership from a cross-cultural perspective. Many studies have focused on American CEOs (Waldman et al. 2001; Waldman, Javidan and Varella 2004). Furthermore, House et al. (2014: 86) noted that among those studies "the focus has so far been on the consequence of CEOL and not the driver of CEOL", of which the latter can be studied using the findings of the Globe study.

Studies of leadership within the Middle East are almost non-existent (House et al. 2004). Only Hofstede and the Globe study included countries from the Gulf. Individual countries such as Kuwait have received very little attention because of the clustering of "Arab" or "Middle Eastern" nations (Moore and Shearer 2005). Abdullah and Al-Homoud (2001) stated that the "Arab World" is lacking locally valid theories of management, leadership and organisations.

The present socio-economic situation of Kuwait presents a challenge triggered by the fluctuation in oil prices, the financial and psychological burden of the Iraqi situation, the Arab Spring and evolving sectarian fanaticism. Abdullah and Al-Homoud (2001: 508) noted that the most significant factors in Kuwaiti society are "Islamic values, tribal and Bedouin traditions, oil wealth, and related factors such as the influences of education, a huge influx of expatriate workers, and sudden international exposure".

As an oil-dependent economy struggling to diversify, Kuwait is in critical need of CEOs who can formulate clear visions and execute strategies to be able to continue developing the country and compete globally, through the utilisation of people and financial resources. However, efforts to modernise Kuwaiti organisations have been hampered by an inability to execute long-term development plans. Thus, understanding and having an effective leadership model that could have a potential effect on any type of business is necessary.

Some researchers identify the Gulf Arab culture leadership style as being collectivist, masculine and power stratified (Al-Romaihi 1977; Barakat 1991). In the tribal leadership style, leaders have intense loyalty to their group and consider themselves father figures to their employees (Mahjoub, Ghonaim and Shareef 1997). Abdullah and Al-Homoud (2001) found that Kuwaitis attributed leaders' failures to indecisiveness and lack of vision. Clearly, more studies of leadership in Kuwait are needed in light of the Hofstede and Globe studies.

1.7 Thesis structure

The thesis is structured in seven chapters, commencing with this first introductory chapter (Chapter 1), which provides the background and impetus for the conduction of the study.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature pertaining to an overview of leadership theories. This chapter essentially presents the academic foundation, establishes the gaps in the literature, and conceptualises the theoretical model.

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to discuss the particular context of the research setting, Kuwait, covering leadership and mainstream cultural analysis models, including religion and its impact on leadership effectiveness.

Chapter 4 justifies the qualitative methodology used in this research, starting with the research philosophy. It also explains the research design, particularly how data was collected and analysed using content analysis.

Chapter 5 frames the data and content analysis, leading to key findings of the research. While Chapter 6 discusses the key findings with respect to the extant literature to explore conformity and divergence to extend the understanding of the literature on leadership, particularly as it relates to CEOL.

Chapter 7 concludes the research, presenting its contribution, and makes policy and practical recommendations, as well as suggesting areas for further research. Finally, Chapter 8 presents my personal reflections on the research journey.

2 Leadership Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically reviews the extant leadership literature to gain deeper insights and establish gaps with regard to what makes good leaders and how they become effective, which as Northouse (2013) stated, has gained increasing research attention worldwide (e.g. Bass 1990; Gardner 1990; Rost 1991; Bryman 1992; Bryman et al. 2011). Different theories of leadership are reviewed in order to appreciate how the subject has evolved and also understand the major theories that underpin this study and help to operationalise the concept.

The review of the extant literature contributes to this study by establishing the dimensions that are considered important in understanding CEOL, as well as in conceptualising an integrated model that explains the relationships between these dimensions, which include understanding the business environment, relationships between the Board of Directors (BoD) and executives, career development and family roles, societal and organisational culture and CEOL.

2.2 Defining leadership and CEO leadership effectiveness

Leadership is a common phenomenon that has a range of definitions from various perspectives of academia and business. Understanding of the general leadership definition is needed as a precursor to understanding participants' input and to better recognise their interpretations of leadership issues.

Leadership evades a common definition (Bass 1990; Yukl 2002), and "there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept" (Stogdill 1974: 259). Burns (1978) stated that leadership is one of the least understood subjects, even though it is the most observed one on earth. The most typical and common definitions of leadership are listed in Table 2.1. From these definitions, the common components that could apply to the leadership definitions mainly involve vision, influence and group processes. However, there are many differences that reflect deep disagreements about the identification of leaders and the leadership process,

particularly about the differences in how influence is exerted and its outcome (Yukl 2013).

Table 2.1: Common definitions of leadership

Leadership Definitions	Authors
"Leadership is about articulating visions, embodying values and creating the environment within which things can be accomplished".	Richards and Engle (1986: 205)
"Leadership is a process of giving purpose (meaningful direction) to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve a purpose".	Jacobs and Jaques (1990: 281)
"Leadership is the ability to step outside the culture… to start an evolutionary change process that is more adaptive".	Schein (1992: 2)
"Leadership is about the ability to "challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, model the way and encourage the heart".	Kouzes and Posner (1995: 9)
"Leadership is the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute towards the effectiveness and success of the organisations in which they are members".	House et al. (2004: 15)
"Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal".	Northouse (2013: 5)
"Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish the shared objectives".	Yukl (2013: 7)

Unfortunately, extensive attempts at formulating a consensual definition have only caused more confusion due to these terms being used loosely or in a contradictory manner to refer to generic leadership attributes. This observation was made by Bennis (1959: 259), who stated:

> *"Always, it seems, the concept of leadership eludes us or turns up in another form to taunt us again with its slipperiness and complexity. So we have invented an endless proliferation of terms to deal with it… and still the concept is not sufficiently defined".*

Furthermore, Northouse (2013) argues that the actual definition of the leadership term has proved to be a challenging endeavour for scholars and practitioners alike due to contextual specificity. According to Yukl (2013: 7):

"Like all constructs in social science, the definition of leadership is arbitrary and subjective. Some definitions are more useful than others are, but there is no single 'correct' definition that captures the essence of leadership. For the time being it is better to use the various conceptions of leadership as a source of different perspectives on complex, multifaceted phenomenon".

Some authors noted that the variety of definitions is explainable by each definition being appropriate to the particular research context and purpose for which it was devised. Smith and Bond (1993: 58) observed that:

"If we wish to make statements about universal or ethnic aspects of social behaviour, they need to be phrased in highly abstract ways. Conversely, if we wish to highlight the meaning of these generalisations in specific or emic ways, then we need to refer to more precisely specified events or behaviours".

In addition to having many definitions of leadership, there are many other terms which are regularly used to supplement and complement leadership terminology, such as "power, authority, management, administration, control and supervision" (Yukl 2013: 7); furthermore, these are used in overlapping ways.

House et al. (2004) believe that even though the leadership definition varies across cultures, a universal definition for effective or non-effective leadership can be formulated for particular contexts in reference to societal and organisational cultures. It is therefore important that a critical review of the literature be undertaken to operationalise the concept of leadership effectiveness in Kuwait.

2.2.1 What is meant by effectiveness?

Hiller et al. (2011) mentioned three types of outcomes from leadership effectiveness:

1. Tangible outcomes such as sales volume and return on equity (ROE).
2. Leadership effectiveness where the outcome domain is followers or others (cited by Seltzer and Bass 1990).

3. Performance ratings, including formal and informal ratings such as appraisals or perceptions, but not specifics about leaders' effectiveness (cited by Tsui and O'Reilly 1989).

The broad effectiveness domain was defined as "getting the right things done", through having the right individual attributes, as proffered by Drucker (1967). A more modern view of what makes leadership effective links attributes to results, rather than individual factors, as Ulrich and Smallwood (2013: 11) observed:

"From a focus on leader as a person to a focus on leadership as a capability within the organisation… From a focus on what happens inside the leader or inside the firm to a focus on meeting customer, investor, and other external expectations".

The implication is that the definition of effective leadership seems to have been evolving just as much as the actual study of leadership has, over time. The effectiveness of a leader may also be influenced by other factors, such as their motivation and how they relate with their subordinates.

2.2.2   CEO characteristics and definition of CEO effectiveness

This study explores CEOs as leaders of their organisations, so this section discusses CEOs. It is important to explore whether CEOL is partly a function of their unique characteristics. Myatt (2007) stated that CEOL necessitates true leaders manifesting integrity and character while remaining approachable and human; thus, the CEO's primary function is to set the vision, mission and strategy for the company. Myatt (2007) further states that the CEO's vision creates purpose and passion which, when utilised effectively, will increase focus and productivity.

In addition, Drucker (2006) observed that effective CEOs are not stereotypically leaders, and their personal traits may differ significantly. This relates to Drucker's rejection of the "great man" hypothesis and its assumption of innate traits; Drucker does not believe that effective executives are naturally born, rather their hard work and repeated practice of effectiveness eventually leads to effectiveness becoming a habit.

Drucker (2006: xi) referred to the following eight characteristics that lead to effective CEOs:

1. They ask: what needs to be done?

2. They ask: what is right for the enterprise?

3. They develop action plans.

4. They take responsibility for decisions.

5. They take responsibility for communicating.

6. They focus on opportunities rather than problems.

7. They run productive meetings.

8. They think and say "we" rather than "I".

Nadler (2007) believes that CEOs need high self-awareness about their effectiveness, and they should be alerted if they need to change their leadership style to fit a specific scenario (e.g. team acceptance of ideas and approaches); thus, they should pragmatically use objective evaluations rather than subjective judgements based on board of directors (BoD) directions. Nadler (2007) noted that the best CEOs could refresh the agenda and revise goals every few years.

Furthermore, Charan (2008: 119) acknowledged that the CEO role is in itself unique in that CEOs "live in a world where no one provides guidance, encouragement or connection" which can make the position lonely and isolating. Waldman et al. (2001) showed that a CEO's charismatic leadership is significantly intertwined with a firm's actual performance, which should be measured by net profit margins and RoE. Charan et al. (2001: 115) stated that:

> *"Successful CEOs exhibit sound judgement on people matters and execute deep into the organisation. Though strategic ability, vision and other factors are important skills at this level of leadership, they won't rescue a CEO who cannot get things done or who lacks the ability to put the right person in the right job".*

It is clear that the effectiveness and success of CEOs depends on personal characteristics, organisation and time, and each context is unique (Nadler 2007). Furthermore, while organisational performance is an index of CEOL, there is little evidence to explain how CEOs effect this (Wang et al. 2011), as general leadership effectiveness and characteristics are studied, rather than specific CEO traits (Pfeiffer 1977; Boas, House and Arthur 1993; Finkelstein and Hambrick 1996; Drucker 2006; Charan 2008; Hui et al. 2011). However, in today's turbulent business environment (since 2008) there has been increased interest in strategic leadership at the CEO level (Yukl 2008; Finkelstein, Hambrick and Cannella 2009). The latest Globe phase (from 2000 to 2010) focused on CEO strategic, global and cross-cultural leadership.

From the above definitions and debate, this thesis defines an effective CEO as:

> *The one who has visionary thinking with the capability to adapt to different situations. Furthermore, their effectiveness is measured by them delivering the expected results.*

This definition is influenced by prior research (House et al. 2004, 2014; Myatt 2007; Charan 2008; Finkelstein et al. 2009) which highlighted the importance of CEO characteristics such as being visionary, specifically focusing on leadership in the upper echelons of organisations, as opposed to leadership in general. It is also important to consider contextual factors such as culture when considering CEOL, as denoted by the Globe study.

2.3 Existing theories, models and styles of leadership

This section reviews the various leadership theories that form the disciplinary context for this study. Many studies relate to generic theories such as transactional, transitional or behavioural theories, while there is less focus on newer theories such as dispersant leadership.

2.3.1 Historical background of leadership

Rost (1991) analysed the evolution of leadership definitions between 1900 and 1990. It is believed by practitioners and scholars that his analysis provides a

sound basis for understanding how leadership was defined throughout the 20th century, and this analysis also provides insight into better understanding the historical development of this concept (Northouse 2013).

In the first three decades of the 20th century, leadership was understood in terms of control and the centralisation of power, which resulted in a common theme of domination (Northouse 2013). A leader was a focused person facilitating group change, activities and processes, and the nucleus of social tendencies (Cooley 1902, cited by Bass 2008: 16). The dominant theory of leadership at that time was the classical "great man" theory, which encompassed the notion that leaders are born as exceptional people with very special qualities, defined at a 1920s conference on leadership as: "The ability to impress the will of the leader on those led, and induce obedience, respect, loyalty and cooperation" (Moore 1927: 124). To illustrate, Bowden (1926, cited by Bass 2008: 149) noted that, "the amount of personality attributed to an individual may not be unfairly estimated by the degree of influence he can exert upon others".

During the 1930s, traits became the focus when defining leadership and the notion shifted toward influence rather than domination (Northouse 2013). According to this understanding, people were either born or made with certain qualities that would make them excel in leadership roles, such as intelligence, a sense of responsibility or creativity, etc. (Matthews et al. 2003: 3).

During the 1940s, leadership was defined by the ability to persuade and direct beyond the effects of power, position or circumstance. These notions are reflected in a quote from Krech and Crutchfield (1948, cited by Bass 2008: 16): "By virtue of his special position in the group… he [the leader] serves as a primary agent for the determination of group structures, group atmospheres, group goals, group ideologies and group activities". It was during this decade that the trait approach definition developed.

In the 1950s, the manner in which leaders acted in a group became a prevalent theme, as well as the authority given to leaders by the group members, which determined leadership. This was supported by Shartle (1956, cited by Bass 2008: 17), who noted that a leadership act is "one which results in others acting".

Furthermore, leadership during this time was also characterised by a relationship that developed shared goals and effectiveness; in this way, the leader would be the person able to influence the overall effectiveness of the group (Northouse 2013). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the association of leadership and effectiveness was firstly introduced in the 1950s.

The 1960s saw definitions that concerned influencing people toward shared goals, with "…acts by persons who influence other persons in a shared direction" (Seeman 1960: 53). Similarly, Rost (1991: 59) claimed leadership in the 1970s was viewed as "initiating and maintaining groups or organisations to accomplish group or organisational goals". However, Burns (1978: 425) defined leadership during the same period as:

> *"The reciprocal process of mobilising, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realise goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers".*

In the 1980s, leadership was still deemed to be successful when the followers obeyed; the word "influence" was the most often used word during this time, as there was an attempt to differentiate leadership from management (Northouse 2013). Furthermore, Peters and Waterman (1982) brought leader traits back into the spotlight, focusing on trait orientation (Rost 1991). By the 1990s, scholars agreed that they could not successfully identify a common definition for leadership (Northouse 2013), but the debate continued as to whether leadership and management should be treated as separate processes, while others focused on the traits, skills and relational aspects of leadership (Rost 1991). Consequently, leadership continued to be formulated by different meanings; Kotter (1990) stated that the importance of managing or leading is relative to the situation, as managers seek to produce predictability and order, whereas leaders seek to produce organisational change with distinct or complementary roles for managers. Yukl (2013) asserted that simplistic theories about effective leadership should be encouraged, rather than separating the managing and leading roles and relationships.

During the 2000s, scholars added a sense of urgency to leadership attitudes, as well as charisma. Bennis (2007) argued that leadership is now more holistic as it is centred on groups or organisations, rather than individuals, as it engages the whole group in terms of their hearts, minds, spirits and energies. Moreover, Yukl and Lepsinger (2005) encouraged exploration, in order to predetermine the domain of essential leadership processes, managing and leading, through empirical research rather than subjective judgement.

2.3.2 Great man theory

The "great man" theory was expressed in Thomas Carlyle's definition of heroes as highly influential individuals who, due to their personal charisma, intelligence, wisdom or Machiavellianism, utilise their power in a way that has a decisive historical impact. Carlyle (1841: 127) commented that "the history of the world is but the biography of great men", generally considering leadership traits to be inherited (Burns 1978; Bass 1990; Bennis 2003). Burns (1978), Covey (1990) and Rost (1991) all indicated that these leaders tend to have leader-centric rather than collaboration-centric themes surrounding their works: "leaders are prophets, priests, chiefs and kings that serve as symbols, representatives and models for their people" (Bass 1990: 3).

2.3.3 Trait theory

The "trait" theory evolved from the great man theory, which intrinsically believes that leaders are born to be leaders. This theoretical approach identifies the key characteristics of successful leaders based on the identification of specific traits that can be used for the selection and hiring of leaders (especially in military contexts), supported by numerous studies (Stogdill 1948; Argyris 1953; Edwards and Townsend 1958; Mann 1959).

Early research focused on physical characteristics, including weight and height as well as the personality aspects of self-esteem and emotional stabilities, along with aptitudes for general intelligence and creativity (Yukl 1998), while recent research has been more concerned with managerial effectiveness, in terms of integrity, emotional maturity and self-confidence (Bass 1990; Kirkpatrick and Locke 1996; Yukl 1998). Various studies have been conducted in this area and a huge number of traits have been identified as possibly affecting the effectiveness

of leaders. To illustrate, Argyris (1953) listed the following ten traits as usually identifiable in successful leaders:

1. demonstration of high levels of frustration,

2. engagement of people to participate while also being part of the decision-making process,

3. able to question themselves without criticism,

4. able to understand the laws of competitive warfare,

5. able to express hostility tactfully,

6. able to accept victory with controlled emotions,

7. never divested by defeat,

8. able to understand the necessity for limits and decisions,

9. able to identify themselves among the group to gain stability and security, and

10. able to set realistic goals.

Within this same subject, Edwards and Townsend (1958) introduced six traits to determine the effectiveness of a leader:

1. strength and willingness to work hard (immensely hard in some cases),

2. perseverance and determination, amounting at times to fanatical single-mindedness,

3. a taste and flair for commerce, and an understanding of the marketplace,

4. audacity – a willingness to take risks that are sometimes large gambles,

5. able to inspire enthusiasm in those whose cooperation and assistance is essential, and

6. toughness, amounting in some men to ruthlessness.

These two lists are related, although the first one focuses on the identification of specific traits (the *what*), while the second list focuses more on the manner in which these traits will be demonstrated (the *how*).

All considered research studies had similar objectives regarding discovering the traits of effective leaders; however, none identified a consistent or universal list of traits, as each study reflected the environment surrounding it, as well as other drivers in the form of economic, political or psychological elements (Stewart 1963). Thus, different situations and organisations are likely to need different leaders, in order to adapt to the other elements affecting the organisation.

Bird (1940), Jenkins (1947) and Stogdill (1948) all stated that the trait approaches provide limited evidence to support the success of certain effective leadership traits. It is accepted that the situation can dominate the level of demand imposed by a person, and ignorance toward certain situations could affect relations within a group. As a result, researchers began shifting their attention during the 1960s from trait theories to theories/approaches of leaders and leadership that considered the behavioural element.

2.3.4 Behavioural theory

Behavioural theory is more practical as it focuses on the leader's behaviour toward their followers and the job at hand. This theory identifies a relationship between leader behaviours and leadership effectiveness. The behavioural theory began to emerge during the 1950s, as a result of research from Ohio State University. Their leadership study identified two factors for effective leadership behaviour classification, specifically task-oriented behaviours and relation-oriented behaviours. Furthermore, some leadership studies conducted at the University of Michigan added participative leadership behaviours to the above two classifications – thus, three classifications were identified (Katz et al. 1950, 1951; Katz and Kahn 1952; Fleishman 1953; Halpin and Winer 1957; Hemphill and Coons 1957; Bass 2008).

Wright (1996) indicates that leadership behaviour can be explained in four styles associated with particular objectives: (1) concern for task (production); (2) concern for people (subordinate needs as people); (3) directive leadership (issuing orders to be obeyed); and (4) participative leadership (involving subordinates in decision-making).

The seminal "Theory X and Theory Y" of McGregor (1960) suggested that leadership strategies are influenced by the leader's assumptions about human nature. He summarised his experience through the use of two contrasting sets of assumptions that were initially made by managers in the field. This provided two different views of individuals: the negative/pessimistic nature of views and behaviours at work, known as Theory X, and the positive/optimistic views known as Theory Y. According to McGregor (1960), the perception of managers toward the nature of individuals is based on various assumptions categorised within Theory X or Y.

According to Bass (2008), Theory X assumes that people are resistant to organisational needs and changes, and they dislike responsibilities; thus, close supervision is required to direct and motivate individuals. In contrast, Theory Y assumes that people have desires and motivations that self-direct their need to achieve organisational objectives. McGregor (1960) views Theory Y to be essentially more valid and usable than Theory X for creative work. Theory Y encourages decentralisation, teamwork and participation of all people/employees throughout the decision-making process.

Furthermore, it also provides the opportunity for different thoughts and ways of working to be identified, which may contribute positively to the organisation. Leadership in Kuwait may be considered as more oriented toward Theory X, as personnel are accustomed to having someone to direct them and motivate them rather than taking initiatives – thus, the decision-making style is centralised.

Building upon the Ohio State and Michigan studies, Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (1964, 1968, 1969) developed the "managerial grid" for leaders, to assist organisations to reach their purpose by focusing on two independent dimensions of leadership behaviour, one that resides on the horizontal axis and focuses on

tasks and production, and one which resides on the vertical axis and focuses on people. For each dimension, there is a nine-point range, from low (1) to high (9), which results in the creation of 81 possible variations in leadership style.

The managerial grid model ignores the importance of internal and external limits, matters or scenarios, which means that some of the important aspects of leadership are not included – obviously, this is considered to be a limitation of the model. Kuwaiti leadership is positioned more towards the middle of the grid, with a notable degree of people focus, whereby people specifically avoid damaging social or family relationships, even at the expense of the organisation.

Overall, the behavioural approach, when compared to the trait approach, is well conceptualised through the five main leadership styles. This makes it easier for leaders to understand the different styles that are easily relatable to, and they can also help to measure and identify gaps. Although Blake and Mouton (1964) and Misumi (1985) claim that effective leaders are those who are concerned with both tasks and people, as in the high-high style, this might not be the case for all situations, as subsequent research findings provided only limited support for a universal high-high style (Yukl 1998).).

2.3.5 Situational theory

Situational theory is considered to be the last of the traditional approaches, as it includes elements from the trait and behavioural theories. It places more emphasis on the effectiveness of leaders in different situations and also suggests that the effectiveness of leadership behaviour depends upon the organisational and cultural contexts. Thus, the leadership style could be contingent upon many elements, including situational, organisational, people, task and environmental variables.

The main school of thought that supports the situational theory is Fiedler's Contingency Model (Fiedler 1964, 1967; Fiedler and Chemers 1974, 1984), which identified the "least preferred co-worker (LPC)" as one of the first examples of the "contingency" theory. It focuses on the problem of leader consistency across situations that need different requirements. Ultimately, it acknowledges

that there is no single best way to lead, as effective leadership is dependent on change and adaptation to different situations.

This model reflects the relationship and task-oriented leadership thoughts that were proposed by Bass (2008). To illustrate, this model identifies that leaders with high scores in LPC will perform better in situations that moderately favour them, as they are more relationship-oriented (Bass 2008). In contrast, leaders in situations that are extremely favourable or extremely unfavourable to them will score lower, as they will be deemed to be more task-oriented.

Similarly, Hersey and Blanchard (1982 1988) proposed the situational leadership theory, which claimed that good leaders adapt to different situations through the diagnostician and adaptive leadership styles they deploy. This is dependent on the maturity and the readiness of the subordinate, which moves through cyclical stages.

This theory determines that leadership behaviours are dependent on followers, which is based on the task behaviour and the relationship behaviour direction (maturity) of the followers. The task behaviour refers to the amount to which the leaders micromanage and supervise follower performance, usually as one-way communication. Whereas, relationship behaviour encompasses two-way communication with the participating followers in the form of joint discussions, listening and decision making, or even by delegating the decision by facilitating interaction between followers. Although these theories are interesting, they lack empirical results to support implementation (Chen and Silverthrone 2005), particularly the relationship between leadership and job performance (Avery and Ryan 2002).

2.3.6 Transactional leadership theory
Weber's transactional leadership theory/style was first introduced to the English-speaking world in 1947, and was elaborated further by Bernard Bass in 1990. According to Burns (1978), transactional leadership is the relationship of exchange between the leader and followers, based on the pursuit of individual self-interest, whereby the leader's power derives from formal authority and followers are self-interested in obeying instructions, thus "transactional leaders

closely resemble the traditional definition of the manager" (Kouzes and Posner 1995: 321). This type of leadership focuses on management processes rather than leader processes, therefore it chiefly concerns control, organisation and short-term planning.

The transactional leader theory assumes that employees are motivated by rewards and systems, they obey orders and are not self-motivated, thus they need to be monitored and closely controlled (Bass 2008). Furthermore, four categories can be represented (Avolio and Bass 2002; Bass 1995):

1. Contingent reward: leaders are found to be reasonably effective as they assign agreements on what needs to be done and promise rewards or actually reward satisfactory output from followers.
2. Management by exception – active: leaders are considered less effective than in the contingent reward category, but still acceptable in some situations, and they monitor mistakes from followers' assignments and take corrective action.
3. Management by exception – passive: leaders who wait passively for the mistake and error to happen and then take corrective action.
4. Non-leadership/laissez-faire leadership: leaders are inactive and ineffective, representing avoidance or absence of leadership. These leaders avoid making decisions and do not exercise their authority.

Most leaders execute transformation and transaction to varying degrees (Bass 1985). In the hierarchy of leadership actions/activity and effectiveness, transformational is the best, followed by transactional, with laissez-faire being last (Avolio and Bass 1991). Boje (2000) validated this by stating that a transactional leader will clarify the required performance and how the results will satisfy the need, while also demonstrating confidence, which can be significantly increased by a transformational leader who will introduce additional effort to elevate the value of the outcome for the followers.

2.3.7 Transformational leadership theory

Burns (1978) was the first to put forward the concept of transformational leadership, focused on an exchange between leaders and followers through

inspiration. Burns (1978: 4) defines transformational leadership as "a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents".

In terms of Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs, transformational leaders stimulate new followers through higher needs. Burns (1978) described transformational leadership as a process that increases motivation and morality of leaders and followers using engagement. As such, transformational leaders increase the perception of their followers by being role models and adhering to ideal and interesting values. Transformational leaders are expected to cope better with adversity (Parry 2005). Furthermore, Parameshwar (2005) noted that global leaders of social change developed inspiring extraordinary purposes by firstly exposing unresolved human rights problems; secondly, untangling false interpretations of the world; thirdly, breaking out of conventional solutions; and fourthly, by making use of transcendental metaphors.

Burns (1978) stated that transformational leadership might be found on all organisational levels – in teams, departments and throughout organisations. Transformational leaders are visionary risk-takers, thoughtful thinkers, charismatic and inspirational, deploying change- and value-oriented leadership (Bryman 1992). Examples can be seen in religions from across the world, with charismatic leaders who have created a vision, created values and empowered changes in the form of Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad (Ford 1981), or modern transformational leaders such as Martin Luther King (Burns 1978).

Transformational leadership represented a seminal shift in the field of leadership studies (Bass 1990), but new empirical research failed to add much value. In 1975, a commentator reported, "I was active in the leadership field, then I left it for about ten years, when I returned, it was as if I have been gone for ten minutes" (Hunt 1999: 130). A more optimistic view was presented by Berson et al. (2003), who noted the seminal contribution of Bass (1990), with a multidimensional theory that emphasised the need for major changes in the organisation and the individual (Simic 1998; Hall et al. 2002; Kelly 2003; Judge and Piccolo 2004; Barbuto 2005). Avolio and Bass (2004) highlighted the following five behaviours (the 5 I's) that transformational leaders possess: idealised influence (attributes),

idealised influence (behaviour), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration:

1. Idealised influence (attributes) occurs when followers identify with and emulate those leaders who are trusted and seen as having an attainable mission and vision. Idealised attributes encompass respect, trust and faith. Leaders must go beyond their self-interests for the good of the group and act in ways that build others' respect. They must display a sense of power and competence and make personal sacrifices for others' benefit. Lastly, they must reassure others that obstacles will be overcome.

2. Idealised influence (followers idealise and emulate the behaviours of their trusted leader), which means that leaders must be exemplary in their actions and deeds.

3. Inspirational motivation embraces a new vision or set of ideas while also holding high expectations (followers are motivated and energised by attainment of a common goal). This in many cases is very difficult because of people's different backgrounds and interests. However, the challenge is in sharing the leadership vision with the rest of the organisational members.

4. Intellectual stimulation is where followers are encouraged to break away from old ways of thinking and are encouraged to question their values, beliefs and expectations in order to think in creative ways. Followers are encouraged to think outside the box to generate new solutions to old problems, which is a challenge because most people are content with the status quo and dislike change, largely because of fear of the unknown. The leader is open to opinions and suggestions of employees, and engages them in open discussions to generate new solutions. The followers' opinions are sought and valued.

5. Individualised consideration (followers' needs are addressed both individually and equitably by integrating their desires, beliefs, talents and ideas into the process of change), including developing them to become leaders or better leaders.

Thus, transformational leadership may be seen as an approach whereby the leader of an organisation is inspirational and often charismatic, in order to inspire staff to achieve outcomes through buy-in of a collective mission and vision. The transformational model of leadership is an outgrowth of both the transactional and the charismatic models of leadership.

The main principles of transformational leadership have been criticised by many as enabling abuse of power by emotional manipulation (Hall et al. 2002; Russell and Stone 2002). Thus transformational leaders should have moral foundations, and "to bring about change, authentic transformational leadership fosters the model values of honesty, loyalty and fairness, as well as the end values of justice, equality and human rights" (Griffin 2003: 8).

2.3.8 Charismatic leadership

Clearly, leadership theories overlap in numerous ways and charismatic leadership is largely indistinguishable from inspirational leadership (Hinken and Tracey 2000). Charismatic leaders are likely to be transformational, however it is also possible to be transformational without being charismatic (Bass 2008). Charismatic leaders influence followers by:

- stating a vision that provides a sense of community by linking the present with a better future;
- communicating high expectations and expressing confidence that followers can attain (DeCenzo and Robbins 2002);
- conveying, through words and actions, a new set of values, and by his or her behaviour, setting an example for followers to imitate (Mihelic et al. 2010);
- making self-sacrifices and engaging in unconventional behaviours to demonstrate courage and convictions about the vision.

Charismatic leadership in Kuwait could be seen more as inspiring, through motivational speeches (especially for leaders with Islamic inclinations) or through tribal attitudes, whereby the leader ensures that his words are seen as orders, and loyalty is expected and given according to blood, which means less value added and vision to the real business.

2.3.9 Entrepreneurial leadership

Entrepreneurial leadership is a relatively new concept, fusing the field of leadership with that of entrepreneurship. Gupta et al. (2004: 241) viewed entrepreneurial leadership as that which "creates visionary scenarios that are used to assemble and mobilise a 'supporting cast' of participants who become committed by the vision to the discovery and exploitation of strategic value creation". The main elements of entrepreneurial leadership include vision and pro-activeness as elements derived from the leadership field, and innovation and creativity, opportunity seeking and risk taking as elements derived from entrepreneurship, which is considered by McCarthy (2003: 158) to be "the ability to influence others to manage resources strategically, in order to emphasise both opportunity-seeking and advantage-seeking behaviours".

The subject of entrepreneurial leadership now permeates the strategies of companies focused on gaining competitive advantage (Ireland and Webb 2007). Continuous innovation (in terms of products, processes, technologies, administrative routines and structures) and an ability to compete proactively in global markets are key skills for corporate performance, but Kuwaiti companies remain shielded by the government. However, further liberalisation is imminent to attract more foreign direct investment (FDI) and diversify the economy for a post-oil age.

2.3.10 Authentic leadership

Authentic leadership can be seen as an offshoot from transformational leadership, focusing on intrapersonal and interpersonal leadership perspectives, defined by Luthans and Avolio (2003: 243) as:

> *"A process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organisational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviours on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development".*

Authentic leadership is characterised by heightened levels of followers' self-awareness and self-regulation, leading to positive follower development and outcomes. Recognition of the self-referential nature of authenticity is critical to

understanding the construct (Shamir and Eilam 2005). It requires self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviours on the part of the leaders and associates, thereby fostering positive self-development, which develops from a foundation in the leaders' positive psychological qualities and ethics (Walumbwa et al. 2008). However, authentic leadership is multi-dimensional and too fissiparous to define and measure (Luthans and Avolio 2003). Avolio and Gardner (2005) believe that authentic leadership development can be achieved through ongoing processes such as training, and they state that the main characteristics of authentic leaders are that they:

- are true to themselves,
- are motivated by personal convictions rather than personal benefits,
- lead from their own personal point of view, and
- their actions are based on their personal values and convictions.

From the above characteristics of authentic leadership, the key components may be categorised as: (a) psychological capacities of confidence, optimism, hope and resiliency as personal resources of the authentic leader; (b) positive moral perspective; (c) leader self-awareness; and (d) leader self-regulation. Notably, authentic leaders lead by example, as they demonstrate transparent decision-making, confidence, optimism, hope and resilience, and consistency between their words and deeds (Avolio and Gardner 2005).

It is a leadership style that provides the impetus for followers to be more engaged, aware and intelligent about the direction being set, so that they can contribute their best views about the desired future state of the organisation.

2.4   Current, competing theories of leadership

While hegemony has been held for a time by numerous theories of leadership, there is currently no dominant theory. Various current theories are discussed in this section, prior to discussing social constructionist and critical perspectives on leadership.

2.4.1 Relational leadership

As noted earlier, traditional leadership theories have been criticised for being functionalist and positivist in orientation, not understanding the essential relative nature of leadership. Relational leadership is relatively new and was initially introduced by Uhl-Bien (2006: 672), who stated that, "we need to move beyond a focus on the manager-subordinate dyad, or a measure of relationship quality, to address the question of what are the relational dynamics by which leadership is developed throughout the workplace?" Relational leadership was defined as "a social influence process through which emergent coordination (i.e. evolving social order) and change (e.g. new values, attitudes, approaches, behaviours, and ideologies) are constructed and produced" (Uhl-Bien 2006: 655). From this perspective, leadership and its practice are socially constructed through relational (social) processes, therefore, the social aspect is at the heart of relational leadership. Because changes are "constructed and produced", everybody participates in the process, regardless of role or hierarchical position (Uhl-Bien 2006), and leadership is a social reality, emergent and inseparable from its context (Hosking 1988).

Applied to leadership, a relational perspective changes the focus from the individual to the collective dynamic (Hosking 2006). Consequently, relational perspectives do not seek to identify attributes or behaviours of individual leaders, but instead focus on the communication processes through which relational realities are made (Hosking et al. 1995). In this sense, relational perspectives view leadership as the process through which social order is constructed and changed (Hosking and Morley 1988).

According to Uhl-Bien (2006), relational leadership can be considered from two different perspectives: entity and relational. The entity perspective refers to "attributes of individuals as they engage in interpersonal relationships", while the relational perspective refers to "a process of social construction through which certain understandings of leadership come about and are given privileged ontology" (Uhl-Bien 2006: 654). Moreover, the meaning or the conceptualisation of the relationship changes according to the perspective: "The former focuses

primarily on leadership in conditions of already 'being organised' while the latter considers leadership as 'a process of organising'" (Uhl-Bien 2006: 664).

In summary, leadership is seen as the result of a social dynamic in which members of the organisation participate in knowledge systems through the relational dialogue, which Uhl-Bien (2006: 672) explains thus:

> *"[This perspective] would allow us to consider processes that are not just about the quality of the relationship or even the type of relationship, but rather about the social dynamics by which leadership relationships form and evolve in the workplace. In this way, it moves leadership beyond a focus on simply getting alignment (and productivity) or a manager's view of what is productive, to a consideration of how leadership arises through the interactions and negotiation of social order among organisational members".*

Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) reworked relational leadership by articulating both its conceptual and practical foundations within social constructionist ontology, suggesting that:

> *"… this ontology has very practical consequences for leading and managing organisations because it suggests that organisational members actively create their organisational world through their relationships with one another; that what we say is important; and that it is the nature of those relationships that are important" (Cunliffe and Eriksen 2011: 1432).*

They also argue that four main conceptual threads run through relational leadership: leadership is a way of being-in-the-world; it encompasses working out, dialogically, what is meaningful with others; it means recognising that working through differences is inherently a moral responsibility; and involves practical wisdom. Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) then conclude that relational leadership is not a theory or model of leadership, rather "it draws on an intersubjective view of the world to offer a way of thinking about who leaders are in relation to others (human beings, partners) and how they might work with others within the complexity of experience" (Cunliffe and Eriksen 2011: 1433). They also conclude

that leadership is accomplished in the "mundane" and small details of conversation by creating open dialogue, being responsible for recognising and responsively attending to difference through scenic moments, "where together people draw out of the features of the landscape so that what may have remained hidden is noticed and attended to" (Cunliffe and Eriksen 2011: 1439). They also suggest that it is important to become attuned to sensing and responding in the present moment with relational integrity that respects and responds to difference.

A relational view places emphasis on interpersonal relations and it goes beyond this to concern "the dynamic interplay between individuals, historical and institutional structures and different forms of materiality, such as tools, technologies and other artefacts" (Oborn et al. 2013: 254).

From the above discussion, it would appear that relational leadership requires a relational ontology, i.e. understanding social experience as intersubjective (Cunliffe 2010) and leadership as a way of being-in-relation-to-others (Cunliffe and Eriksen 2011). Within this study, the relationship of interest is one amongst the executive team itself and the relationship between the executive team and the board.

Relational leadership critiques over-individualised views of people. Its core values, as set out by Fairfield (2013: 23), include the need to understand well-being relationally and holistically, the importance of diversity and the need for sharing leadership to ensure sustainability. However, much of the empirical research concerning relational governance employs a macro-perspective that masks the ambiguity in the relationships between the actors. At the heart of this leadership perspective is the ability to deliver a nuanced response, appropriate to situations and cognisant of the personal relationships existent therein – yet still focused on achieving the service's and users' goals (Clark et al. 2014).

2.4.2 Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership is a concept that has seen a rapid growth in interest since 2000 in theory and practice (Bolden 2011). Bennett et al. (2003) argue that, "distributed leadership is… a group activity that works through and within relationships, rather than individual action" (Bennett et al. 2003: 3). This notion of

"group activity" leadership has also been in use for some time, using terms such as "collective leadership" (Denis et al. 2001), "collaborative leadership" (Rosenthal 1998), "co-leadership" (Heenan and Bennis 1999) and "emergent leadership" (Beck 1981). All these accounts share the idea that leadership is not the monopoly or responsibility of one person, with each suggesting a similar need for a more collective and systemic understanding of leadership as a social process (Hosking 1988; Barker 2001). Distributed leadership replaces the model of "a single 'heroic', leader standing atop a hierarchy, bending the school community to his or her purposes" (Camburn et al. 2003: 348) to a leadership concept that involves activities and interactions distributed across multiple people and situations (Camburn et al. 2003; Copland 2003), involving role complementarities and network patterns of control (Smylie and Denny 1990; Heller and Firestone 1995).

Gronn (2002) traced the emergence of distributed leadership by other names from the early 1950s (Gibb 1954), before rediscovery by Brown and Hosking (1986), reflecting the fluidity of leadership. Hargreaves and Fink (2006: 79) concluded that distributed leadership has been "a central part of organisational theory and the field of educational administration since the 1960s", beyond "executive positions" and "spanning levels and circulation up and down hierarchies"; this is pertinent to the case of many Kuwaiti organisations.

According to Spillane (2005: 143), distributed leadership is a way of thinking about the practice of leadership "over an interactive web of people and situations, examining how leadership is spread over both leaders and followers given key aspects of their situation, including organisational routines, structures, and tools". Spillane believes that the interactions between leaders and followers are crucial when considering how to involve people in leadership opportunities. Therefore, leadership practice is not viewed as a product of a leader's knowledge and skill, but rather as the interactions between people and their situation. It is through these interactions, rather than actions, that leadership practice is understood, as these interactions inform, influence and construct leadership practice. It is therefore clear that distributed leadership fundamentally contradicts the traditional and functionalist approach to leadership, where leadership is imposed

on the followers by a leader from above (Pearce and Conger 2003). However, it is important to note that distributed leadership can be considered to incorporate shared, democratic, dispersed and other related forms of leadership (Bolden 2011). Three premises that are shared by most authors are:

1. Leadership is an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals.
2. There is openness to the boundaries of leadership.
3. Varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few (Bennett et al., 2003).

2.4.3 Followership leadership

This section discusses followership leadership, which may be perceived as the mirror image of leadership (Yung and Tsai 2013), since leaders would be non-existent without the support of their followers. As Yung and Tsai (2013) argue, the relationship between leaders and followers resembles a miniature democracy. Many scholars and practitioners of leadership support the idea of interplay between leaders and followers as intrinsic parts of the same phenomenon (Attridge 1949; Buchanan 2007; Kleiner 2008), with some considering followership itself "a form of leadership" (Jerry 2013: 348), although it has received minimal attention compared to leadership, an acknowledged issue since the 1970s (Burns 1978; Meindl et al. 1985). Academic interest in followers and followership was dormant until Kelley (1992), and Baker (2007) concluded that leaders and followers are symbiotic and equal. Followership has been defined by many authors, as shown in Table 2.2. However, as with "management" there is no universal definition of "followership", and leadership and followership are sometimes used interchangeably (Foster 1989; Bass and Stogdill 1990; Bass 2008). It is widely affirmed that good leaders and followers share similar characteristics (Hollander 1992; Brown 2003; Latour and Rast 2004). As Latour and Rast (2004) stressed, this connection implies two dimensions of followership: competency and relationship.

Table 2.2: Definitions of followership

Rost (2008: 57)
"An influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend significant changes that reflect their mutual interests"
Cox et al. (2010: 48)
"An a priori choice (self-conscious) of the individual in the context of his or her relationship to the nominal leader. Issues of authority and rank play little or no role in such a choice. Followership is interactive"
Maroosis (2008: 18)
"A discipline of competences and response-abilities… readiness"
Howell and Costley (2006: 298)
"Followership is defined as an interactive role individuals play that complements the leadership role and is equivalent to it in importance for achieving group and organisational performance. The followership role includes the degree of enthusiasm, cooperation, effort, active participation, task competence and critical thinking an individual exhibits in support of group or organisational objectives without the need for star billing".

Competency followership involves working effectively with others, embracing change, understanding what is expected, and seeing one's self as a resource. Relationship followership pertains to building trust, communicating courageously, identifying with the leader, and adopting the leader's vision. Lundin and Lancaster (1990) state that effective followers are individuals who (a) possess of a high level of organisational understanding, (b) make sound decisions, (c) show enthusiasm when asked to do tasks, (d) demonstrate strong commitment to their work, and (e) take on a high level of responsibility. Nolan and Harty (1984) suggested intelligence, cooperativeness, diplomacy, and sociability are also important qualities of good followership. Barrette (2010) also provided seven traits of good followers: humanity, loyalty, honesty, integrity, reliability, utility and synergy. Therefore, one can say that followers play an important building block in the organisational structure. Kelley's (1988: 146) conceptualisation of leadership and followership exploited the skills and abilities unique to each role, distinguishing followers and leaders, thus:

> "People who are effective in the leader role have the vision to set corporate goals and strategies, the interpersonal skills to achieve consensus, the verbal capacity to communicate enthusiasm to large and diverse groups of individuals, the organisational talent to coordinate disparate efforts and, above all, the desire to lead. People

who are effective in the follower role have the vision to see both the forest and the trees, the social capacity to work well with others, the strength of character to flourish without heroic status, the moral and psychological balance to pursue personal and corporate goals at no cost to others, and, above all, the desire to participate in a team effort for the accomplishment of some greater common purpose".

In terms of the role of followers, Shamir et al. (2007) argued that the most common and traditional role of the follower is as a recipient of the leaders' influence. In this role, the leader is the causal agent and the leader's traits and behaviours are the independent variables; the follower's perceptions, attitudes and behaviours represent the dependent variables. Referred to as a substitute for leadership (Kerr and Jermier 1978), the follower in this role possesses all of the behaviours required for organisational success. Shared leadership, another follower role categorisation, is based on the doubt of the usefulness of distinguishing between the roles of the follower or leader, suggesting that leadership is not a role, but rather a function or activity that is shared among organisational members (Shamir et al. 2007).

In this perspective, leader effectiveness should be evaluated by reference to follower attitudes, behaviours, satisfaction and followers' acceptance of the leader.

2.4.4 Other leadership styles

Leadership style is defined as the pattern of behaviours that leaders display during their work with and through others (Hersey and Blanchard 1993). Several factors shape the specific styles of leaders, particularly their personal background and feelings about appropriate leadership, which determine their specific leadership style, as with employees. For example, employees who are more knowledgeable and experienced may prefer a democratic leadership style, while employees with different experiences and expectations may prefer an autocratic leadership style. Some factors in the organisational environment such as organisational climate, organisational values, composition of work groups and type of work can also influence leadership style. Successful leaders can adapt

their leadership style according to the perceived preferences and needs of followers (Al-Ababneh and Lockwood 2011).

The democratic leadership style entails some active involvement of employees; the leader relies upon group decision making and praises honestly. It is a way of leading that influences people in a way that is consistent and beneficial to basic democratic principles and processes, such as equal participation and deliberation. This is very much in-line with Theory Y, which tends to have a positive view of people, specifically that they are keen to learn and can equally make a contribution to the well-being of an organisation.

Laissez-faire has been viewed as a non-leadership style, primarily because the leader avoids decisions, hesitates to take action and generally ignores their subordinate's needs. It is further indicated that this way of leading comes with a leader who does not exercise authority (Manners 2008).

Task-oriented leaders place less focus on people and prioritise achieving results, thus they micromanage to fulfil pre-established goals and objectives (Soriano and Martinez 2007).

A participative style refers to the involvement and influence of individuals in decisions that are ordinarily the prerogative or responsibility of others (Parnell 2010). It asks organisational members to think in a strategic way and to accept full responsibility for the quality of their personal work (Bowen and Lawler 1995). Employee involvement here is taken to mean the exercise by employees of influence over how their work is organised and carried out. Participative leadership is a leadership style where managers share with the rest of the members of the organisation their influence in the decision-making process (Pardo-del-Val et al. 2012).

Empowerment is a leadership style that leaders embody to enhance employee motivation, in order to foster their individual development to achieve organisational goals (Kanter 1977). Konczak et al. (2000) identified six dimensions of leader-empowering behaviour: delegation of authority, accountability, self-directed decision making, information sharing, skill development, and coaching for innovative performance.

2.4.5 The social constructionist approach

A major critique of the above leadership theories has developed from the dominance of positivist, quantitative research in this history of thinking about leadership in organisations. Alternative qualitative approaches to understanding leadership have been gaining ground (Bryman 2004). For example, Grint (2005) argues that leadership theories should move away from the proactive role of the individual leader, top director or executive as an outstanding individual manipulating subordinates, as this functionalist approach ignores individual differences within social contexts wherein leaders, managers and subordinates operate.

This critique gave rise to interpretivist perspectives such as the social construction of leadership, which understands leadership as a negotiated and dynamic interplay between leaders, managers and employees (Meindl 1985; Gronn 2000, 2002; Grint 2001, 2005; Collinson 2006; Vine et al. 2008), as detailed in the next section. Critical theories of leadership offer new challenges to provide a comprehensive account of leadership theory, however, these are fundamentally Western theories, as discussed in the chapter summary.

2.5   The dimensions of the social construction of leadership

Several forms of social constructionism exist (Pearce 1995; Gergen and Gergen 2003) positing that, "realities are constructed through social processes in which meanings are negotiated, consensus formed and contestation is possible" (Fairhurst and Grant 2005: 174). The concept has its origins in symbolic interactionism (Mead 1934) and phenomenology (Schutz 1970). There are four main dimensions of the social construction of leadership according to the "sailing guide" shown in Figure 2.1.

The distinction between the "construction of social reality" and the "social construction of reality" is that the former emphasises cognitive perceptions, whereas the latter emphasises foregrounds, action and the interactions themselves (Pearce 1995). This dimension of social constructionism also has implications on adopting either quantitative or qualitative methods, as discussed in Chapter 4.
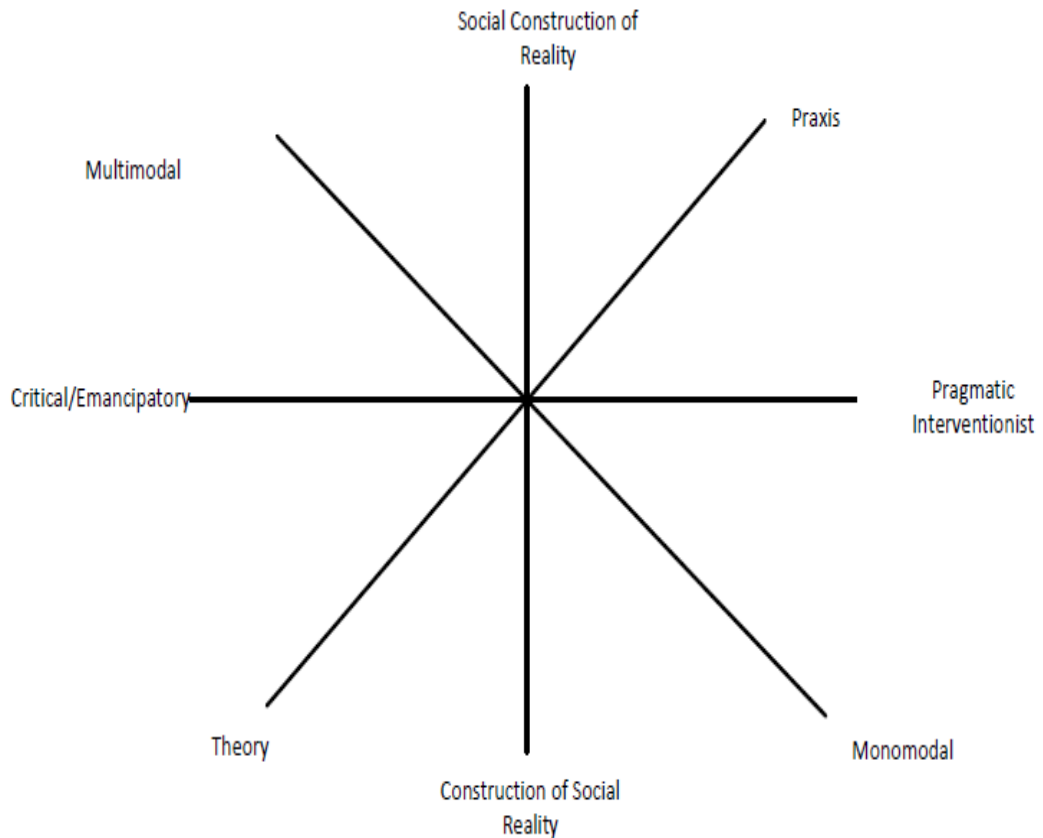
Figure 2.1: A sailing guide to the social construction of leadership
(Adapted from Fairhurst and Grant 2010)

The dimension of "theory" versus "praxis" posits that the former is instrumental in the latter (Shotter 1993; Grint 1995; Cronen 2001; Eisenberg 2007; Fairhurst 2007; Kelly 2008).

The third dimension of "critical/emancipatory" versus "pragmatic intervention" is primarily concerned with issues of power dynamics in social constructionist research (Fairhurst and Grant 2010). Critical management theories emphasise the dominance of power by top management (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Cunliffe 2009). Ethno-methodological studies require actors to first make issues of power/control specifically relevant to the task-at-hand, whereas pragmatic intervention may tread more lightly on power dynamics to stay within the logics, grammars, and tasks of the participants involved (Grant and Ledema 2005).

The last constructionism dimension by Fairhurst and Grant (2010) is "mono-modal" versus "multi-modal", which is concerned with whether researchers limit their attention solely to leadership actors' language in organisations, or whether

they focus on other means of generating meaning, such as the use of space, the body, clothing, technology, etc. The focus has been toward the former, although there is a move towards use of other means.

These dimensions of social constructionism have methodological implications on explanations of leadership, due to the ontological assumption that reality is constructed socially through language and observation (Gergen and Gergen 2003).

2.6 Critical notions of leadership

Alvesson and Deetz (1996) noted that the positivist approach suppressed variation in leadership concepts and practice in favour of contrived universalism. The critical social science perspective emerged as an alternative paradigm to positivist and interpretivist approaches (Kura 2012), highlighting the potential of human consciousness to reflect critically on oppressive practices and to facilitate the extension of domains of autonomy and responsibility in the complex and variable social phenomenon of leadership (Alvesson and Willmott 1998). This critical perspective is characterised by:

- Questioning assumptions.
- Foregrounding processes of power and noting how inequalities of power intersect with social factors (e.g. race, gender and age).
- Identifying competing discourses and the sectional interests reflected in them.
- Developing a workplace and social milieu characterised by justice, not inequality or exploitation (Trehan 2007).

Critical social science concurs with the interpretivist paradigm in that social science is not value-free, but differs from interpretivism in that everything is relative and nothing is absolute (Kaplan and Maxwell 1994).

2.7 Summary of the discussion of leadership

Earlier works of leadership aimed to identify the characteristics and attributes of great personalities who would serve as exemplars for would-be leaders to

emulate, and these were dominated by trait theories of leadership. Later studies changed their focus to leader behaviours, rather than personal attributes (traits), and McGregor (1960) foreshadowed constructivist perspectives and argued that the leaders whose worldview assumes that people are competent and creative (Theory Y) would enhance both individual development and organisational performance in sharp contrast to Theory X. However, his theory had little influence on subsequent theoretical and empirical work. During the same era, other theorists (Fiedler 1967) began linking leadership with performance. However, this link between leadership and human performance is much more complex and problems associated with this perspective include ambiguity in defining the concept; and the issue of up to what point leadership impacts organisational performance (de Souza Sant'Anna et al. 2011). Team performance was moderated by the leadership style, by the level of acceptance of the leader's authority by subordinates, by the degree of task structure and by the leader's formal authority.

Focus then shifted from more measurable items, such as productivity and efficiency, towards more subjective items, e.g. expectations and values. This paved an interest in charismatic leadership, along with visionary leadership (Burns 1978). Critique about charismatic leadership centred around dependence on one person (the leader) and suspension of critical thinking, loss of team identity on the part of followers. Then transformational leadership tried to accommodate creativity, change and vision without the liabilities of charisma and its accompanying personality cults (Bass and Avolio 1990). Transformational leadership brought together four characteristics: (a) idealised influence; (b) inspirational motivation; (c) individualised consideration; and (d) intellectual stimulation. Transformational leadership has been contrasted with transactional leadership, where subordinates are motivated thorough more utilitarian exchanges and incentives.

Most of these theories have been largely examined using quantitative approaches and have been criticised for being rational and positivistic in orientation. Non-positivist leadership theories view leadership as being constructed by the actors themselves and include relational leadership,

followership leadership, distributed leadership and other critical paradigms. Grint (2001, 2005) advanced the theory of the leadership arts, which is almost wholly based on the social construction of leadership and followership, with minimal reliance on objectivism. However, the study was influenced by a combination of theories, as opposed to reliance on one particular theory of leadership.

Overall, this literature review suggests that positivist leadership theories are still very influential, but they are augmented by contemporary theories that emphasise the fact that if leaders are to be effective, they have to take into consideration their followers and the contexts they find themselves in (e.g. their relationships with the board and their peers).

2.8   Limitations of contemporary leadership theory

Prevailing theories of leadership are firmly rooted in Western civilization, and cannot be transposed wholesale to non-Western cultures such as Kuwait. However, they are still relevant to understanding leadership in the context of power, social influence and other aspects. A notable weakness of existing research is the narrow range of research methods and focus in leadership studies in general. Many studies adopted a positivist perspective and failed to probe in-depth social phenomena pertinent to leadership, including personal values, changing relationships between organisations and their various stakeholders, increasing globalisation and multiculturalism, and new social demands on companies (Higgs 2003).

A positivist ontology might be apt to understand the salient characteristics of leadership in Kuwait, but a subjective perspective offers deeper insight into Kuwaiti CEOs' definitions and experiences of effective leadership within a qualitative model. This study therefore uses qualitative research methods located within a positivist ontology.

In terms of epistemology, leadership has to be understood within a social context of ideas and practices, which ultimately give meaning and form to how leadership is actually enacted and experienced, and therefore the behaviour setting of interaction and observation must be recorded. This does not mean abandoning

a positivist perspective, but it does require a qualitative rather than quantitative approach. A positivist qualitative approach, as used in this thesis, follows the long-standing tradition in leadership theory that the truth is out there, but this thesis is different because it explores leaders' accounts of those truths as they experience them (Denscombe 2010).

2.9   Literature synthesis and gaps identified

The literature review indicated that CEOL is underpinned by several traditional theories, such as trait, behavioural, situational, transactional, transformational, charismatic, and authentic leadership. It is through an understanding of these theories that we can begin to glean the dimensions that greatly influence CEOL in Kuwait. However, it was also shown that many of these theories have been functionalist in orientation and undertaken using scientific methods that do not take into account differences amongst the leaders, or the contextual differences.

It was also observed that little research had been undertaken to gain insight into the way that CEOs in Kuwait perceive their effectiveness from their own perspective.

Many leadership studies have been conducted from Western perspectives, using quantitative studies; but they have been unable to reveal the real inside-workings of CEOs, and they do not reflect cultural differences in Arab countries, and Kuwait in particular. Furthermore, it is not known how the CEOs themselves perceive their effectiveness; an understanding of this would help with the enhancement of leadership development programmes, which would draw on CEOs' own experiences and understandings to ultimately enhance organisational performance and shareholder value. Leadership development methodologies ought to focus on what the leaders themselves feel is important to them for effectiveness, as opposed to imposing leadership development programmes. It is important to factor in what those around them feel and say about them, although inclusion of subordinates in the study was not the focus of the study.

Lastly, it was observed that there is no integrated model to inform our understanding of CEO leadership in Kuwait.

2.10 Chapter summary

This chapter has critically reviewed the extant literature on leadership and has shown that although there is a vast array of literature on leadership, and there are many theories of how leadership should be practised, these are rooted in experiences in the US and Europe. CEO/leader effectiveness is an important phenomenon in organisational life, which is not well understood and researched in Middle Eastern countries, such as Kuwait, where there are socio-cultural and religious beliefs that may influence the way work is constructed and conducted, as explored in the next chapter.

3　Study Context and Conceptual Model

3.1　Introduction

This chapter discusses the contextual issues that influence leadership effectiveness from the perspectives of CEOs (organisational leaders) in Kuwait, to identify and appreciate the importance of leadership behaviours in the study context. Kouzes and Posner (2010) observed that there could be differences in leadership effectiveness between diverse contexts, thus this chapter focuses on various contextual factors such as culture (societal and organisational), religion and *Wasta* (patronage), business environment and relationships between the board and the executive team, as well as CEOs' life experiences and family background, as these are considered to have a significant influence on CEOL. In an effort to help fill this void, this study will focus on CEOs working in Kuwait's private and public organisations.

3.2　Country background

Kuwait is a relatively small country in West Asia. Islam is the official religion and Arabic is the official language, although English is universally taught in schools as a second language. Following independence from British colonial rule in 1961, Kuwait became part of the GCC, facing challenges of imported modernity and sudden economic prosperity (Ali and Al-Kazemi 2002). Of the total population of 4.1 million people, 1.3 million are Kuwaitis and 2.8 million are expatriates (Population Census, Public Authority for Civil Information 2014), chiefly from South-East Asia, the Indian subcontinent and other Arab countries, mainly engaged in service occupations (e.g. manual labour, domestic service and low-level clerical occupations), with a small Western community of highly skilled personnel.

The population lives in an ethnically segregated manner, with Kuwaitis being concentrated in the Al-Ahmadi governorate and non-Kuwaitis predominantly found in the Farwaniya governorate (Kuwait Pocket Guide 2009). As noted by Khalfan and Alshawaf (2003), 98% of the population reside in urban areas where the government has provided easy access to paved roads, water, electricity and

sewage supplies/facilities, schools, supermarkets, healthcare facilities and other amenities. The standard of living in Kuwait is comparable with many developed countries, but it is still considered to be developing (Khalfan and Alshawaf 2003).

National prosperity based on oil exports enable lavish state patronage, with a per capita GDP of $42,100 (CIA 2010). The country is heavily involved in oil extraction and export, and it disburses the oil revenues via an extensive social welfare programme for Kuwaiti nationals, including employment in over-staffed government sinecures (Ali and Al-Kazemi 2007). The private sector consists mainly of small and medium-sized organisations, mostly family owned and intertwined with state personnel by family and patronage networks (Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001).

3.3   The CEO and the effect of culture

Numerous authors have thought that organisational culture is intricately related to leadership, particularly at senior leadership levels (e.g. Davis 1984; Trice and Beyer 1993; Schein 2004). Gibson et al. (2009) supported relationships between CEO personality and cultural values. Exploratory analysis indicated that several CEO personal values were related to cultural values. In terms of the national culture and its relationship with leadership effectiveness, Schein (1985) suggested that culture manages management more than management manages culture. Due to the significant influence that culture has on leadership, it is imperative that societal and organisational cultures are reviewed to determine their implications for CEOL.

3.3.1 Societal culture

This research draws on the work by Hofstede (1980, 1983), Alvesson (2002) and the Globe study (House et al. 2004), which considered Kuwait indirectly. For Hofstede's early work (1983), Kuwait came under the "Arab Countries" cluster, while the latest Globe study had a generic "Arab World" concept.

- Hofstede's study

Hofstede (1983) noted the effect of culture on leadership by highlighting that effective leadership processes must reflect the national culture. As such, cultural

clusters must be created which reflect the culture of the nation, including the language, beliefs, values, religion and social life. Hofstede (1983) also highlighted that national culture is the collective programming of the human mind and the core issue of organisational science.

A comprehensive study of national culture was conducted by Hofstede (1980, 1983), wherein he posited five dimensions of culture: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism versus individualism, masculinity versus femininity, and long- versus short-term orientation. These dimensions and the classification of national cultures on numerical scales for each dimension were based on Hofstede's (1980) study of IBM employees working in numerous countries. Countries were ranked in hierarchical order for each dimension based on a quantitative identification of prevailing national cultural attributes (McSweeney 2002); each country was scored on a scale from 0 to 100 for each dimension.

Hofstede (1980) believed that some questions in the survey were more related to values, which he considered to be the core of a culture. He defined values as "broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others" (Hofstede 1980: 19). By focusing on these dimensions, it is possible to identify the extent, nature and dynamics of cultural similarities, consequently exposing the influence of national culture on leadership behaviour (Javidan et al. 2006).

The first dimension is that of power distance, which was defined as the degree to which societal members expect and agree that power is unequally shared. Power distance is "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede 1991: 28). Individuals from high power distance cultures typically believe that power differentials are legitimate and inevitable. Such cultures tend to be autocratic, highly centralised and explicitly hierarchical (Delerue and Simon 2009).

Uncertainty avoidance was defined as the extent to which members of a society strive to avoid uncertainty by relying on social norms and bureaucratic practices as a way to help alleviate the unpredictability of future events (Hofstede 1980, 1983; House et al. 2004). The uncertainty avoidance dimension determines how

individuals and organisations within a society react to an unknown future or manage and accept risk (Delerue and Simon 2009).

The next value reflects the extent to which individuals express pride, loyalty and cohesiveness in their groups, families or organisations (Hofstede 1980, 1983). It is individualism/collectivism that deals with the relation to self (Doney, Cannon and Mullen 1998) by reflecting concerns about the notion of self and personality, as well as the way in which people interact. As such, people are protected by the group, but they are also expected to act in the group's best interests (Newman and Nollen 1996).

Masculine and feminine orientation reflects a culture's dominant values with respect to achievement, recognition, competitiveness and interpersonal relationships (Hofstede 1980). This is social rather than biological sex role division. These social constructions are more or less arbitrary and vary from one society to another. Hofstede (1983) considered a society to be masculine when emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender and concerned with equality. On the other hand, a society is deemed to be feminine when these emotional gender roles overlap; as such, both men and women will be more modest, tender and concerned with equality.

A fifth dimension was established by Hofstede and Bond (1988), initially termed "Confucian dynamism", but later renamed "time orientation". This was in response to their studies in China, where the degree to which individuals in societies engage in behaviours such as planning and investing in the future are greater, as opposed to focusing on the past and present (Hofstede and Bond 1988; Hofstede 1991; House et al. 2004).

In terms of the implications of Hofstede's study to Kuwait, Kuwait was classified as a high power distance society that separates the top management/leaders from the rest of the organisational members (Hofstede 1980, 1983). While Arab countries as a whole have a high power distance (80), Kuwait was particularly high even among this group, with 90 (Hofstede 1980). This indicates that Kuwait is characterised by hierarchical organisations with chain of command structures,

and that people accept and obey authority (and inequality); thus, personal autonomy and innovation are expected to be correspondingly low.

It is well known that Kuwait exhibits a high level of centralisation and bureaucracy. Abdullah and Al-Homoud (1995) found that organisations in Kuwait value the hierarchy of authority, since power and authority are confined to employees at the top hierarchal level. In such societies, it may be difficult to have participative decision-making or meaningful consultations with or by lower level employees. Similar findings were established by House et al. (2004).

In terms of uncertainty avoidance, Kuwait scored 80 – thus people have a preference for avoiding uncertainty. Kuwait's score was higher than the Arab average of 68 (Hofstede 1980), therefore, Kuwait was classified as a high uncertainty avoidance society. It is worth noting in this regard the increased importance of harmony with others and with nature in Asian and Arab societies, in sharp contrast with the traditional Western paradigm that emphasises individual achievement and mastery over nature (Kumar and Nti 2004). Furthermore, many people in the Muslim world strongly believe that the ultimate control of human affairs and the environment is in the hands of God (Krauss et al. 2007).

According to House et al. (2004), uncertainty avoidance can affect the implementation of new projects in an organisation, and it will therefore have different implications with regard to time orientation for both organisational and societal behaviours. Ali et al. (1997) stated that Arab workers, in general, prefer a structured and unambiguous work environment with more formalised and standardised work procedures that fall within a centralised structure. Abdullah and Al-Homoud (1995) found that Kuwaitis are rigid and non-innovative. These ways of working are likely to limit the amount of creativity and autonomy observed within the workplace.

In terms of individualism versus collectivism, Kuwait scored 25, while the Arab average was 38. Thus, Kuwait is considered a highly collectivistic society because there is a reliance on membership of groups for identity and status, and there is a long-term commitment to group identity and objectives at the expense

of individual attainment/interests. It is believed that strong bonds and trust exist between members of the same group.

Hofstede (1980) related that in a collectivist society, offence will lead to shame and loss of face, moral terms dominate the employee-employer relationship, decisions related to hiring and promotion take account of the employees in a group, and management is the management of the group, rather than of individuals. GCC cultures have intensive emphasis on loyalty to their in-groups and leaders consider themselves the caregivers and fathers of employees (Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001), meaning they tend to consult with their group but are less accommodating with others.

Ali et al. (1997) studied the concept of individualism and collectivism, along with decision styles and implications for organisational and cross-cultural relationships among 307 managers in Kuwait. They acknowledged that Kuwait, unlike many other Arab states, is a tolerant and cosmopolitan society, which they related to its history as a nation of merchants. They further explained that Kuwaitis have been exposed, for a relatively long time, to foreign cultural ideas and customs that have shaped their behaviours and attitudes, while also exhibiting two contradictory values: strong individualism on one hand, and a passionate attachment to primary groups (tribal and sectarian) on the other.

In Kuwait and throughout the Arab World individuals are concerned with maintaining strong and cohesive relationships with their immediate families, relatives, neighbours and friends. According to Hofstede (1983), in a more collectivist society, the personal relationship prevails over the task and should therefore be established first, whereas in the individualist society, the task is supposed to prevail over any personal relationship.

In the fourth dimension of masculinity versus femininity, the Arab countries scored 53 while Kuwait scored 40 (Hofstede 1980). Thus Kuwaitis exhibited less assertiveness, achievement and competitiveness, they also had more solidarity and less assertiveness in terms of their management style, which relates to egalitarianism (Schwartz 1999).

The Kuwaiti culture is positioned as being relatively feminine, whereby managers strive for consensus and people value equality, in contrast to highly masculine societies where the working value is to win and be the best in the field. According to Sidani and Gardner (2000), the common religious teachings in the Arab world appear to promote a differentiation between gender roles. In addition, Sidani and Gardner (2000) mentioned that the social and religious traditions in this region have generated disapproval (by men and women) of women becoming supervisors or co-workers. Accordingly, very few women have progressed into senior positions throughout Kuwait, including in governmental and parliamentary positions. Thus, intensive development is needed in this region, not only for the male leaders but also for the female leaders, particularly at the higher levels of top management or chief executives.

Hofstede's work has been embraced by many researchers, but others have expressed their doubts about the validity of Hofstede's inferences. In particular, McSweeney (2002) criticised Hofstede's methodology, claiming that his research was based on "fundamental flawed assumptions", partly because it failed to recognise occupational sub-cultures within organisations, and because the research limited the initial dimensions to just four.

Another criticism focused on the manner in which Hofstede identified national culture in IBM subsidiaries. While there were three non-interacting cultures existing in every organisation (organisational, occupational and national), each employee must be influenced by all three. Hofstede argued that there was only one organisational culture (the IBM culture), given the fact that employees were matched occupationally. Therefore, Hofstede claimed that the differences observed in the questionnaire responses reflected differences in the national culture. McSweeney (2002) considered this claim to be unrelated to reality, raising a question mark over the possibility that there was one single organisational culture in IBM worldwide, and whether it really was possible for every occupation to have one single global culture.

In addition, it should be noted that McSweeney (2002) wondered whether the answers given by the respondents were comprehensive enough to derive clear

descriptions of the culture, noting that the analysis was established based on respondent answers to a fixed format of choices.

Nations should not be equated with societies (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005), as, the concept of common culture applies to the latter, not the former. In earlier work, Hofstede (1983) considered the dimensions of culture to be national rather than societal, reflecting his European preconceptions: the nation (i.e. the nation state with its national government, national culture and national language etc.), such as it is, emerged from the historical experience of Europe, and it did not appear elsewhere in the world except under imperialism.

According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), within nations that have existed for some time, there are strong forces that influence further integration. Furthermore, he argues that today's nations do not attain the degree of international homogeneity of the isolated, but they are the source of a considerable amount of common mental programming of their citizens. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) admit that using nationality as a criterion is a matter of expediency, because it is immensely easier to obtain data for nations than for organic homogeneous societies (that may include diaspora communities). This again supports the criticism about the applicability of Hofstede's work, in particular with regard to the grouping of Arab-speaking nations together. To illustrate this point, Arab peoples' behaviours and beliefs vary within as well as between countries.

Despite such criticism, many researchers support the logical appeal of Hofstede's dimensions, including Triandis (1982: 88) who stated that:

> *"The dimensions identified by Hofstede certainly make sense. One has a déjà vu feeling about some of them… One can also think of the protection of the leader (king or president) in high power distance countries as opposed to the mingling of leaders with the populations in low power distance countries… Hofstede's study will stand as one of the major landmarks of cross-cultural research for many years to come".*

Whilst Hofstede's dimensions are an important beginning, qualitative approaches are needed for a nuanced appreciation of culture (Alvesson 2002).

- Alvesson's framework

Whilst many authors, including the Globe study of 62 countries, have conducted cross-cultural studies, few have looked at a qualitative perspective of culture, which is something that Alvesson (2002) accomplished. He viewed culture broadly as a shared and learned world of experiences, meanings, values and understandings which inform people and which are expressed, reproduced and communicated in language and symbols. He argues that a sense of common assumptions, beliefs and meanings is necessary for continuing organised activity, without constant confusion or intense interpretation and reinterpretation of meanings (Alvesson 2002).

Alvesson (2002) corroborates Schein (1992) and Hofstede (2001) in highlighting unquestioned assumptions and values as proxies of culture, including beliefs, ideas, rituals and values. According to Alvesson (2002), culture is manifest in material expressions, not just primarily programmed "inside" people's heads as Hofstede (2001) suggests, making it visible and invisible at the same time.

The chief value of Alvesson's (2002) work in culture is in acknowledging that managerial action needs to consider the cultural context in which it is carried out – how people give meaning to and act based on their perceptions of the world. However, it is more appropriate to in-depth cultural studies, and its anthropological focus renders it of little practical import to this research, except to emphasise the importance of qualitatively considering Kuwaiti culture as understood in the literature, and manifest and expressed by participants and the researcher's own perspective.

- The Globe study

The Globe study is a three-phase, multi-method project examining the interrelationships between societal culture, organisational culture and organisational leadership. Phases one and two involved 162 researchers from 62 national societies, 160 research targets, and 1,700 middle level managers in 951 domestic organisations. The study measured both cultural practices (the way things are) and values (the way things should be) at the organisational and societal levels of analysis. The 62 countries were grouped into 10 cultural clusters, under which Kuwait was classified as part of the Middle East.

Nine cultural dimension practices and values were assessed to show the difference between the desired culture and the existent culture: 1) power distance; 2) uncertainty avoidance; 3) institutional collectivism; 4) in-group collectivism; 5) gender; 6) assertiveness; 7) future orientation; 8) performance orientation; and 9) human orientation. Clearly the first six are drawn from Hofstede's dimensions, while the rest are from different resources.

Leadership attributes were examined and grouped according to 21 primary factors consolidated to six global leadership dimensions: a) charismatic value-based; b) team-oriented; c) participative; d) autonomous; e) human-oriented; and f) self-protected. A relationship between cultural dimensions and leadership dimensions was created and a universally desirable cultural leadership theory (CLT) was developed.

The Globe culture questions have two categories: existing society practices and what society should be (according to the values of the study's authors). This study focuses on the former, as the data is drawn from participants' assessments of the status quo.

The power distance rate for Kuwait (5.12) was higher than that of the Middle East (3.93), but very similar to the world average (5.10). This was aligned with Hofstede's result, supporting the notion that Kuwaitis are comfortable to work among hierarchical relations and order (Al-Romaihi 1977; Barakat 1991; Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001).

With regard to uncertainty avoidance, Kuwait scored 4.21, which was higher than the Middle East (3.91) and above the world average (4.16). This was similar to Hofstede's findings. For performance orientation, Kuwait scored 3.95, which was similar to the Middle East average (3.9), but lower than the world average (4.07). For collectivism in institutions, Kuwait scored 5.80, which was higher than the Middle East (4.28) and world average (5.08). However, for collectivism in-group Kuwait scored 4.49, below the Middle East (5.58) but above the world average (4.23).

The Globe Project had two dimensions of the collectivism versus individualism values: institutional and in-groups. Institutionalism means valuing the collective

actions while the in-group value concerns loyalty and pride in the family and organisation. This is more comprehensive than Hofstede's individual versus collectivism dimension, yet the results support Hofstede's findings, identifying that Kuwaitis have a tendency to work in in-groups with limited cooperation with outsiders (Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001).

With regards to gender egalitarianism, Kuwait scored 2.58, which was lower than the Middle East (2.95) and world average (3.38), confirming Hofstede's finding. The Globe project also observed that Kuwaiti society has fewer women in high positions of authority, as the consensus is that women's primary role in society is within the domestic sphere. However, it should be noted that Kuwaiti society venerates the mother and holds the domestic role in very high esteem, therefore to describe the role that women play as being 'lower status' is a projection of Western cultural assumptions that value the professional (i.e. traditionally patriarchal) sphere above the domestic.

For future orientation, Kuwait scored 3.26, which was below the Middle East (3.58) and world average (3.83); this could be related to the concept of fate, which can negatively influence future orientation. Kabasakal and Dastmalchain (2001) noted that in Islamic cultures, fate is generally a very strong belief, equated with the basic Islamic principles of faith in God and Islam itself. While orientalists have bemoaned this as the source of indolence in the Muslim world since the colonial era, Islamic teachings are in fact very clear in explaining the importance of human beings' responsibility and freedom of action within a general framework of fate (Kabasakal and Dastmalchian 2001).

Kuwait scored 3.63 for assertiveness, which was lower than the Middle East (3.39) and world average (4.13). This dimension is one of the lowest dimensions following gender equalisation, reflecting that Kuwaiti culture believes in valuing relationships rather than task-based success (Al-Romaihi 1977; Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001; Kabasakal and Dastmalchian 2001; Ali and Al-Kazemi 2002).

With regard to human orientation, Kuwait scored 4.52, which was higher than the Middle East (4.36) and world average (4.07). Ali and Al-Kazemi (2002) noted that

affiliation to particular tribes drives human orientation in Arab societies, thus the Kuwaiti society is considered tribal (including at the government level).

Shi (2011) observed that both Hofstede and the Globe studies had similarities, but differences remained in the research design, which could have led to different results, such as the way they viewed culture. As Shi (2011: 96) concluded:

> *"Globe researchers were heavily influenced by Hofstede's work in their choice of variables to assess and some of their nine social scales share labels with the Hofstede dimensions. It is possible therefore that some of global scales assess unfounded stereotypes rather than objective features of the society".*

In addition, Hofstede's assumptions for religion and language to develop clusters overlooks the micro differences that do not justify clustering them in one group (Hickson and Pugh 1995). Whilst countries in the Middle Eastern cluster have commonalities in their societal cultural norms, each country also demonstrated variations on some cultural dimensions. This means that acceptable management practices found in one country are not guaranteed to work in a different country, even when it is a bordering nation (House et al. 2004).

Nevertheless, the implications of the Globe study are that societal culture has a significant influence on individuals, as it is a relatively stable phenomenon when compared with organisational culture, although due to external and internal factors all cultures may be in continual flux.

The Globe study concluded that, "it is likely that the pervasive influence of the Islamic religion is a key to understanding the Arab world" (House et al. 2004: 694-697). Even with lower CLT scores, universal ideas about and aspirations for an effective leader are apparent, with Middle Easterners looking to charismatic/value-based (C/V-B) and team oriented (TO) leadership style, as well as participative (P) and humane (HO) leadership, but not nearly to the extent indicated for other clusters. Effective leadership styles of participation common in the individualist West are questionable in the collectivist East, and Arab managers heavily emphasise paternalistic leadership and group maintenance activities (House et al. 2004). Specifically, Globe is about culturally endorsed

implicit theories of leadership, and was a foundational shift in leadership thinking from individual leadership theory (ILT) to CLT (House et al. 2004). The research, published since the 2000s, has extended the knowledge base toward a more comprehensive conceptualisation of cultural dimensions, even introducing new dimensions compared to the original five dimensions of Hofstede.

3.3.2 Organisational culture

Culture and the role it plays in organisations has occupied the work of many theorists and researchers since the early 1980s, such as the work of people like Deal and Kennedy (1982) as well as Peters and Waterman (1982), who developed their "excellence" theory. Organisational culture can be viewed as the mechanism through which work is done in organisations; furthermore, because organisations are embedded in the larger society in which they exist, organisational culture is heavily influenced by societal culture as it influences the actual ways in which members of a culture go about dealing with their collective challenges (Javidan et al. 2006).

The academic study of leadership in organisational studies was pioneered in the 1950s, when Selznick (1957: 23) postulated that, "the theory of leadership is dependent on the theory of organisation". Although theoretical interests and the practical importance of organisational culture are well recognised, it remains a debatable field and controversial area in terms of the definition of organisational culture and the methodologies used to assess it (Allaire and Firsirotu 1984; Ouchi and Wilkins 1985; Schein 1992).

For the purpose of this research, the simplest interpretation of the term is used (i.e. that organisational culture represents the feelings or sets of values, norms, beliefs and understandings that are shared by the organisation's members, these are taught to newcomers to the organisation). This culture is generally unwritten, but it is still very powerful. Smircich (1983) argued that the way one views culture depends on whether it is what the organisation 'has' or what it 'is'; therefore, the culture is the organisation's personality, which cannot easily be changed, corroborating Lederach's (1995) view, and adding that the shared meanings that people hold in their societies are important. This confirms the importance of understanding the shared values and meanings of leaders in Kuwait about CEO

perceptions of leadership. According to Schein (1992: 12), organisational culture is:

> "A pattern of basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered solid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems".

Schein (1992) mentions the following uses of the term organisational culture: observed behavioural regularities when people interact (e.g. language, customs and traditions); group norms; espoused values; formal philosophies; common assumptions; climate; embedded skills; habits of thinking, mental models and linguistic paradigms; shared meanings; and root metaphors or integrated symbols.

Most of the literature refers to similar definitions of organisational culture, but a concise summary could be phrased as follows: culture is an integrated mechanism that guides organisational behaviour, whereas the organisational culture is a collective phenomenon emerging from members' beliefs and social interactions (Schneider 1987; Trice and Beyer 1993); as such it contains a pattern of beliefs, behavioural expectations, mutual understanding and shared values (Rousseau 1990), which bind individuals together over time in the same organisation (Schein 2004). It is the beliefs that are transferred across the organisation, and which contribute to aligning new members, consequently forming the basis of organisational culture (Schein 2004).

Upper echelon leaders believe that they are the primary responders for creating and developing an organisation's culture (Selznick 1957; Davis 1984; Bennis and Nanus 1985; Schneider 1987; Kotter and Heskett 1992; Trice and Beyer 1993; Schein 2004). For example, Tsai et al. (2006) found that CEO performance-building behaviours (such as vision and visibility) and institution-building behaviours (such as what they pay attention to and what they delegate) lead to the creation of organisational processes and structural characteristics that strengthen organisational cultures.

The "attraction-selection-attrition" theory developed by Schneider (1987), and the theory of "culture and leadership" developed by Schein (2004) provide perspectives on the leader's role in being accountable for developing and sustaining organisational culture. They agree on the fact that the foundation of cultural content begins with the decision-making ability of leaders. Schneider (1987) noted that people with similar characteristics to leaders actually attracted their interest; these leaders ultimately imprint their personal characteristics on the organisation by establishing organisational goals. In support of this, Goldstein and Smith (1995) suggested that the organisation's goals are an operationalisation of the top leader's broadly defined personality.

In turn, Schein (2004: 212) stated that, "Organisations do not form spontaneously. Instead they are goal oriented and have a specific purpose". Schein (2004) conceived that, through a variety of mechanisms, CEOs affect the organisation deliberately and unintentionally as they drive their learning and preferences into the organisation.

It is important to note that the impacts of culture on leadership differ, and some aspects of leadership may transcend cultural boundaries, and the use of common technologies, global institutions and practices serve to harmonise management practices and structures in the globalised economy (Yavas 1995; House et al. 2004), Conversely, some authors argue that specific cultural differences fundamentally affect the degree of cooperation, morale and commitment to and within the organisation (Redding et al. 1994).

Differences in societal cultures have been shown to result in different organisational and management practices, as well as employee expectations (Hofstede et al. 1990). Other factors that influence organisational culture include management practices, which vary depending on the industry in which the organisation operates. While organisations from different nations can be expected to differ in their fundamental values, organisations from the same nation may differ due to their internal organisational practices (Hofstede et al. 1990).

The process versus results orientation represents the opposite ways in which the management systems approach tasks; in particular, Western cultures are known

for being more results oriented. These differences could lead to conflicting behaviours that could adversely influence joint venture performance (Pothukuchi et al. 2002). While Kuwaiti organisations may place more emphasis on concern for stakeholders, not in terms of development but in terms of maintaining relationships, Western organisations are more concerned with getting the job done. Similarly, some Kuwaiti employees derive their identity from the organisation (parochial/family) and will not work for companies belonging to others, whereas Western employees tend to derive their identification from their career/profession. Differences also arise in terms of communication systems in organisations, being generally "open" in Western organisations, or "closed" elsewhere.

Lastly, the normative versus pragmatic orientation dimension differentiates between organisations that strictly follow rules and regulations (normative) and those that are customer-oriented (pragmatic) (Peters and Waterman 1982). Organisational culture would therefore seem to predispose members to view issues and perceive problems differently (Huo and Steers 1993).

Culture impacts the way an organisation is managed in several ways. Specifically, it can affect the pattern, the timeliness and the evaluation of information. In Western societies, time is of the essence, whereas many developing societies do not subscribe to the importance of time and information transmission, and they lack the same sense of urgency (Triandis 1995).

Cultures differ in terms of the emphasis that they place on each of the decision-making modes; Western organisations tend to be more factual and rational (i.e. materialistic and bottom-line), whereas other societies tend to conceptualise problems in human terms and they are also seen to be more sensitive to maintaining group harmony (Das and Kumar 2010). Differences also occur at the organisational level; decisions made by organisations in developing countries such as Kuwait tend to be top-down, with very limited autonomy for lower level employees within an organisation.

Leaders and managers belonging to individualistically oriented societies are usually strongly goal-oriented and concerned with outcomes, while collectivist

societies emphasise the process. Thus, the goals and means of attaining them may differ in accordance with the different organisational cultures (Das and Kumar 2010).

3.4 Religion and its impact on leadership effectiveness

The pervasive influence of Islam is key to understanding the Arab world, including leadership within it. Kuwait is predominantly an Islamic country, which mainly consists of Sunni and Shia Muslims, where concepts of leaders and leadership have evolved across centuries, influenced by the nature of power structures and sectarian allegiances (Ali 2009). The practical ideology of Islam focuses on monotheistic worship, justice, good deeds and patience with hardship; it promotes honesty, trust, solidarity, loyalty and flexibility (Ali 1995), but modern technology is subtly changing traditional family ethics and behaviours (Tetreault 2001).

In defining leadership in Islam, Beekun and Badawi (1999 1999a) contend that Muslims base their behaviour as leaders and/or as followers, upon the word of God as revealed in the Qur'an, and the example of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, a mortal man who modelled the way for Islamic leaders and followers for all times (Kriger and Seng 2005). Muslims conduct their work in the name of Allah and are therefore expected to be conscious of God's presence by viewing their whole life in the context of worship.

Thus, while trade and work are forms of worship in themselves (presuming they do not contravene Islamic law, such as the prohibition of alcohol and gambling), worldly pursuits should be suspended at the time of prayer, an obligation for all Muslims (Graafland et al. 2006). A leader is therefore required to meet his obligations to God as well as to discharge his duties toward his followers, to the best of his abilities. Spirituality is therefore an integral component of leadership in Islam, as a spiritually guided leader engages in socialised power, such as the power for the service of others as opposed to personalised power (Kanungo and Mendonca 1994). According to Ali (2005: 146), the traditional view of Islamic leadership is that it:

> *"Is a shared influence process. Leaders are not expected to lead or maintain their roles without the agreement of those who are led, and at the same time, decisions made by these leaders are expected to be influenced by input from their followers. The process is dynamic and open-ended and the ultimate aim is to sustain cohesiveness and effectiveness".*

In many hadiths (narrations) of the Prophet Muhammad, he directly and indirectly explained leadership qualities and the importance of leadership, as in the following examples (Khan 2007):

> *"Each of you is a shepherd, and all of you are responsible for your flocks".*

> *"When three persons go on a journey, let them put one of their numbers in command".*

Islamic leadership principles are primarily derived from the two key sources of Islamic teachings, the Qur'an and the Sunnah (the scriptural revelation and the tradition – words and deeds – of the Prophet Muhammad, respectively) and the companions of the prophet, particularly the Pious Caliphs (the first four successors of the Prophet) (Khan 2007). There are many Islamic laws, principles and models, but Khan (2007) classifies them into cardinal principles and values of faith, knowledge, courage, mutual consultation and unity (fraternity and brotherhood), honesty and trust, communication, justice and compassion, patience, commitment and sacrifice, lifelong endeavour and gratitude and prayer, which transcend ethnic and religious boundaries.

Leadership in Islam is considered to be a trust and a responsibility, but while the religion unequivocally condemns oppression and authoritarian tendencies, there is a manifest proliferation of autocratic political and business leaders in Muslim-majority states, including Kuwait, characterised by paternalistic, autocratic and authoritarian leadership (Ali 2009).

Beekun and Badawi (1999, 1999a) describe leadership from an Islamic perspective as having the two primary roles of servant-leader and guardian-

leader, promoting the welfare of followers and protecting them from oppression. In this perspective, the notion of Islamic leadership is very close to notions of leadership in mainstream literature, with differences arising mainly from the organisational or the external context (Faris and Parry 2011). However, although residues of anti-authoritarian Islamic institutions are often applied in the GCC (e.g. *Majlis Al-Shura*, the proto-democratic consultative council), these generally lack the spirit in which they were intended.

Abdullah and Al-Homoud (2001) recommend that leadership can be improved in the Middle East using the consultative leadership style, reflecting Islamic ethics. Muna (1980) supported this by noting that consultation is the necessary complement of obedience to leaders that is strongly recommended by the Qur'an and emphasised by Bedouin traditions, however Abdullah and Al-Homoud (2001) cautioned that consultation could be used as a smokescreen to embed more nepotism and political autocracy.

Hudson (1977) attributed authoritarianism in Islamic politics to the historical primacy of coercive force and instability in the succession process, and centralised bureaucratic political systems in post-colonial Muslim countries. European colonialism disconnected the normative culture of the Middle East (Ali 1995), and in caricature of Islamic predestination induced a fatalist resignation that has served to legitimise authoritarian action and oppressive leadership.

While often rendered as "peace", a more literal translation of "Islam" is "submission", which has implications for this study in that employees might be submissive to their leaders and not question their actions. An authoritarian style of leadership whereby subordinates have no choice but to accept the managers' decision unquestioningly is against Islamic ethics; Islamic texts rather support participative management (Ather 2005). However, in reality the leaders in these organisations tend to be authoritarian, which possibly could be due to a high power distance culture drawing on religious justifications not directly condoned by the religion itself. Whilst such leadership styles may be effective in certain situations, they are generally not sustainable leadership styles for long-term success, stifling innovation and creativity in organisations and rendering leaders less effective. Religion acts as a tremendously dominant factor in socialisation

and enables unity among members of a society (Mohammad 1998). Religion and kinship have been the main unifying factors in Arab societies (Mohammad 1998).

Furthermore, other studies have noted that values are often related to the religious background of the leader (Fry 2003), therefore it is important to understand how religion influences the ethical views of leaders in Kuwait and their overall effectiveness as CEOs.

3.5 *Wasta*: Nepotism or patronage?

Barnett et al. (2013) explained patronage in the Middle East, commonly referred to as *Wasta* in Arabic, as an implicit social contract, typically within a tribal group, which obliges those within the group to provide assistance/favourable treatment to others within that group. One is said to have "*Wasta*" when those from whom one can request assistance are in positions of power that make it possible for them to grant the requested assistance. Therefore, those who have *Wasta* can jump queues, while those who do not have to go through the "normal" bureaucratic process for issues such as job recruitment, promotion, approvals, contracts and entrance to market or bidding.

Although *Wasta* can be useful for those who wish to bypass the bureaucratic procedures, it has a clear dark side, at least in the eyes of those who favour and are accustomed to merit-based transactions or "equal opportunities". *Wasta* can be viewed as a source of nepotism, cronyism and general corruption. It can also be seen as a means to gain what seems an undeserved advantage or as a mechanism that yields decisions based on connections instead of merit (Barnett et al. 2013). Meles (2007: 16) noted that, "*Wasta* has become a right and expectation" in Arab societies. It adversely affects CEOL if CEOs are appointed due to *Wasta* and not because of merit, or if CEOs have unqualified subordinates placed in positions because of their relationships with senior influential personnel.

3.6 Leadership in Kuwait

The contextual factors highlighted above have overall implications on leadership in Kuwait. This section draws upon the main issues discussed above, namely

societal culture, religion and *Wasta*. The leadership styles that are often practiced in Kuwait are based on the traditional approaches derived from Kuwaiti culture (Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001). *Sons of Sinbad* (1940) presents the experiences of Villiers as a crew member in a Kuwaiti dhow, recounting the traditional maritime trading culture of nine-month (10,000 mile) voyages under command orders from a captain in a male-dominant culture, as exemplified in the following extract (Villiers 1940: 103):

> *"The pace in the Kuwaiti ships is dreadfully hard, and the style is killing. It must be especially severe on a man who has previously been pearl diving. All jobs are rushed at: all orders obeyed on the run, day and night; all sailors live on the sufferance of the Nakhoda [officer] who, if he be impatient and overbearing, must still be put up with. Consideration for others is not a noticeable quality in the Nakhoda class: life is hard, I fear for the old sailors… One who cannot stand the life drops out of it, I suppose; but usually he drops out in harness. There comes a day when he dies. The pace in Kuwaiti ships is hard, foolishly hard, for there is no need for all this rush".*

Rosen et al. (2000) found that Islamic and Bedouin traditions are conducive to transactional and authoritarian leadership styles (Al-Mailam 2004), due to leadership in political, social or economic organisations being predicated on caring for the welfare of the organisation and its members (Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001). Kuwaiti organisations tend to be hierarchical and highly centralised, with leadership power concentrated in the individuals at the highest positions in the hierarchy (Alansari and Al-Shehab 2006). This hierarchical structure enables the leader to exercise greater control over the activities of employees. Organisational culture has evolved within this traditional framework and members of the organisation are expected to follow the directives of the leader, even without the leader needing to provide specific motivators.

However, there is widespread social anxiety and unease about the future in Kuwait, which has led to the development of a spirit of competition, cunning behaviour and competitiveness among managers that can be observed in their relationships with others (Ali and Al-Kazemi 2002). Interestingly, even when

cooperation would have been the preferred approach, competing is still observed. This lack of cooperation can be witnessed across various spheres of life, including the fact that there are a large number of very small individual businesses, relatively few high-rise buildings, and numerous small private hospitals and clinics; thus, instead of improved economies of scale that could have benefitted all through cooperation between more parties, a more independent way of living can be seen. Therefore, an awareness of these societal cultural orientations may help to provide further understanding of leadership in Kuwait.

Most modern Kuwaiti organisations have a hierarchical structure, with indigenous Kuwaiti managers forming the elite group in the organisation; international workers tend to be part of the non-elite group, even if the worker has a nominal position as a manager in the organisation. Nepotism and favouritism are also characteristics of the relationship between the leader and followers in Kuwait, which further narrows the eligibility for membership to the elite group – even among indigenous Kuwaitis (Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001).

Over the past few decades, there has been rapid economic development in Kuwait, but most public sector organisations have continued to use the traditional authoritarian leadership approach. The public sector employs the highest number of indigenous Kuwaiti nationals, with the public agencies using hierarchical organisational structures (Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001). Research investigating the perceptions of Kuwaitis also found a preference for the traditional method of transactional and authoritarian leadership (Al-Mailam 2004), with the majority of Kuwaitis being employed by the public sector, rather than the private.

In Arabic, the word for leadership is *al-qiyada*, which has two original definitions, as described in the *Alraed* and *Alsahah Alarabe* dictionaries: horses remotely piloted by rope (i.e. "being led by the nose"); and the ability to influence human behaviour to guide a group of people toward a common goal in such a way as to ensure their obedience, trust, respect and cooperation. Historically, a leader is a great hero who leads warriors into battle, therefore, the concept of leadership is rooted in traditional military concepts. Furthermore, tribal traditions influence all

aspects of life, consequently managers are expected to act as fathers by viewing their role in a highly personalised manner, characterised by providing and caring for employees and favouring individuals within the family and the tribe over outsiders (Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001).

Ali et al. (1997) concluded that leaders in Kuwait, if anything, practiced pseudo-participation. This is perhaps a reflection of the influence of centralisation and bureaucratic organisational systems and a corresponding tendency to restrict decision making to those at the top of the hierarchy. In this case, pseudo-participation is a mechanism for promoting worker acceptance of decisions that have already been made by management.

In terms of women in leadership positions, the first female suffrage in Kuwait was granted in 1962 by the Crown, but later revoked due to public opposition. It was reintroduced in 2005 for the 2006 elections, but none of the female candidates were elected. In 2005, two women were appointed to the Municipal Council of Kuwait, a complement to the increasing openness of Parliament to women at this time. Notably, social reform in GCC is often driven from the top-down on a reflexively conservative population.

In traditional cultures of the GCC, women engaging in work could be construed as a shameful act, indicative of the inability of the family patriarch to feed and protect his family. Women entering work followed the familiar trajectory of the West, first entering certain "female" working environments (e.g. healthcare and education), then dovetailing into other sectors, including Bedouin women working to earn money rather than to gain senior positions or social status.

3.7   Summary of Kuwaiti culture

It is observed that the Kuwaiti culture has evolved over the years from that of a hard-working maritime culture to a consumer culture of entitlement and sinecures. The culture is permeated by Islamic religion and tribal traditions, which tend to condone submission to leaders. It is a collectivist society that has given rise to *Wasta* and a somewhat class-based society consisting of the ruling class, the merchants and the working class. It is a high power distance culture that is male

dominated, with some softening of views on women's roles in society. The above contextual issues have implications for leaders, and in particular their effectiveness, which gives rise to the need to understand the business environment within which these leaders operate, and the importance of relations for conducting business in Kuwait.

3.8   Understanding the business environment

In order for the CEO to make a sound decision at the right time, a deep understanding of the business environment is required (Bandiera et al. 2011). This includes consideration of the economic status of the country in which the CEO operates, as well as the global situation, as this environment will also greatly affect decision-making. Enhanced knowledge of the economy, politics, rivals and competitive advantage also enable good decision-making (Burns 1978).

Many studies have indicated that the business environment has a greater effect on the performance of an organisation than the CEO's characteristics. Agile et al. (2006) examined the relationships between strategic leadership, organisational performance and environmental uncertainty. They found that organisational performance was associated with subsequent perceptions of CEO charisma, but that perceptions of CEO charisma were not associated with subsequent organisational performance.

Waldman et al. (2001) concluded that CEO charismatic leadership is highly related to organisational performance when the environment is perceived as uncertain and volatile. Conversely, they also noted that CEO charismatic leadership is minimally related to organisational performance at times when the environment is perceived to be more certain and stable.

On the other hand, if a CEO's personality attributes influence his strategic choices, this will be reflected in organisational performance. Hambrick (1994) criticised studies that treat CEOs as just another member of top management, noting that empirical evidence indicates that the CEO influences the organisation from a disproportionate to dominating level. Finkelstein and Hambrick (1996) stressed that the CEO has the overall responsibility for the organisation's

performance, therefore CEO characteristics are of serious consequence to the organisation internally, and in liaising with the external environment – a modern concept (Ulrich et al. 2009) described by Drucker (2007: 31):

> *"The CEO is the link between the inside, that is the organisation, and*
> *the outside of society, economy, technology, markets and customers,*
> *inside there are only costs… results are only on the outside".*

A thorough understanding of the external stakeholders, their competing interests and how these interests correspond with the capabilities and limitations of the organisation are all vital aspects affecting CEO performance. Lafley (2009) defined four tasks that enable the CEO to understand the business environment:

- Defining the meaningful outside by ensuring that everyone in the organisation understands and is aligned with the CEO definition of the key important external areas.
- Analysing the attractiveness and the positioning of the business compared to the competitors, and analysing the strategic fit with the core competencies.
- Balancing resources needed for long-term investment in relation to short-term investment.
- Being accountable for encouraging the right behaviour by identifying the expectations toward the company values.

3.9 CEO relationships with the board members and executive team

This section discusses CEO relations with the Board of Directors (BoD) and executive/top managers, which are imperative to the success of the CEO and the organisation. If the relationship between the BoD and the CEO fails, the company may fail (Nadler 2007). Therefore, effective management of this relationship may contribute to the effectiveness of the CEO.

3.9.1 Relationship with the board of directors

There are many theories that share different perceptions of CEO/board relations. This section elaborates on some of the perceptions that have been repeatedly focused upon.

The most dominant theory is the agency theory, which is concerned with the relationship between two parties, the principal (e.g. shareholders) and agent (e.g. managers). The predominant academic perspective on what makes a BoD effective is that it mitigates the counter-productive behaviour of the CEO (i.e. the agent) in terms of self-interest, as the proper role of the agent is to maximise the value of the principal (Williamson 1973). Thus, a positive impact can be exerted on the overall performance of the firm by directors exerting greater control over management actions (Hillman and Dalziel 2003). Consequently, the BoD is responsible for monitoring the management and using compensation to align the interests of the principals and managers. The costs of monitoring, bonding and any residual claims or contracts in this scenario are agency costs (Fama and Jensen 1983).

Innumerable articles and surveys assess and evaluate the composition of relationships between the CEO and BoD in terms of control, interaction, communication, support, power, characteristics of both elements, and so on; no one model fits all companies. Furthermore, it all depends on the maturity of the CEO, the maturity of the chair and the BoD members, and the external environment surrounding the business. Nonetheless, it is evident that a clear line of responsibility is very important for the business to run effectively.

The determination of the BoD and their relations with the CEO, in very socially oriented cultures such as Kuwait, are of great interest when attempting to determine the interaction and effect of work relations, and family or friendship relations, on this level.

3.9.2 Relationship with the top management/executives

The top management or executive team has a critical impact on organisational processes and performance output (Hambrick and Mason 1984; Finkelstein and Hambrick 1996). In general, the definition of executives encompasses the top management team, including the CEO, and all members who report directly to the CEO. The executive team members play a key role in strategically orienting and controlling the organisation (Hambrick and Mason 1984; Castanias and Helfat 1991).

Up until the 1980s, much leadership research focused on the head of the organisation's strategy and their behaviour, whereas during the last two decades, researchers have increasingly recognised the importance of shared leadership activities. As Daily and Schwenk (1996: 188) noted, evidence suggests that certain factors, values and changes are shared among top management team members, which are thought to be better predictors of organisational outcomes, since the whole team's performance significantly affects business performance. An influential relationship between the CEO and the executive team should engender successful organisational performance. Empowerment leadership aims to develop a team's capability to lead without the presence of a formal leader; as such, it helps to support team anatomy (Manz and Sims 1987).

Carmeli et al. (2011: 399) examined how CEO empowered leadership can shape the top management team's behavioural integration and potency, thereby enhancing organisational performance. Their study noted that:

> *"Behavioural integration mediates the relationship between CEO empowerment leadership and firm performance, while TMT potency carries the influence of CEO empowerment leadership and behavioural integration to firm performance. Finally, there is a stronger relationship between top management team potency and firm performance among firms that perceive higher environmental uncertainty".*

In addition, the relationship between the CEO and the BoD and other executives is influenced by the relational leadership theory, as discussed in Section 2.4.1.

3.10 The CEO: Experience and family background

This section discusses CEO backgrounds, in terms of experience and family roles and how these relate to career progression and performance.

3.10.1 Experience/ career development

According to Mumford et al. (2000), it is not enough for leaders to be able to solve novel, ill-defined organisational problems. Instead, they must also be capable of formulating solutions that will work in complex organisational environments, and

this capability develops with experience. It may take up to 20 years before leaders acquire all of the skills needed to solve these ill-defined organisational problems (Mumford et al. 2000). Furthermore, Bray, Campbell and Grant (1974) argue that exposure to assignments presenting novel and challenging problems will promote the development of leadership skills, presumably by stimulating the exercise of creative problem-solving and systems skills.

It is important to note that some careers often fail to provide the same opportunities for exposure to these types of assignments. Moreover, other kinds of assignment, such as sales and marketing assignments, may promote the development of other types of skills, including the interactional, communication and systems skills needed by leaders (Mumford et al. 2000). Anderson (1993) argues that training can be viewed as an attempt to provide a set of systematic experiences to promote the development of certain knowledge and skills. Even though many available leadership training courses have received widespread praise, there is little compelling evidence on the actual ability of these programmes to develop the required leadership skills (Zaccaro 1996).

3.10.2 Family background

According to Harris (1998: 15), "parents are the most important part of the child's environment and can determine, to a large extent, how the child turns out". This has been corroborated by numerous studies of high achieving leaders in numerous fields (Whiting 1971; Robbins 1996; Wetlaufer et al. 2000). Avolio and Gibbons (1988) reported that leaders who were evaluated as more transformational by their followers independently described their parents as being very challenging and supportive, in a balanced way. Popper and Mayseless (2003) stressed that parents provide role models for children in the same way that transformational leaders do with their followers. Zacharatos et al. (2000) reported that the high school athletes that rated their parents as more transformational were in turn rated by their peers as more effective leaders themselves.

In summary, it is noted that successful *Western* CEOs have grown up in family backgrounds that were entrepreneurial and had an opportunity to see how their parents or guardians were running their businesses. The families also gave them

the opportunity to become successful leaders by providing them with the family support that they needed, be it a good education or by being good role models. It is not known if similar findings would apply to leaders in Kuwait.

3.11 Summary of contextual factors

In summary, this chapter has highlighted the important contextual factors of both societal and organisational culture and how culture influences CEO styles of leadership and effectiveness. Other important contextual factors that ought to be considered when trying to understand effective leadership in Kuwait are Islam, *Wasta*, business environment, career experience and family background. It was noted that these contextual factors might have led to hierarchical and highly centralised leadership styles as dominant styles, with power concentrated in the individuals at the highest positions in the hierarchy (Alansari and Al-Shehab 2006). Such a hierarchical structure enables the leader to exercise greater control over the activities of submissively acquiescent employees. This may influence leadership effectiveness as constructed by leaders themselves.

Therefore, a conceptual model of leadership ought to take these contextual factors into consideration, which is detailed in the next section.

3.12 Conceptual model

Figure 3.1 shows the conceptual model and the conceptualisation of CEOL within the Kuwaiti context. The main dimension of importance to this study is CEOL, which was operationalised as being visionary, the successful execution of strategic plans, and the ability to adapt to different situations in order to produce expected results. It shows that effectiveness is influenced by several dimensions, in particular by the CEO's leadership style, as indicated in the literature review.

Several leadership theories were discussed, including both traditional and contemporary theories of leadership such as relational, critical and distributed leadership as well as followership. Leadership style in Kuwait can be influenced by societal culture, in particular the high power distance culture and inherited Arab-Islamic and Bedouin tradition practices (Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001),

rendering CEOs as authoritarian and paternalistic, and subordinates as submissive.
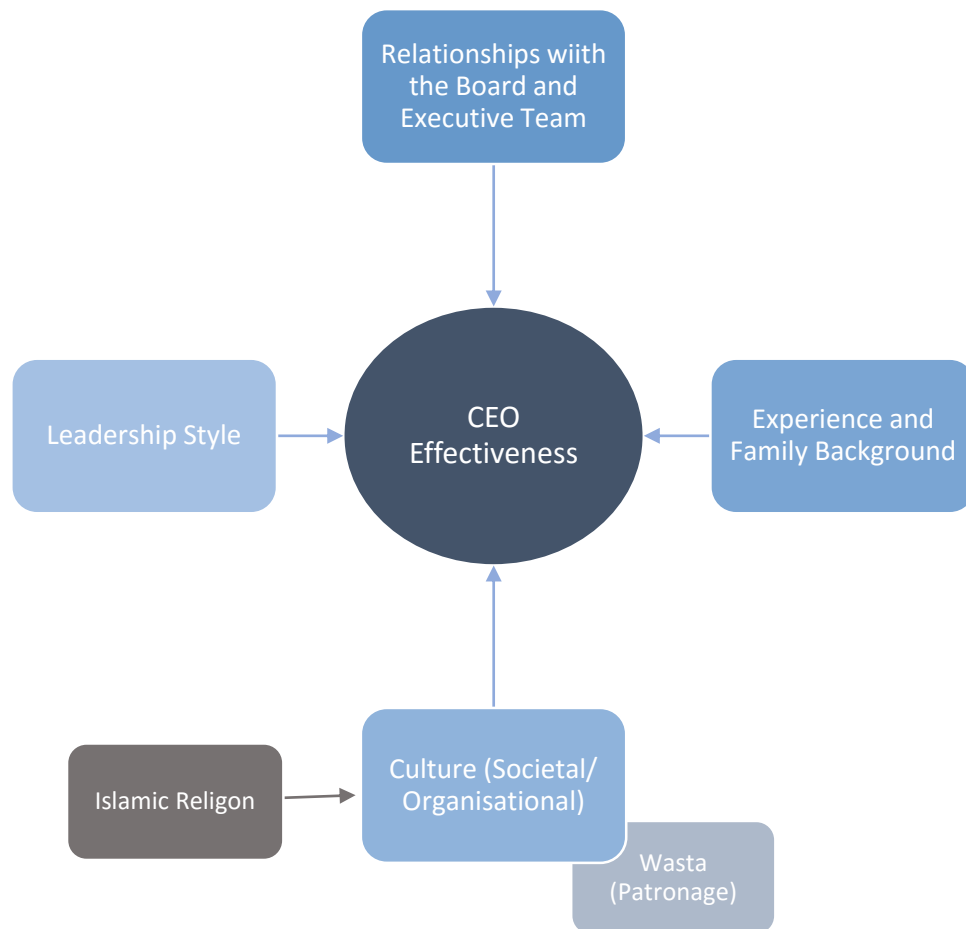
Figure 3.1: Conceptual model of CEO effectiveness

Wasta affects CEOL, especially in situations where an executive was appointed by patronage and not merit, and CEOs themselves may have unqualified followers appointed by *Wasta*; nepotism can also undermine the morale and motivation of competent people who might have been by-passed because they did not have strong patronage (Andy et al. 2013). As a result of the *Kuwaitisation* policy, most of the top leadership positions in both private and public organisations are now occupied by Kuwaitis. In some cases, CEOs are from owning Kuwaiti families. Nevertheless, some CEOs are non-Kuwaitis, universally because of merit and the value they bring to the company.

Other dimensions deemed to be important were the relationship the CEOs had with their boards and executive teams (Hambrick and Mason 1984; Finkelstein

and Hambrick 1996). In some cases, boards were not just there to rubber stamp or interfere with the operations of top management, rather the BoD could be very effective in carrying out its roles of accountability, supervisory, service tasks, strategy formulation, resource provision and policy making (Tricker 2012). If CEOs have good relations with their boards, the latter could be supportive to them. Moreover, understanding the new BoD role is vital for the relationship success (Charan 2009). In relationships that CEOs had with their executive teams, it was found to be prudent to have a supportive team sharing the same values as those of the CEO (Charan et al. 2001; Conaty and Charan 2010).

In the literature review, it was noted that Western studies show that the CEOs' experience and family background are also instrumental in their effectiveness (Mumford et al. 2000; Popper and Mayseless 2003). For example, some CEOs may have had appropriate leadership development and exposure to best practices, which may contribute to their effectiveness.

CEOL may in turn lead to overall organisational performance, which can be measured from different perspectives, including the financial bottom line, market share, etc. How exactly these dimensions relate with each other will be explored further and explained in Chapter 6, which puts forward a model informed by the empirical evidence. How these concepts are operationalised is discussed in Chapter 4.

3.13 Chapter summary

This chapter focused on the context for this research project by explaining the background of Kuwait from an economic and historical viewpoint. The chapter indicates that a mix of culture, Bedouin traditions, Islam and *Wasta* are deeply embedded in Kuwaiti society and shape CEOL (Villiers 1940; Rosen et al. 2000; Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001).

Building upon the literature synthesis in Chapter 2, important dimensions emerged, such as relationships with BoD members and the executive team, together with the CEOs' family and family background, and the contextual underpinnings presented in this chapter resulted in the formation of a theoretical

model of CEOL. It is argued that the model, which is context-sensitive, offers an opportunity for understanding CEO leadership effectiveness in Kuwait. This theoretical model provides a guide for the way in which the data was collected and analysed, as explained in Chapter 4.

4 Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and justifies the qualitative research design and methodology used to collect and analyse the data to answer the major research questions and achieve the study objectives. The chapter firstly restates the study aim and objectives and explains the research questions, followed by a detailed justification of the methodology. Given that leadership behaviour is a complex social construct that is presented in many different contexts, the study adopts a research approach that is characterised by inclusivity, diversity and pluralism in terms of its research perspectives and approaches. Semi-structured interviews and participant observation were utilised for data collection.

4.2 Study aim and research objectives

The research aim is to explore CEO perceptions of effective leadership behaviours in Kuwaiti organisations, with the view to conceptualising a model for CEOL to support CEO development, with a particular focus on the CEOs working in Kuwait's private and public sector organisations. The specific research objectives include:

1. To critically review the extant leadership literature and contribute to knowledge on CEOL, particularly within the context of a developing country such as Kuwait.
2. To investigate the dimensions that influence CEOL and conceptualise a model that explains CEOL.
3. To appreciate the predominant leadership styles of Kuwaiti CEOs.
4. To appreciate the contextual factors that may influence CEOL in Kuwait's public and private sector companies.
5. To understand the influence of societal and organisational culture on CEOL.
6. To explore the commonalities and differences in the understanding of CEOs' perceptions of leadership effectiveness

4.3 Research questions

This study explores how the most common leadership behaviours and styles commonly adopted by CEOs working in these organisations are characterised and examines their effectiveness. It also considers the extent to which CEOL is affected by various factors, including CEO characteristics, economy and business environment factors; relationships with BoD members and executive team members; and career development and family background. Special attention is given to the role that societal and organisational culture has with leadership effectiveness to answer the following six research questions:

- ❖ *RQ1: How does the extant literature define CEOL and how do CEOs in Kuwait perceive leadership effectiveness?*

In order to answer the first part of this question, the various theoretical leadership effectiveness definitions were explored in Chapter 2 and then narrowed down to CEOL as determined by the literature review.

The second part looks at the CEOs' discourse, to obtain an emergent practical effectiveness definition from the CEOs. This will help to explain the important aspect of ascertaining whether a universal definition of CEOL is possible, or whether such a definition is context-sensitive.

- ❖ *RQ2: How do individual CEOs perceive the skills, capabilities and behaviours that are required from effective CEOs in terms of their leadership?*

The aim of this question is to understand the CEOs' nature and their perceptions of what is required and how their characteristics affect leadership effectiveness behaviour for someone at their level.

- ❖ *RQ3: To what extent do the identified CEO leadership behaviours reflect existing leadership styles?*

This question concerns the link between the language/vocabulary expressed by the CEOs, to reflect their perceptions of the style of an effective leader and relate that with the theoretical styles as identified in the literature review in Chapter 2.

❖ *RQ4: What are the contextual factors that drive and/or hinder the success of CEOs to run their organisations?*

Understanding the external environment that could contribute to CEOL is important, so as to recognise the elements within and outside the CEO's control and CEO individual behaviours. The dimensions discussed include the business environment and how CEOs deal with changes in the business, the relationship with the BoD and executive team, as well as career and life experiences.

❖ *RQ5: To what extent is there a relationship between culture and CEOL?*

The aim of this question is to understand the CEOs' views towards the role of culture and CEO leadership, which is pioneering in Kuwait.

❖ *RQ6: What are the commonalities and differences regarding leadership effectiveness as perceived by CEOs in leading companies in Kuwait?*

This question compares and contrasts the answers to the above questions, in order to understand the unified understanding and pattern of effectiveness from CEOs, as well as understand the differences in their perceptions of leadership effectiveness.

4.4   Mapping objectives, themes, research and interview questions

Table 4.1 maps the objectives, research questions and themes that emerged both from the literature review and from the empirical findings, in order to show linkages. It was important to ensure that the data gathered addressed the research questions and met the study objectives. The qualitative methodology adopted enabled further interrogation of the participants to explore issues and gain deeper insights until data saturation was reached.

Table 4.1: Mapping of research objectives, questions and themes

Research Objectives	Research Questions	Themes
1. To critically review the extant leadership literature and contribute knowledge on CEOL, particularly within the context of a developing country such as Kuwait.	1. How does the extant literature define CEOL and how do CEOs in Kuwait perceive leadership effectiveness?	1. Effectiveness definition
2. To investigate the dimensions that influence CEO effectiveness and conceptualise a model that explains CEOL	2. How do individual CEOs perceive the skills, capabilities, and behaviours that are required from effective CEOs in terms of their leadership?	2. Characteristic
3. To appreciate the predominant leadership styles of Kuwait's CEO's.	3. To what extent do the CEO leadership behaviours identified reflect existing leadership styles?	3. Leadership style
4. To appreciate the contextual factors that may influence CEO effectiveness in Kuwait's public and private sector companies.	4. What are the contextual factors that drive and/or hinder the success of the CEOs to run their organisations?	4. Business environment 5. Board relations 6. Executive relations 7. Experience 8. Family background
5. To understand the influence of societal and organisational culture on CEO effectiveness.	5. To what extent is there a relationship between culture and CEOL?	9. Societal culture 10. Organizational culture
6. To explore the commonalities and differences in CEOL.	6. What are the commonalities and differences observed among the CEOs of leading companies in Kuwait?	

4.5 Research philosophy

In management and other fields of social inquiry, research should derive from beliefs about what constitutes an understanding and explanation of a social phenomenon. Easterby-Smith et al. (2008: 56) argue that:

"The relationship between data and theory is an issue that has been hotly debated by philosophers for many centuries. Failure to think through philosophical issues such as these, while not necessarily fatal, can seriously affect the quality of management research, and they are central to the notion of research design".

Therefore, undertaking credible social research requires that the questions asked, and the designs employed, are shaped by the researcher's underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions, which affect data collection, analysis and interpretation (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Piekkari et al. 2009).

4.5.1 Ontology

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality. In social science research, social phenomena should be either separate from the actors, or the phenomena should be considered to be a consequence or a perceived action of the social actors. These positions are referred to respectively as objectivism and subjectivism (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Morgan and Smircich 1980; Saunders et al. 2007). The latter position of subjectivism was later named constructivism by Bryman and Bell (2003).

For the purpose of this research, a subjective ontology is adopted, as it is important for the actual CEOs being studied to describe their understanding and perspectives of leadership behaviour, which necessitates gaining data on how individuals construct reality based on the construction of language and meaning.

4.5.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with how individuals determine what is true (Streubert-Speziale and Carpenter 2003: 362). It also assumes that the scientific approach helps with the development of new knowledge (Saunders et al. 2007). Positivism is useful for "working with an observable social reality, where the end product of such research can be law-like generalisations similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists" (Remenyi et al. 1998: 32). According to Bryman and Bell (2003), interpretivism has been described as the difference between the conduct of research between people and objects, and the requirement of the scientist to grasp meaning from the social actors.

This thesis follows the dominant tradition in leadership theory of an objectivist epistemology, as it assumes that organisations and their leaders exist as an objective reality. However, it is presumed that individuals have subjective interpretations of these external factors. Thus, because a quantitative description can limit the amount of meaning that participants give to events, and can equally

limit what is learned about them, a qualitative approach is adopted. Moreover, "in quantitative description, researchers leave less room for the unanticipated" (Becker 1996: 61). This is important in this study because the researcher was an active participant observer, and data collection was not based purely on CEO narratives, but also on observing how they behaved in business.

4.6   Research purpose

Saunders et al. (2007) categorised research in terms of its purpose as being explanatory, descriptive or exploratory. This study is exploratory – it studies something that has yet been subjected to very little research. Exploratory research is a valuable medium for finding out "what is happening; to seek new insights, to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light" (Robson 2002: 59). As suggested by Saunders et al. (2007), there are three elements of exploratory research: the conduct of a literature review, the discussion of the topic with field experts and in-depth interviews or focus groups. Zikmund (2000) stated that the purpose of exploratory research is to clarify ambiguous problems, to generate a better understanding of the nature of the problem(s). Accordingly, exploratory research is suitable to be used when there is little previous data or information about a problem (Hussey and Hussey 1997; Kumar 1999; Aaker, Kumar and George 2000; Sekaran 2003).

Since there are very few theories in existence pertaining to CEOL in Kuwait, this research is exploratory and descriptive. Furthermore, the researcher will describe the ways in which two CEOs have been working in reality.

4.7   Research approach

Two theoretical approaches can be used when drawing conclusions in research (Zikmund 2000; Bryman and Bell 2003; Saunders et al. 2007). The deductive approach is used if the researcher's design tests hypotheses based on existing theories (Wiedersheim-Paul and Eriksson 1991), hence data collection is driven by theories and hypotheses. The inductive approach is used when a researcher draws a conclusion from a specific, observed phenomenon and establishes a

general conclusion, theory, or model from this (Wiedersheim-Paul and Eriksson 1991).

An inductive approach is employed in this research as there is limited literature on the subject, and the audience in Kuwait has limited awareness of the topic, as no theories or hypotheses have previously been tested (Eisenhardt 1989; Crane 2000; Baker 2002). Moreover, the inductive approach will allow for the exploration and interpretation of CEO perceptions from Kuwaiti organisations over a more expanded timeframe, enabling in-depth understanding (Mintzberg 1979; Saunders et al. 2007).

This research explores and collects data from multiple sources of evidence, including semi-structured interviews and direct participative observations, to develop an in-depth understanding of how CEOs perceive effective leadership behaviours in Kuwait, and to identify commonalities and differences in perceptions. The primary data was collected through interviews with CEOs from mixed sectors/industries in Kuwait.

4.8   Research strategy justification

As pointed out by Fairhurst and Grant (2010), research can be either purely theoretical or theory applied in praxis. The traditional approach connects one's theory to a set of research questions and methodology (Reichardt et al. 2004). The alternative is to engage the participants in some meaningful way in the design of the research process and the development of practical theory (Cronen 2001; Van De Ven and Johnson 2006). In this study, participants were engaged in the pilot study and they helped to shape the questions, although extensive probing was undertaken to explore other dimensions not necessarily anticipated *a priori*.

This thesis is located within an objectivist epistemology in a methodological approach of qualitative positivism. Objectivist epistemology "holds that meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists as such apart from the operation of any consciousness" (Crotty 1998: 8). The researcher in objectivist epistemology views meaning as inherent in the subject, to be discovered without influence (Crix

2004). Positivism requires the gathering of empirical data enabling discovery of true meanings.

Research in management and business studies has been dominated by positivism (Hassard and Kelemen 2002). Pfeffer's (1993) highly influential paper argues strongly for its continued importance. In the last 20 years, qualitative approaches to research have been dominated by interpretivist rather than positivist approaches (Crotty 1998), where researchers are interested in how "reality" is constructed through language, discourse and interaction. The researcher's subjectivity and influence upon the research is acknowledged. However, positivist qualitative methodologies continue to flourish, although sometimes referred to as "post-positivist" (Cresswell 2013). The positivist qualitative researcher presumes that participants can describe a reality in which they participate, not one that they constitute. The words they speak in interviews are therefore an accurate reflection of that reality, and can be analysed using systematic procedures such as content analysis and grounded theory (Cresswell 2013).

4.9 Methodology

When conducting research, the research methodology adopts either a quantitative or qualitative approach, or it mixes the two (Yin 2003; Creswell 2007). The quantitative approach is structured and formal, involving the use of structured questions with predetermined response options for canvassing large cohorts (McDaniel and Gates 2007). It uses data collection techniques such as questionnaires and numerical data analysis through statistics and graphs (Saunders et al. 2007). The measurement must be objective and only a small amount of information is collected from each subject, but it allows for many subjects to be studied simultaneously to generalise conclusions (Bryman and Bell 2003; Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

Qualitative research on the other hand is concerned with meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions, with closeness to the respondents or source of data being collected (Creswell 2007). Qualitative research is subjective, as it relies on in-depth descriptions while striving for

uniqueness (Bryman and Bell 2003). For this reason, it is particularly useful for exploring phenomena that cannot be quantified – such as interpersonal phenomena in human organisations and relationships – or for emergent areas of research that require exploration (Blaxter 2001).

This study utilises a qualitative methodology to provide a detailed understanding of how CEOs in Kuwait really perceive effective leadership behaviours, because most existing research from the business environment is quantitative, and lacks deeper theoretical analyses (Stokes 2000).

As demonstrated by Gray (2004), qualitative research is distinguished as a highly contextual approach whereby data is gathered over long periods, in natural and real-life settings. Reality is constructed between social actors as they interact with each other and the methodology is inevitably subjective. Data itself does not exist independent of the research – it is subjective and interactionist (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008).

This approach allows the researcher to carefully and thoroughly consider how people experience phenomena, not to test hypotheses but to produce an understanding of a social context (Patton 2002; Rowlands 2005). This approach places emphasis on the development of core concepts and categories as they emerge from data, rather than defining them *a priori*, as in deductive theorising (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

4.10 Data collection

Interviews and participant observations were chosen as the primary research methods. Research questions often evolve with the study, because the researcher wants to know what is happening without biasing the study by focusing the investigation too narrowly from the outset. Moreover, the qualitative researcher becomes part of the study by interacting closely with subjects (Savenye and Robinson 2004). A copy of the letter sent to each CEO and the Interview Guide can be found in Appendices 1 and 2. The main questions were derived from the literature and broadly covered all elements of the conceptual

model, but the approach allowed room to explore other themes with the use of follow-up or probing questions.

4.10.1 Scoping study

Pilot interviews were conducted in May 2011 with four CEOs to explore the effectiveness of the research instrument in understanding CEOL, particularly to streamline questions for time efficiency (Stake 2010). Following thorough supervisory discussion and a detailed review of the questions, some modifications were made to the interview guide.

4.10.2 Interviews

Interviews must be suitable for research questions and objectives (Saunders et al. 2007). Bryman and Bell (2003) noted that there are three main types of interviews, structured, semi-structured and unstructured, in descending order of depth (Spradley 1979; Rubin and Rubin 1995). This research used semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. The discussions were audio recorded (with appropriate ethical observance), which allowed the researcher to pick up on paralinguistic features and to record the deeper considerations related to participants' answers, rather than being diverted by transcription. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they focus on the participants' perceptions of self and experience, expressed in their own words (Minichiello et al. 1995).

Semi-structured interviews foster rapport and elicit interpretations and meanings, generally beginning with ice-breaking basic questions and moving to more detailed ones (Stake 2010), which also allows exploration of emergent and unexpected themes (Conger 1998). The interviews were conducted in English even though the national language is Arabic, but periodically participants were free to express themselves in Arabic, which was then later translated into English as part of the transcription process. Although some researchers are concerned that the language used can affect thinking about leadership (Czarniawska and Joerges 1996; Niemier and Driven 2000; Fairclough 2003; Jepson 2009), where translation of Arabic used by participants was necessary, semantic renderings were used (Chapman et al. 2004). In effect, this was unimportant as the majority of major companies in Kuwait use English as a common language (World Business and Investment Library 2008; Kuwait Pocket Guide 2009).

- Interviewee selection

The software program *Al Misbar Guide* (Version 2011) was used to select candidates. It details all major firms in Kuwait, including data on the business sector, the CEO name and their address, with features enabling mail merges and label production. The leaders were selected in the beginning based on a quick test to determine the top CEOs in Kuwait; 25 individuals from the researcher's organisation were selected and asked to identify the top five CEOs and organisations. In addition, the researcher identified aspects that could be defined as significant or remarkable achievements, or something unique about the CEOs, as criteria for selection.

This was developed by researching the CEOs' achievements and reputations (via the internet, newspapers and company websites) in an attempt to identify the CEOs who were acknowledged or rewarded locally or internationally for their achievements and leadership. Furthermore, the researcher utilised *Leaders of Kuwait* (2007) as a reference guide. Snowball sampling was also used as a method to reach and confirm the selection of participants, described by Thompson (2002: 138) thus:

> *"A few identified members of a rare population are asked to identify other members of the population, those so identified are asked to identify others, and so, for the purpose of obtaining a non-probability sample or for constructing a frame from which to sample".*

The researcher adopted this definition and approached the first three participants from different sectors and genders, then asked those participants to name CEOs they knew or admired and who might be interested in participating in the study. Each respondent provided a few names and the researcher started to compare the list that she had and found that two were suitable for approach, thus they were added accordingly.

Bryman and Bell (2003) stressed that snowball sampling is in no sense random, because there is no way of knowing the precise extent of the population from which it would have to be drawn. They agree that snowball sampling is appropriate to be used in qualitative research, because the concern for validity

and generalisability "do not loom as large within qualitative research strategy as they do in quantitative research strategy" (Bryman and Bell 2003: 200).

Accordingly, 21 CEOs were initially targeted through formal letters sent by mail (see Appendix 1), followed by an email and then a call from the researcher. As a result, 16 CEOs responded from the following six different industries: banking, investment, telecommunication, aviation, O&G, and consultancy. It was intended to have a mix of genders and nationalities in order to enrich the data. However, it is worth noting that the aim was not to select a specified number of Kuwaiti and expatriate CEOs in Kuwait, or to selectively recruit people by gender; the primary aim was to select reputable CEOs in successful firms.

- Interviewee profiles

Table 4.2 shows more information about participants who were considered to be knowledgeable enough to enrich the study.

- Conducting interviews

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 16 participants. The face-to-face interviews allowed for a rapport to develop more quickly by creating an atmosphere of trust, which made the participants feel more comfortable to talk about several issues. Furthermore, face-to-face interviews allowed the interviewer to see the body language of the participants, which could help to reveal any inconsistencies between what was being said and what was meant. In addition, the atmosphere of each CEO's office/workplace was also acknowledged as an indicator of their style.

With the permission of the participants, the interviews were recorded with a Sony MP3 recorder. Warren (2002) states that recording equipment has a different meaning for participants than for interviewers, and it can signify the serious nature of a project, which may encourage participants to make more of an effort to give the researcher what they want; conversely, some participants may be more suspicious/nervous (Warren 2002).

Table 4.2: Participant profiles

CEO Profile	International Exposure	Education (Local vs. International)	Company Performance	Word Count
Kuwaiti male, Transport, CEO since 2005				
Established first private airline in the Middle East	Yes	Local	Profitable	4450
Kuwaiti female, O&G, CEO since 2005				
Established first independent O&G company in Kuwait	Yes	Local	Profitable	6050
Kuwaiti male, Banking, CEO since 2006				
Expansion of non-conventional banking tools	Yes	International	Profitable	3460
Kuwaiti male, Telecomm., CEO since 1998				
Transformed company from family business to listed company	No	International	Profitable	4737
Non-Kuwaiti male, Telecomm., CEO since 2011				
Managed remarkable customer expansion	Yes	Local	Profitable	2050
Kuwaiti male, O&G, CEO since 2010				
Drove company to profit making from loss	Yes	International	Profitable	3700
Non-Kuwaiti male, Banking, CEO since 1983				
One of biggest and safest banks in Middle East	Yes	International	Profitable	3300
Kuwaiti male, O&G, CEO since 2001				
Named as one of the world's most influential CEOs in his industry by a number of renowned bodies	Yes	International	Profitable	5268
Kuwaiti male, Consultation, CEO since 2002				
Led the expansion of the company from being local to international	Yes	International	Profitable	7625
Kuwaiti male, Telecomm., CEO since 2011				
Managed one of the largest telecom. organisations in Kuwait	Yes	International	Profitable	3390
Kuwaiti female, Consultation, CEO since 2006				
Performed political role	No	Local	Loss-making	5300
Kuwaiti male, Investment, CEO since 2007				
Maintained the stability of the company during the '08 financial crisis	No	International	Profitable	5275
Kuwaiti female, Investment, CEO since 1998				
Established one of the biggest investment companies in the region	Yes	International	Loss- making	3959
Kuwaiti male, Investment, CEO since 2007				
Expansion, merger and acquisition	Yes	International	Profitable	5490
Kuwaiti female, O&G, CEO since 2006				
Managed to efficiently position Kuwait as a prominent exporting country	Yes	International	Profitable	3150
Non-Kuwaiti male, Banking, CEO since 2009				
Turned losses to profit	Yes	International	Profitable	3809

The researcher acknowledged that two of the participants did not appear to be comfortable about the recordings; in these instances, the researcher made an effort to emphasise the confidentiality of the study by explaining how the recordings would be saved and for what purpose, while reassuring the participants that their transcripts would remain anonymous. Concurrently, the researcher explained the criticality of recording all of the interviews, as this would aid analysis after the interviews and avoid misinterpretation. These CEOs decided to have interviews in the company of other senior members of staff for reassurance.

Some notes were taken during interviews, including a brief description of anything of interest observed by the researcher, such as participant facial expressions, fidgeting, office set-up and communication style, particularly when Arabic expressions were used, and generally being sensitive to participant symbolic, material, and/or institutional narratives (Keenoy et al. 2000; Fairhurst and Grant 2010). Therefore, language use was but one means of understanding the phenomena encountered (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001).

4.11 Data analysis

In terms of data analysis, since a major objective of qualitative research is theory development, an intricate process of data collection and analysis of the CEOs' discourses, narratives, stories and experiences was necessary. The recorded materials (both interviews and participant observations) were converted into verbatim text in the transcription process (Gillham 2005). Each transcription took about four hours. These thick and rich descriptions of actual events in real-life contexts uncover and preserve the meanings that those involved ascribed to them (Gephart 2004).

The researcher then validated the transcripts to check for any statements that could be missing. The second round of validating the transcript took the researcher roughly three hours per transcript. The transcripts were carefully reviewed as the interview process was ongoing, and any repeated ideas were probed in subsequent interviews to establish the agenda for observation and later documentary analysis. The data analysis was organised according to the

questions asked, which eventually led to data analysis categories arising from the concepts generated in the literature review. Data analysis was performed through an iterative process of description, ordering and identifying recurrent and repetitive aspects, thereby determining the major codes in a process of constant comparison across the interviews and the observation transcripts (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Data analysis was conducted using the content analysis method, which is described as a method to classify written text or oral materials into identified categories of similar meanings (Moretti et al. 2011). Abrahamson (1983) asserted that content analysis can be successfully used to examine virtually any kind of communication materials, including narrative responses, open-ended survey questionnaire, interviews and observations. Following the repeated reading of the text to try to understand the meanings of the participants, the next phase in the process of data analysis was data reduction.

The raw data or large text was compressed into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding. The process of data reduction into compelling authentic and meaningful statements constitutes an end-goal of the qualitative research design (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Data reduction distils the information to make visible the most essential concepts and relationships, distinguishing primary/main and secondary/sub-themes. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that data reduction sharpens, sorts, focuses and organises data in such a way that conclusions can be drawn and verified. Following the suggestions of Ryan and Bernard (2003), the text was "pawed", which involved highlighting key phrases because they appeared to make sense (Sandelowski 1995, 2000).

Coding is the first stage in the process of beginning to analyse the interviews. The initial code structure was based on the research questions, the literature review and the researcher's experience with the subject matter, but the data analysis allowed other codes to emerge as well. This process of constant comparison of the codes emerging from the analysis was accompanied by comparison with subsequent collected data and with the concepts outlined in the literature (Glaser and Strauss 1967). It was important that codes had greater specificity and clarity (see Appendix 3).

The quotations that vividly illustrated each code were selected from the interview transcripts (Sumner-Armstrong et al. 2008) and were used as compelling evidence from the interviewees. The primary concern was to explore understanding of leadership behaviours and styles of participants and how they perceived their effectiveness. Initially, statements/sentences were extracted from the data (i.e. from interviews, observations and discussion notes), and each extraction was marked with a relevant code. It was important to ensure that the theoretical discussions were traceable in the data.

The next phase of data analysis consisted of categorisation of the codes. Groups of codes can be associated into a category (or family). A category is referred to as an "abstract higher order concept, based on its ability to explain what is going on" (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 112). A category refers to items "with similar meaning and connotations" (Weber 1990: 37), which must be "mutually exclusive and exhaustive" (Crowley and Delfico 1996: 20). By comparing and combining categories in new ways, new insights into the phenomenon of interest were developed (Hoepfl 1997). Cho and Lee (2014) stated that the selection of unit analysis, categorising and finding themes from categories is the component of the analysis process in content analysis. Table 4.3 gives a sample of the data coding and categorising to illustrate how the data was analysed.

The next phase in content analysis is the establishment of themes, "a way to link the underlying meanings together in categories" (Graneheim and Lundman 2004: 107). The concept of a theme has multiple interpretations: it is a way to describe a structural unit of meaning essential to present qualitative results (Streubert and Carpenter 1995), a recurring regularity identified within or cutting across categories (Polit and Hungler 1999), and "an expression of the latent content of the text" (Graneheim and Lundman 2004: 107).

The establishment of the themes linked the underlying meanings together in categories and the key findings stated the emerging themes which subsequently formed the basis for discussion, interpreting and presenting qualitative results (Streubert and Carpenter 1995; Granecheim and Lundman 2004). This ensured theoretical sensitivity when clustering the codes into categories and themes (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Table 4.3: Data coding and sampling

Research Objectives	Research Questions	Themes
Focus/business oriented Achiever driven Flexibility Change manager Ability to implement/execute Process oriented Results and performance driven Strategy manifested by shareholders Prioritisation Measure result	Driving execution	Effectiveness definition
Lead by example Walk the talk Living the organisation Charismatic Aspire Dedication Wisdom Firm Balanced heart and mind Respect others	Charismatic/role model	Characteristic
Had vision, mission and strategy Build business model Ability to anticipate Photographic memory Create innovation culture Diversification and growth strategy Have different scenarios	Visionary thinker	

By considering the themes, it was possible to explore the general leadership behaviours and styles of the CEOs and how they perceived effectiveness, which enabled the development of a theoretical narrative. Particular attention was also paid to answers that were notably different from common or most frequent themes, or "negative instances" (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Marshall and Rossman 1999). Furthermore, close attention was given to contradictions and "mixed responses".

During the analytical discussion of the themes/data, the theory-building process of "enfolding literature" was conducted – this is required to produce a theoretical explanation at a higher level of abstraction (Eisenhardt 1989). This involved an iterative and comparative process of tracking back and forth between the existing theory and the data (Yanow 2004), while remaining sensitive to the unique

situated experiences of the participating CEOs. The whole analytical process is as depicted in Figure 4.1 below:
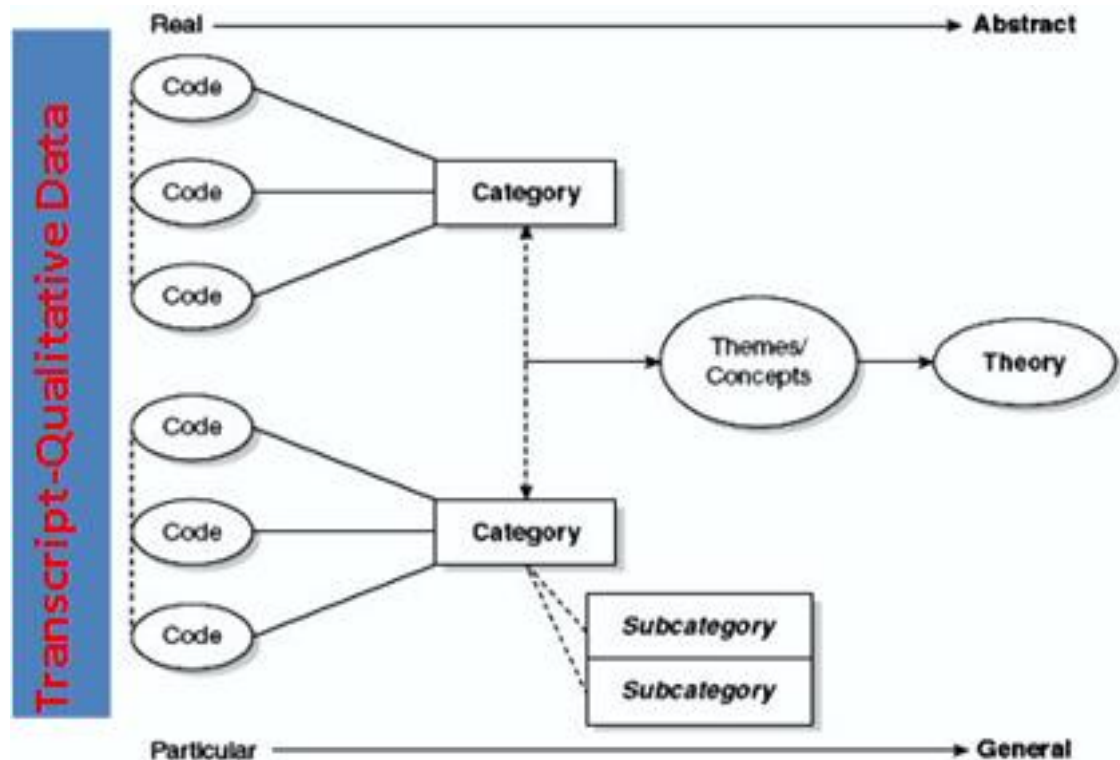
Figure 4.1: The coding manual for qualitative researchers
(Adapted from Denscombe 2010)

Electronic software such as NVivo was not used to analyse the data, partly because of the intermittent use of English and Arabic by interviewees during the interviews. There was, therefore, a need to translate into English in a few places, for which manual transcription and analysis was undertaken.

4.12 Participant observations

Because organisations can be viewed as societies with their own customs and practices, participant observation has become increasingly popular in organisational research. Evered and Louis (2001) identified two different paradigms of organisational research: inquiry from the outside and from the inside. Inquiry from the outside requires the researcher's detachment from the organisational setting, therefore, data is acquired from company files and financial reports, etc. Inquiry from the inside, on the other hand, requires the personal involvement of the researcher in the research process, functioning

within the organisation. Evered and Louis (2001) concluded that the knowledge acquired through inquiry from the inside is inherently more valid and relevant to the organisational actors, thus it was adopted. Jorgensen (1989) noted that there are three key elements of a successful participant observation study: it should generally be *in situ*; rapport should be established with participants; and sufficient time (according to the context) should be allowed.

The researcher aimed to obtain a better understanding of the social reality for CEOs by gaining a detailed understanding of their behaviours and leadership styles. This observational element was conducted on a much smaller scale; two CEOs were selected due to the fact that they were in a transition period and they were from the same organisation as the researcher. Thus, the researcher could readily view the behaviours of these CEOs for the purpose of this study. The first CEO who participated in this research had worked as the researcher's direct leader for 16 months. They had also been non-direct leaders in the same organisation for eight years. In contrast, the second/new CEO had worked with the first CEO for just four months in the transition period. This relationship allowed the researcher to work with the new CEO for 18 months – the full duration of the observational aspect.

For the purpose of this research, in addition to the researcher being part of the executive team, she was also conducting observational research, as she wanted to keep the environment as natural as possible (Becker and Geer 1957). Conger, Finegold and Lawler (1998) noted that observations can uncover data that is seen to be unreachable and, when combined with interview data, can make a powerful methodology. Conger, Finegold and Lawler (1998) also mentioned that there are two main components to the participant observation conducting strategy: an open-ended type of interview, and observations that are concerned with the interaction patterns and the detection of any underlying behavioural implications. Van Maanen (1979) referred to this as the challenge of distinguishing between operational data, which reflects spontaneous data collected by candid interactions and active engagements by the field observation researcher; and presentational data, which strives to maintain a certain image by reflecting an ideal act rather than a routine act.

One of the observed CEOs participated in the semi-structured interviews; this provided a validation check that he was acting in the way he described. Generally, the interviews identified the ideal model of an effective CEO, but the observations indicated further elements with regard to CEO characteristics for their preferred way of working/effective style.

It is worth mentioning that all of the interviews were conducted prior to any participant observations. This helped the researcher to segment the elements that needed observation. Thus, the observations helped to identify whether the CEOL factors were unique and the extent to which they were validated by the identified model of perceived effective CEO characteristics.

This had two-fold results: during the observation stage, the researcher managed to validate the patterns of behaviour that were described by the individual interviews, and frequency counts could also be performed; simultaneously, the researcher could take notes on the behaviours, reactions and events observed – many had not been identified clearly in the interview as the interview itself asked about perceptions toward effective CEOs – thus, there were differences noted between the notion of effective CEOs and specific actions by the CEOs. Furthermore, the researcher focused on the behaviours that had been considered in the interviews.

The observations were not easy as the researcher needed to use multiple skills, including paying attention to the use of body language and voice tonality. Conger, Finegold and Lawler (1998) noted that before validation with a respondent, they would look for spontaneous remarks that may contradict what they were hearing. The researcher did not select the days or events to observe; rather she kept this open and continually had her notebook to record any observations. Many of the observations came from interactions with other executives, BoD members and other employees when comparing the two CEOs.

By the end, the researcher had a log of summaries about the events and behaviours observed. After most of the events, the researcher would write-up the content of the observations and then, from time to time, the researcher would generate some preliminary abstracts that were then transferred to the general

themes used in the interviews. During the data analysis stage, the categories were modified and a few new coding categories were also identified.

4.13 Validity and reliability

Leadership research techniques of validity and reliability generally include methods such as content analysis (Klenke 2008). Seidman (1998: 20) stated:

> *"What are needed are not formulaic approaches to enhancing either validity or trustworthiness but understanding of and respect for the issues that underlie those terms. We must grapple with them, doing our best to increase our ways of knowing and avoiding ignorance, realising that our efforts are quite small in the larger scale of things".*

In order to measure the trustworthiness of content analysis, Guba (1981) suggested the use of credibility (truth value), transferability (applicability), and dependability (consistency). The use of this concept is supported by Graneheim and Lundman (2004). In order to increase the credibility of the study findings, the citing of quotations was a strategy, where quotations were included to reflect the exact views of the participants. Furthermore, by using interview and observation techniques, data was complemented with data from the observations. Graneheim and Lundman (2004) suggested another strategy to cover for credibility, which is the selection of the most suitable meaningful unit/ code and the capacity of categories and themes.

To assure transferability, Shenton (2004: 73) recommends providing "background data to establish the context of the study and detailed description of the phenomenon in question to allow comparison to be made", while dependability can be enhanced by an auditing trail that include all records and documents (Cho and Lee 2014).

It is important to exercise caution when transcribing interviews, thus accepted transcription protocols and processes were used, and long abstracts of data were analysed and commented upon in narrative, so as to interpret it for reader accessibility (Silverman 2001).

In contrast, validity is also concerned with checking whether it measured what it intended to (Warwick 1973; Silverman 2001; Baker 2002); as this research was qualitative in nature, validity is not relevant, rather credibility and transferability are. Importantly, validity can be improved within qualitative research by the accurate recording of all of the events; this was done through the use of multiple methods and through systematic analysis of the resulting data (Warwick 1973; Silverman 2001).

King and Horrocks (2010) explained that it is crucial to think wisely during the planning stage in order to identify what is actually needed, and whether full or partial transcription is required. During the second round of validation and compiling the missing parts of the transcripts, the researcher looked for contextual features that were beyond the actual words used in context (King and Horrocks 2010). The researcher was clear about when and how to reflect the paralinguistic features; in particular, the researcher took detailed notes to illustrate the context from the moment she entered the parking area to the moment she left.

All interviews were recorded in full except one received by fax and later excluded from analysis. Furthermore, notes were taken during the interviews to provide more insight into the observations relating to what was happening around the researcher. Such data provides more information that can be used for later reflection, and helps improve reliability and validity (Van Maanen 1979).

As for the participant observations, as Jorgensen (1989) stressed, they resulted in highly valid concepts because of their preoccupation with concepts, in terms of what they mean and how they are used by people in everyday life. Therefore, validity can be maintained through the ability to gain direct access to the insiders' world of meaning and action (Adler and Adler 1978). On the other hand, the reliability of participant observations is sometimes questioned (Jorgensen 1989), since it refers to the extent to which a procedure or measurement would produce the same result with repeated usage. That is why different data collection methods were used within this project, rather than it being reliant on just one methodology.

4.14 Values and ethics

The researcher followed and complied with the University of Bradford's Ethical Guidelines, as mentioned in the *Regulations for Research Degrees* (2010), listed in the *Quality Assurance Handbook* available from the University website.

It was important to ensure that participants were protected and not harmed in any way as a result of the academic research. The researcher ensured that there were no risks to exposure or embarrassment, as well as no loss of standing, employment or self-esteem. Equally, it was important that the companies and the participants were in no way put into disrepute (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). This is fundamentally important, not just for this present study, but also for other researchers who might want to conduct similar studies. To that end, confidentiality was maintained throughout this study and no company names or participant identities were revealed. Furthermore, no other references were included that could be used to determine any of their identities. Only anonymous excerpts from the research interviews were utilised in the study.

Participants were given the opportunity to decline interviews being recorded using a recording device, and they had the opportunity and right to ask to receive a copy of the recording and the transcript, so as to reveal how they were presented, quoted and interpreted, if they so desired. Participation was voluntary, and participants retained the right to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

Finally, the participants were advised that they would receive a copy of the research summary results after completion of the research, and that the researcher would present these to them face-to-face, if time permitted. They were informed that data would be stored in a password-protected computer accessible only to the researcher on the University of Bradford server for a period not exceeding seven years, after which it would be destroyed in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act (1998).

There may have been some ethical implications of researching in the researcher's own organisation, but these were overcome by ensuring that the CEO and other participants were aware of the study. Therefore, the researcher was open about her research and did not covertly observe anyone. The

researcher's role required that she be observant of the work of the top management and facilitate the smooth enactment of their duties, therefore, it required being ethical and objective in the conduct of duty without being biased.

It is a concern that researchers can "go native" in qualitative research, especially in contexts where they have professional or personal history (Gill and Johnson 2010). This can undermine the researcher's ability to undertake research with consequent loss of sight of the research aims being pursued. The researcher had to strike a balance between being able to participate with the activities of the CEOs being studied, so as to get the insider's point of view as a member of their culture, while also retaining a degree of detachment (Gill and Johnson 2010); for instance, after writing observational notes, the researcher had to be reflective and examine whether there was any tendency for the analysis to reflect her own personal views. Data observed from participation was supplementary to the main data obtained from interviews.

4.15 Reflexivity

Since the data gathered in the interviews forms an interpretation and collaboration of meanings around how CEOs perceive leadership behaviours, it was important to be reflexive in the interview process, and with regard to the significant factors that affected the process, in order to openly acknowledge any bias. King and Horrocks (2010) stress that reflexivity opens up possibilities around additional and often radically different ways of seeing and comprehending people's lives and experiences. Payne (2007) argues that reflexivity allows the researcher to acknowledge their role in the creation of the analytical account, and enables a critical stance to be taken towards the impact of both the researcher and the context in which the research takes place.

Furthermore, the researcher is accountable in reflexivity, since it supposes that the researcher makes visible his or her part in the production of knowledge (King and Horrocks 2010). Steier (1991) argued that reflexivity is about taking responsibility, while Finlay (2002) noted that reflexivity can be used to support validity as a quality technique that confirms and validates the research approach. Advocates of reflexivity (e.g. Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000) advised openness

and honesty with regard to the position and identity of the researcher, accompanied by critical self-appraisal.

Every effort was made to remain unbiased in collecting the data and reporting the findings. Reflexivity required a lot of patience and wisdom. The researcher took leave from her work for the days that she conducted the interviews to assure no disconnect or distraction, to cultivate the deep listening and reflective mood necessary. The researcher practiced reflexivity through building rapports and showing acceptance with the participants through self-reflection, and looking at how her reactions during the interview may have influenced participants in the context of Kuwait's conservative culture, where people are reflexively reticent with strangers. Another aspect was time constraints and maintaining focus during the interviews with the busy CEOs.

4.16 Chapter summary

This chapter justified the research design and methodology used to collect and analyse the data. A qualitative methodology was adopted as the most appropriate in line with a subjective ontology and positive epistemology. The strength of a qualitative research design, such as that presented here, "lies in its capacity to provide insights, rich details and thick descriptions" (Jack and Anderson 2002: 473). To this end, 16 face-to-face interviews were conducted with CEOs selected from various sectors of the Kuwaiti economy. This evidence was corroborated with data from participant observation of two CEOs working with the researcher. Content analysis was then employed to analyse the data (Appendix 3) and the findings and analysis (Appendix 5), as presented in the following chapter.

5 Framing of Data and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter frames the data and presents the main findings generated from the 16 semi-structured interviews and the data obtained from the two participant observations. The analysis is based on interview transcripts totalling approximately 71,000 words, and 10 pages of participant observation.

Based on analysis of the literature (Chapter 2) and the context (Chapter 3), the following key concepts all constituted the theoretical model, which formed the basis of the interview guide and the ensuing analysis: CEOL, leadership style, BoD and executive relationships, career background and family backgrounds, societal and organisational culture, *Wasta* and religion. The interview guide was organised according to these main concepts as informed by the literature and theoretical model (see Figure 3.1), from which numerous follow-up questions emerged to stimulate further exploration and findings of other themes not originally identified in the extant literature.

The chapter starts by presenting the emergent findings from interviews. A "tell, show, tell" sandwich structure was used (Golden-Biddle and Locke 2007). The structure first explains the core idea (codes) depicted in the data, followed by the presentation of excerpts from the interviews to substantiate the core idea, followed by data analysis leading to formulation of categories, and ultimately themes that the data supports, herein referred to as key findings.

Data from participative observation is then analysed to corroborate data from interviews, and key findings in each case are highlighted to enable discussion and interpretation of the key findings.

5.2 Interview findings

This section presents the findings that emerged from the interviews and the following subsections analyse each of these findings, based on the CEO responses to the related interview questions. These were coded and categorised in accordance with the descriptions presented in the research methodology (see

Chapter 4). Furthermore, Appendix 5 exemplifies how the analysis and results were interpreted based on the CEOs' responses.

5.2.1 Theme 1: The definition of CEO effectiveness

The following question helped to answer the above understanding of CEOL:

❖ *What is your definition of effective leadership, for someone at your level?*

Participants were not able to fully define the concept, but the second question, focusing on their skills, experiences and behaviours, helped them to conceptualise their understanding of CEOL.

The participants' responses led to the meaning of CEOL from their perspectives, although in some cases, they mixed the definitions and the requirements needed for a CEO to be effective, including specific required skills and behaviours. Data analysis identified ten codes that, together, form the theme "definition of effective leadership at CEO level".

The majority of the participants (14 of 16) made reference to "driving execution" as their overarching understanding of effectiveness. As substantiated by CEO-7, the aspect of implementing and executing changes was cited as very important:

> *"I perceive the leadership effectiveness by the ability to introduce, implement and execute strategies and changes. It is the ability to change the people's poor values and system. Leadership will not happen by chance, it will only happen when you succeed to introduce changes".*

The other codes that emerged from the analysis were "focused on the business direction", "result and performance driven", "driven by achievement", "ability to change", "measuring results", "ability to execute and implement" and "strategy manifested by shareholder", which reflected the necessity to measure objectives that are driven by shareholders' interests. Several CEOs referred to "flexibility", "process oriented" and "prioritisation".

These were all aspects driving execution, as noted by CEO-4:

> *"Execution ability is a must-have attribute, and I consider it the ABC of any management role, basically after putting the strategy any task needs proper planning, organising, coordinating and controlling. Goals should be clear with measurement tools".*

- Summary of findings

"Driving execution" is therefore the dominant perspective in these CEO definitions of CEOL. Driving execution means providing a focused process that helps to drive the successful performance and results, by knowing how to prioritise, focus, and be flexible enough to accept and undertake changes that will ensure specific results, i.e. set objectives can be achieved. If strategies are not implemented and objectives not realised, as per the shareholders' expectations, then the CEOs would not be considered "effective".

5.2.2 Theme 2: Characteristics of effective CEOs

The following question addressed issues concerning specific CEO characteristics that helped them to shape their leadership style:

- ❖ *What are the required skills, experiences and behaviours in order to perform your work more effectively?*

- Being charismatic and a role model

The characteristics of being an effective leader that were constantly raised were being charismatic and being a role model. As can be seen in Appendix 5, these were understood to include "lead by example", "walk the talk" and "living organisation". As indicated by CEO-15, it was important that CEOs should lead by example:

> *"The leaders should lead by example, being team players can bring all diversified workers to work together, walk the talk and have a vision".*

Conversely, CEO-9 did not believe in the role model concept, as he believed that CEOs should excel above and beyond by competing with themselves. Consequently, they should not be considered as role models *per se*, but should just be themselves:

"I don't believe in role models, I think everybody's role model should be himself… you have your own dream, your own ambition, and therefore you try to excel above yourself and compete against only yourself".

Being "charismatic" and "how you are seen by others" were considered to be very important by eleven participating CEOs. This means having a good image, which is gained by having a good reputation and inspiring others. Therefore, it was not necessarily about value addition to the organisation, as much as the image and status that the CEO leaves in their organisation.

- Visionary thinker

Another important category that emerged from the analysis of this theme was being a visionary thinker. For example, eight participating CEOs echoed sentiments such as, "having a clear vision, mission and strategy", "innovation culture" and "ability to anticipate the future". These CEOs believed this helped to position the organisation for a better future. CEO-2 supported this notion of being visionary:

"Leadership is not a formula; it is based on anticipation and expectations of today for the coming five years as minimum, with great ability to refresh every once in a while to reflect the changes".

Several participants referred to "building a business model" and "having different scenarios" that will help proper strategic planning. CEO-9, who had grown his organisation from a small local company into a global company, used the following proverb to support "visionary":

"Mankind is our tribe and the universe is our homeland".

The category of "visionary thinker" is regarded as an important characteristic for leaders to be able to create a coherent vision of the organisation with clear direction and purpose, through the ability to build a different business model. It was about the ability to predict where they want the organisation to be in five, ten or fifteen years' time. This meant being able to read the surrounding environment

and then adapting to use different scenarios and strategies, such as innovation, diversification and growth strategies.

- Knowledge

When considering the importance of equipping themselves with proper knowledge to aid their success, the views varied somewhat regarding what to focus on. Ten of the participating CEOs focused on aspects to do with business acumen, technical business, financial knowledge and global exposure. All respondents acknowledged that it was important to "understand the technical business" while also being "engaged with the industry knowledge".

Having an insight into the global business environment was also emphasised indirectly and directly by the CEOs. For instance, CEO-12 noted that:

> *"Global awareness and an economic mindset is a must, but not only that, having international exposure and institutional exposure plays a role in shaping an understanding of what is meant by globalisation".*

CEO-16 mentioned the importance of technical knowledge of the business:

> *"Combine technical knowledge with wisdom and motivation... so a good leader is somebody who knows the business he is managing. You have to have enough understanding and experience about your business as this will help you to see beyond today's needs and build proper vision".*

Technical knowledge of the institution was also highlighted by CEO-12:

> *"I greatly believe in knowledge in the institution to create some sort of knowledge management reservoir for people to go and draw information from".*

It would appear that having technical knowledge of the business, along with financial acumen and global exposure, were defining capabilities, as perceived by the CEOs. Having business and industrial knowledge was important, as it helped in shaping proper strategies to enable competition and grow the business.

- Empowering

"Empowerment" also emerged as an important characteristic of effective CEOs, as noted by over half (n=9) of the participating CEOs. This included "giving authority to others" and "team playing capabilities". The participating CEOs believed in collective decision-making and people ownership and they also recognised the effort of the team. To illustrate this point, CEO-4 referred to "holding people accountable" as being essential when he emphasised that:

> "Empowerment aims to have collective decision-making in our business... this allows us to share different opinions and create ownership for a successful business".

As far as these CEOs were concerned, this characteristic was seen more as building an engaging environment that fosters the ownership of the individual and group, through a proper individual and collective decision mechanism that reflects the boundaries of authorities. As a result, recognising and re-organising what motivates the people to be empowered was considered very important. Consequently, "empowering" was considered an important characteristic for one to be an effective leader.

- Communicating

Communicating was also considered (by eight of the CEOs) to be an important characteristic to be effective. This was in view of the importance of having adequate and timely information to be able to make informed decisions. This required free flow of information, both vertically and laterally, and between all organisational members. Many of the CEOs emphasised the ability to sell ideas and to influence through proper presentation skills, effective listening, meetings and *Diwaniyas* (traditional male gatherings), as in the following examples:

> "Part of leadership effectiveness is about ensuring proper communication through proper contacts, especially selective communication with specific board members to know from whom you will get support first for your ideas. This will help you as well to build strong relations with those who think like you". (CEO-9)

"In our society, communication is vital a formal and informal means, as it will help you to build strong relations with those who think like you" (CEO-6)

"Communication is not just a nice-to-have skill; rather it is a core skill to build connections. You need to ask people by going down to them, learn directly from them, listening to them. You don't necessarily need to resolve issues, but at least you build a good understanding about issues and how they can be solved". (CEO-8)

CEOs believe that consistent and clear communication helps them to build relations and have dialogue with the people that matter the most.

- People driven

People driven attributes captured the attention of seven CEOs who elaborated on issues such as "motivational skill", "mentoring and coaching skills" and "empathy". For example, CEO-9 stated that:

"You must be as human as possible, we are obsessed by processes and structure and stuff like this and the human soul, the human mind and human spirit does not lend itself to structural processes".

The aspect of humbleness was emphasised by CEO-2 when he mentioned that:

"A humble approach is reflected in the way we deal with the tea boy and the customers… Our legacy remains and remembered by how many finger prints we leave with the people that we meet, through treating them the way we want them to treat us".

The CEOs generally believed an effective person to be one concerned with the people, with the emphasis on moral dedication driven by trusted leaders who must be able to support and relate to all kinds of people, be tolerant with people and create a climate where people want to do their best. They can motivate and direct people, team or individual. They have a positive and constructive sense of humour. Thus, they are humble with people at all levels.

- Building relationships

Building relationship was also considered essential for effectiveness by seven leaders, who focused on "socialisation", "building networks", "proper contact" and good relations with "employees, stakeholders and community" in a "professional" meaning. This point was emphasised by several CEOs. For example, CEO-4 noted that:

> "You have people working in the organisation that come from different backgrounds even though they are from the same local community, but believe you me; the way you socialise with them should meet their expected style and culture, as they have their own thinking and their own way of socialising with each other".

From the above findings, it would appear that building relationships in all areas of the organisation and across the organisation, including with stakeholders, the community and across the industry, might help to foster a network of relationships.

- Ethical/inspiring

Being ethical and inspiring were also considered important characteristics for effective CEOs, pertaining to "integrity", "being ethical", "honesty", "trust", "transparency", "credible leader" and "fairness", all of which help to define ethical behaviours that inspire trust:

> "Be[ing] transparent to customers, [showing] respect to others, [and] honesty to people... when you hold people accountable for their mistakes and achievements... have justice and fairness". (CEO-5)

> "Since post liberation, things changed drastically and values have gone steeply down. There is no sense of responsibility, honesty, and even in Diwaniya, which used to play a role, don't have the right calibre of people attending and mentoring young people". (CEO-14)

However, only six CEOs mentioned that a trusting relationship could be realised through maintaining high standards of integrity and behaving in a fair, credible and consistent way, where one's beliefs are aligned with one's actions.

- Attracting and developing people

"Attracting and developing people" was also considered an important characteristic to be an effective CEO. It was highlighted that effective CEOs should develop their people by "emphasising the creation of the right opportunities" so as to develop people, which will result in "attracting", "retaining" and "building" talent, as amplified by CEO-15:

> *"The ability to create values by creating opportunities for people to grow through learning, development, mentoring and coaching, [as they] are key roles for any effective leaders".*

Four CEOs and four codes emphasise "attracting", "building and retaining talent" and "finding proper opportunities" for personnel to exercise their skills. This would seem to imply that the majority of the participants did not spontaneously raise aspects to do with attracting and developing people.

- Decision-making

The last characteristic identified by the CEOs as contributing to effectiveness was making decisions, and was mentioned by four CEOs. Specifically, CEOs were expected to be able to make "sound judgments", and to be "risk takers" or "calculated risk taker(s)". CEO-7 stated the importance of taking risks:

> *"We build the diversification strategy and grow outside Kuwait when others still fear going outside and have not yet thought about it; but, 25% of our bottom line business is now from outside and we are proud to be operating in this way during the [Iraq] war".*

Four CEOs perceived an important characteristic for CEOs to be the ability to identify opportunities and take calculated risks, even in uncertain situations, by still making timely and quick decisions with proper analytical thinking. Such critical sound judgement and thinking was an essential characteristic of effective CEOs, however, decision-making ability did not arise spontaneously from the majority of interviewees' narratives.

- Summary of findings

The "characteristic" theme emphasises being a "role model/charismatic" followed by "visionary thinker", who is "knowledgeable", who "empowers" the team, and who is skilled with proper "communication" skills, who "drives people" to success, who is "ethical, trusted and inspiring" to others and who is able to "attract and develop talent" and "build proper relationships". What can be gleaned from these categories is that they define what the CEOs regard as the characteristics associated with effectiveness, although this does not necessarily mean that these CEOs possess these qualities.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Preferred leadership style

In order to have a better understanding of the definitions and characteristics that the CEOs identified, a question relating to appropriate leadership style was asked. In general, few CEOs were able to specify a particular title or known leadership style by name, but many suggested attributes that reflected a preferred leadership style. There is some overlap with themes one and two. Nevertheless, this helped to position the CEOs' preferred styles within the context of the reviewed leadership literature and theories. However, there is a great deal of variety between the participants in their ideas about "preferred leadership style". CEO-6 described his leadership style as the "orchestrator":

> *"I surround myself with competent people who are capable and I always play the coordinator, the mentor and the synchroniser, like the orchestrator of these three will try to make sure we are in harmony, in order to form a type of leadership team which can be led in a proactive way".*

This style of leadership had lenience toward being more entrepreneurial in the sense that he was very proactive, and was willing to take risks, but they were still constrained by the board. At the same time, this style depicts followership leadership style, as he is surrounded and dependent on his subordinates.

A more comprehensive leadership style was recommended by CEO-9 who considered human beings and morals to be the most important aspects, which he called a "moral fabric and human-centric leadership style", to which he added

a few more elements including motivational skills, as well as being a risk taker and a tough decision maker:

> "Moral fabric represented by my practice that people must trust the ethics and morality of the leader… There are no decisions that could be built on perfect information, the more information/reporting you need, the less effective you are as a leader… Leadership in essence is a human process where your effectiveness has to do with your ability to be a magnet that can not only pull people together but can glue them together, transfer them, and move them into achieving the objectives".

In addition, he also identified his desire to:

> "... achieve group dynamics by cohesively bringing people together and moving them in the right direction; this is what I believe to be the true influence of leadership".

This style of leadership is more toward relational and transformational leadership with charismatic elements that transform a vision for the future of the organisation by inspiring people in the organisation to behave morally. He had transformed his organisation from being local to a global organisation (as explained under another theme). Nevertheless, for him the relation with subordinates was important. CEO-1 believed in global thinking, which he strongly felt affected local practices. He stated that there was:

> "No specific business or leadership model due to the industry, which is the first in Kuwait, I looked for best fit international practices and tried to fit it to the local culture… I understand the global environment [is] correlated with [the] local environment, this is what I named globalisation".

Achieving the results, and taking into account different situations between the local and global business environment, is reflected in various economic business indicators of such a dynamic business. This is an entrepreneurial way of thinking motivated by wanting to get the tasks executed through seizing opportunities.

A different leadership style expressed by CEO-10 referred to leadership styles in accordance with Arab-Islamic historical experiences. He indicated that true leaders demonstrate truth and honesty, ethics and effective leadership characteristics, thus people followed them passionately, even when they followed different styles from the one's he stated he had learned, specifically from the first two Islamic Caliphs, Abu Bakr and Umar:

> *"Abu Bakr would have a clear target, talk to subordinates that he had great belief in them [regional governors or generals] by giving them general guidelines, but the leader would then need to progress to execute the task or fight in a war in his own way…*

> *"[Caliph Umar ibn Al-Khattāb] will interfere in major and minor activities in the plan, even with the mobilisation of the army and soldiers… he should be informed before they take the next step".*

Although the historical reality is more complex, these two leaders (Abu Bakr and Umar ibn Al-Khattāb) are generally cited as archetypes of soft and hard power, and macro- and micro-management (respectively) in the Arab World. CEO-10 continued to state that he had learned to balance these leadership approaches according to the situation, to improve his flexibility as a leader:

> *"If the only tool you have is a hammer, you will treat everyone like a nail".*

CEO-10 provided a great example by reflecting on how one can have a vision while not being seen by others as visionary, due to having an operational background. During his tenure, he led a major change in the company's history by introducing new technology that benefited the whole country, not just the company, by converting his reading of the future as per the economic changes and new technology to reality, which changed the game in his business environment and led to high performance:

> *"I read, scanned the environmental changes, with sound judgement and good insight and intuition. I was decisive to introduce new technology that would make us leaders and not followers in this*

changing environment, yet I am perceived as an operational guy who is not diplomatic".

He constantly emphasised the importance of logic when thinking and planning to make the discussion more convincing:

"... with my integrity, ethics and transparency that is high and I have subordinates who have strong belief in me... I managed to make it happen".

This would appear that Islamic religion influenced his leadership style, but it is important to take into account that different situations demand different leadership styles. Similar to the above findings, many participating CEOs mentioned the importance of balancing between different leadership styles according to the particular situation. For example, CEO-7 stated the following:

"I believe that result/financial oriented (hard part) and leadership style (soft part) are broad definitions for an executive effective leadership model that in any case will depend on the situation; however, being passive about why they exist is key".

Further interrogation about his experience ensued, since he was one of the longest serving CEOs in the country and had therefore managed his firm with the old and new generations of subordinates and BoD members, throughout political and economic turbulence and war. His leadership style was certainly influenced by the context within which he was working (Kuwait). He enthusiastically replied:

"Clear vision and anticipation… I focus on the vision, we are a conservative firm yet we have started thinking of diversification and growing outside Kuwait when we didn't really need to. The financial drivers were minimal, but I anticipated that things could change and we have to grow outside Kuwait, serve our customer everywhere to build trust. The result was that we were able to operate during the [Gulf] War and cover our customer needs in good times and bad times".

This CEO presents his vision clearly; he knows himself, leads from his core values and is particularly keen on serving customers' needs. He focuses on realisation of goals and is performance driven to be a competent leader who manoeuvres in terms of how much he delegates to subordinates, and he coaches and directs his employees to achieve organisational results in line with his own values. His relations with followers are pivotal to effectiveness, since at this level the leader has to rely more on getting results through other people, as opposed to getting the work done himself, which may be possible at lower levels of leadership. CEO-2 explained that she could not define any specific style, but shared her preferred practical style:

"I seek team advice and share critical information with subordinates...
I say I am not an expert but I create an environment and expect you to
participate freely in the decision by being a proactive thinker".

CEO-2 recalled her previous job environment, where the boss was always right, even if his rationale was unconvincing, due to the enforcement of total obedience, with which she disagreed:

"I am driven by achievement, I want my team to question me and each
other, and I want them to excel by seeing their achievement.
Leadership is common sense where you do things that represent you
and are not reflecting somebody's model or style".

The style is more of an entrepreneurial leader; she took risks during the Arab Spring uprising where she invested in places such as Iraq and Libya, where few other investors were willing to take risks. The aspect of achievement is important. In addition, she distributes her responsibilities with her subordinates.

CEO-8 believes that the most successful leaders are not necessarily the ones with the best leadership skills, as he believes that to be the best in the subordinates' eyes, one must:

"... give confidence through inspiring others, speaking and acting in a
transparent and truthful way, having a good industrial and cross-
functional knowledge, and interpersonal leadership skills could all be

formulated into a model that I would like to use to maintain and assess CEO effectiveness".

He elaborated on the meaning of interpersonal leadership skills as follows:

"... achieve the result through empowering others, give them ownership, have empathy, keep them safe during uncertainty, keep to your words, sacrifice and help others, be conscious about people's moods and status, adapt to different situations".

Clearly, CEO-8 practices a relational leadership style and has built trust and *walks the talk*, as he is responsive to people's needs and values. Moreover, he knows his values.

CEO-11 shared her leadership style that reflected her feminine gender:

"You have to have certain personal things, be a mother to your employees, it's not bad. I have always believed in hugs, I don't know if this is appropriate to say or not, I am a tactile person and I hug people; my age and my experience have granted me the right to be able to give this nurturing spirit".

Complementary attributes that she considered to be part of her leadership style came from practices with her customers and staff – this emphasised open dialogue:

"I have never had a [Great] Wall of China between me and the people, I always have this open-door policy to sit and talk, and I am a great listener… supporting my proactive subordinate and create opportunity, I have never had Thursday or Sunday management team meetings, instead I have management team meetings every day and I have to partner with my customer on a continuous basis".

She also supported the great man and traits approach theories, believing that:

"The leadership characteristic is naturally born and it is not easy to build. I believe that those great leaders, who are named as

transformational leaders like Gandhi, a positive leader, or Saddam Hussein, having a negative impact, are in reality born with leadership charisma, rather than being trained to be leaders".

This leadership style involved parenting and motherhood aspects, which reflect her feminine gender, in addition to using different tactics to gain access to the hearts, before accessing the minds of the customers and employees. This also appears to be the prevailing trend in modern feminism – accentuating rather than suppressing the feminine, while engaging in the world on the basis of equality. Another female CEO (CEO-15) explained her leadership style as aiming to include outward and inward views. For the inward aspect (internal organisation), she strives to drive better performance:

"Driving total organisational performance by prioritising topics and issues that I feel are essential; taking a review with my executives, looking at how we can perform better, how we can target new things and new achievements each and every year, how we keep our ethics standards – this is how I drive the organisation to better performance".

CEO-15 considered outward aspects to be those involving interactions with customers and other businesses and stakeholders in the external environment. She described her main aim of leadership:

"I drive to achieve organisational performance based on my strong religious and ethical values".

CEO-13 believed that a mix of elements is necessary for an effective leadership style, which is ultimately judged by company performance and maximising shareholder value:

"Being charismatic and ethical to inspire staff and attract them to work with him/her, will be reflected also by the quality of the team surrounding the CEO, through having a technical strong background".

During the crisis that CEO-13 faced, she played a "self-sacrificial" role model by foregoing her own self-interest to "cover the shareholders' loss" and to "serve her subordinates".

CEO-16 mentioned that he would describe the leadership style that can achieve results as being through empowering people, who have trust with each other by assuring transparency and clear communication. He also transformed one of the largest banks in Kuwait from a position of loss to becoming one of the most successful banks in the country. He also transformed the organisational culture of the bank to become value driven and focused on key stakeholders:

> *"You formulate a new strategy, maybe in the first two weeks only the management talk about it – that's very possible – but, then it has to be communicated broadly and you need to be very transparent. I think in the end success is achieved if you execute the strategy well and achieve the targets".*

CEO-16 emphasised that successful CEOs should take care of the people surrounding them and success is brought about by sharing responsibilities with others; that is the notion of distributed leadership:

> *"Make sure people have a clear objective and a clear vision, you know what your own vision is and what your personal objectives are – just make sure they are well communicated".*

CEO-12 was very angry about the way things were being managed in Kuwait:

> *"An effective leadership model means a humble CEO who believes in teamwork, a matrix business model, having a global perspective and a sophisticated and economic mind-set… I take risks and seek new opportunities".*

He believes that the culture in Kuwait will not help CEOs to encourage "outward thinkers" and come up with new ideas:

> *"We are becoming more and more inward thinkers, as we copied the outer layers of globalisation, as in terms of where to travel and how to*

dress, what is the best restaurant, but not true globalisation, where you become open minded and accept and understand other cultures".

This suggestion from this CEO is that leadership is nowadays also shaped by globalisation and not just the local surroundings.

The preferred style noted from CEO-14 considered the importance of ethical values in achieving the task, as he believed in focusing on moral elements, such as integrity and being a role model:

"My preferred model is to speak and act in a truthful manner… set standards for conducting business with high dedication, seriousness, promptness and professionalism, this is how I can achieve my task and perform well".

The next quote, from CEO-3, reflects a transformational and authentic leadership style:

"A visionary leader who inspires the organisation with high integrity and ethics, able to embark on changes to support an anticipated need, is the model that I am using".

"I positioned the organisation with a clear direction by transforming the business model to serve the global and local need of the shareholders' vision, where the vision is one but the approach is different, where in our global organisation they need to serve and inspire their community and not the HQ community, in addition the unique business model has embedded transformation in the country as leading in such type of business".

The preferred leadership style of CEO-4 reflected a functionalist orientation, with a tendency towards dominating:

"My preferred leadership model is not one definition as it is a combination of many chemistries of the individual that are mixed together and put in the blender… sometimes I am democratic and sometimes dictatorial, but what is important is that I make sure my

team are well trained, well exposed to technology, well positioned to achieve the task. I request a lot of analysis, I stand by them, I work very close with them but also sometimes more than what I should".

The style expressed by CEO-5 was more results-oriented, emphasising performance, where the CEO strives for excellence in what he and his staff do by setting high targets and then measuring them:

"I always looking for the result, through effective meetings and improved communication... I believe that I am in a very competitive industry, with very dynamic changes... I am very pro-active and will capture the new opportunities through quick decision making mechanisms, otherwise we will lose our position and could fail".

- Summary of findings

There is a great deal of variation in this theme, but there are seven overall categories under the main theme of leadership style, namely: authentic, transformational, entrepreneurial, distributed, relationship, parenting and distributed leadership. This may point to the fact that there is no one effective leadership style, and it ultimately depends on the situation at hand.

5.2.4 Theme 4: CEOs' understanding of the business environment

This theme relates to the CEOs' role in understanding the business environment, as well as the implications that this environment may have on their business. In order for a CEO to make a sound decision, at the right time, a deep understanding of all of the business functions is required. This includes consideration of the economic status of the country where the CEO's business operates, as well as the global situation (which will have a direct and indirect effect), knowledge of global economic indicators, politics, rivals and, accordingly, the competitive advantage that they want in order to differentiate their organisation. Moreover, knowledge of the local and global barriers hindering their success could also help identify opportunities for success, by challenging the global geographical business in such a way as to inspire them (Drucker 2007; Lafley 2009). Consequently, the following questions were asked:

- ❖ *What can you tell me about your understanding of the changes in the business environment that you are operating in?*
- ❖ *What are the barriers or elements that hinder your success and what are the opportunities and challenges facing you?*
- ❖ *How do you manage and face changes?*

All of the CEOs recognised the role of leadership when dealing with change in the business environment. Of the 16 CEOs, 15 described the local and regional barriers and opportunities, as well as how they manage changes in the external environment that affect the way in which they operate. A few mentioned how they faced global dynamic challenges and three CEOs identified how environmental changes affect, as part of their organisation's culture, the manner in which the business is run in a generic way.

All of the CEOs recognised the role of change management as an approach for dealing with uncertainty, as none of the CEOs described their future strategy without referring to changes in the capabilities of their organisation. The main barriers affecting their organisations cited by 15 participants were local, particularly "government/market regulations" and "political interference".

With regards to government policies, "market restriction", "monopoly", "encourage control", "risk averse", "encourage laissez-faire leadership with no challenges", "less competence" and "consumerism" were the main obstacles cited. CEO-2 stated that restrictions on private companies in their attempt to evolve and compete with the government hindered the growth of his business. Three CEOs referred to "government regulations as limiting growth". Kuwait's restrictions on diversification in transportation have led to limited options for travel from and to Kuwait. For instance, CEO-2 stated that:

> *"Internally, the government regulation is the main challenge… as an example, the way the government competes with private sector salaries makes it hard for them to match their salaries and hire Kuwaitis. [Furthermore], the closed environment, security concerns about foreigners and no diversified transportation (like airlines) also make it difficult".*

This was supported by CEO-1, who conveyed a similar message:

"[Kuwaiti] culture changed after the invasion, I am so sad to see nationals being less efficient and less productive, non-nationals are more productive. Government competes with the private sector, so the government sector becomes an employer of choice as the attraction is about having less working hours and more salary".

The next category was political interference, whereby government instability increased political interference and led to "no punishment" and "unethical practices considered normal", with "easy acceptance of corruption". CEO-9 further observed this notion of political disturbance by stressing that:

"99% of projects fail because of politics, not technicalities… in Kuwait there are more politics than in other places because of the nature of the system".

Conversely, the external regional and global barriers were also mentioned by nine CEOs. The "regional coalition" and collaboration within the Arab region and the Middle East is not deemed to be strong enough to grow in the same way as other stronger bodies. To illustrate this point, CEO-7 said:

"An Arab coalition or even Gulf coalition, as per the European coalition [the EU], is impossible due to the religious parties and differentiations that have shaped the political arena".

CEO-13 referred to the implication of not enough understanding of global business:

"Global, big organisations have more than 100 years of experience in reaching globalisation, our locally founded organisations want to be global in a very short time, with less understanding of the depth of experience that you need to be global; it is not just money that will make you a global organisation".

The lack of a technical infrastructure is considered to be a barrier to business easiness, as mentioned by CEO-6 and CEO-13. Nonetheless, some external

opportunities were identified due to "government humanitarian aid" and an "open society" compared to other GCC countries, which were identified as sources to accelerate growth and encourage change. Nevertheless, the Arab Spring was highlighted by a few CEOs as a problem, while some considered it as an opportunity. For example, CEO-12 stated that:

> *"We as businesses owners were forced to suspend any external investors in order to slow things down by increasing internal opportunities to expand businesses and manage profits internally".*

However, CEO-1 managed to profit from the Arab Spring, by resisting the trend of passively adapting to external conditions:

> *"I formulated an emergency team to act immediately with full authority to take advantage of the daily environmental changes in the economy as a source of profit – my business therefore gets in first and has a better chance to enter the market that is considered risky by others".*

CEO-2 was notably pro-active in this context:

> *"The Arab Spring opened opportunities for us, as Western companies found it risky to enter the market… we jumped in and created opportunities in an uncertain time".*

In terms of threats to the business environment and future growth, internal threats and changes were highlighted as being linked to local barriers. One CEO mentioned that they were able to face danger by utilising robust internal guidelines to mitigate risk. Two similar responses were obtained from the CEOs from the financial sector, some of whom considered people engagement and retention to be an issue, especially if there are no growth opportunities. CEO-15 noted that:

> *"As a result of having no clear growth opportunities due to no government support, we were struggling to retain good people – this would ultimately end up affecting company performance".*

CEO-15 also referred to this in a wider context when she mentioned that in addition to threatening to lose peoples' interest in the private sectors, it was leading to a diminished business position and a loss of opportunities:

"I am challenging the people to perform better, we are a public organisation and we have politics. I try to shield the organisation from political influence, but the people are confused between having an entrepreneurial mind-set while working in a public/semi-private organisation that restricts their ability to grow because of having no stable vision or strategy. It's the mind-set for privatisation which is not yet there".

She later elaborated with sadness that:

"... employers don't have a clear future, employees talk about their future… but they don't feel that they have opportunities to grow, which proposes another challenge for preparing people for working in a global environment".

CEO-16 expressed that challenges in the business environment forced them to be dynamic and cooperate. He reflected that:

"I was a newcomer when the financial 'tsunami' happened… I can keep the status quo as it is, or strive to add value in the bad times and turn challenges to opportunities".

Nonetheless, it seems that most businesses define themselves as cyclical when their financial performance fluctuates, not as a result of their type of business but as a result of economic changes and instability. Evidence was shared by 14 CEOs on how they faced and managed change through "adaptability", "CEO as a role model", "building relations", "having clear corporate government", "empowering others", "by loving and embracing change", and being "optimistic".

CEO-7 replied to the question of how he was able to face all of the challenges over his past, while maintaining the same brand image and reputation:

"A lot of hard work and we stick to our culture very religiously, which is still conservative, you know we talk about how we can really bring it to the young generation. We survived the local stock crisis, worldwide economic crisis, as well as the Iraqi occupation, where we worked from a Western country and supported our customers".

Three of the CEOs provided examples of how they managed constant changes. Interestingly, their responses varied somewhat. CEO-1 commented on his strategic technique in creating an emergency taskforce, which could urgently respond to any market changes with full empowerment. This was utilised during the economic and political recent crisis to redirect business to the right place, at the right time. CEO-4 expressed his readiness to face environmental turbulence and change by stating:

"CEO skills should change; the CEO should treat himself as a normal employee in the company in terms of punishment and rewards – this sense of being an employee will help support the management of environmental changes by having a full understanding of what is going to be the impact at an operational level as well as strategic level".

Strategic planning and diversification within a business can help to manage and reduce the effects of economic recessions. To illustrate this point, CEO-14, from an investment company, said:

"During the latest recession, no company was immune from its effect, but we managed to face the market changes by proper planning and balancing our portfolio… we lost significantly in one business but had cash from another business".

CEO-9 counteracted these effects by moving the company from being a local company to a global organisation:

"We should embrace change, love change and thrive for change – I am a great believer that change is endless and a consistent part of business as usual".

During the discussion that ensued, which considered how the CEOs handled economic crises, many stories were shared. Many CEOs directly or indirectly shared the view that the crisis was a "wake-up call" for many organisations, especially the ones that had previously been growing fast.

There was one remarkable story from during the recession that demonstrated the way in which an organisation had moved from bankruptcy during the recession to a healthier status after it, within a specific business environment. CEO-13's story illustrates CEO self-criticism and reflection:

> *"How did I give so much trust to certain individuals? How did I let things happen? How did I lose my knowledge of basics? You look at the numbers and you say, it doesn't make sense, rather than getting carried away with the emotions of what is happening in the market environment, which is damaging everything, you therefore forget to go back. We lost focus of what was really the fundamental value of some of the assets because of the environment, I was very self-critical. When things are good you can't stand and say it's me, but, it's me – you know – when things are bad you have to say it's me, it's me, it's me, so that is self-blame".*

CEO-13 continued, referring to how she recognised her own failures, but when the time came to stand up, she transferred these into opportunities by focusing on her own values, which became the drivers for managing and controlling the situation. To illustrate the point, CEO-13 said:

> *"All my life I have highly valued my ethics, I proved to everybody I am here to stay, I am not leaving my shareholders, my clients or most importantly my employees. It is not their fault that a 'Tsunami' affected everybody in the industry, this has also eased the criticism against my company".*

Despite the fact that no salaries were paid to the employees, they stayed with the company. This materially demonstrates their support of their CEO and the organisation. Ultimately, this enabled the CEO to survive by building determination and motivation to restore the company to support those who stood

behind her and it. As a result, once the self-criticism was completed, things became clearer for the CEO and the following new strategy was shaped by CEO-13:

> "I am moving on two fronts: the personal front, where I have created my own network and I am no longer interested in sitting around with the hypocrites who use you when things are good – one good thing comes from a crisis, you get to know your friends from your enemies and you get to know loyal people... the second front, I have realised that although there were negative noises from a few people, the positive noises were much louder and there were a lot of people who were speaking with a supporting voice to me and the company, Consequently, I moved my attention to those who were more positive, I surround myself with trusted friends and I really became more shrewd".

CEO-9 highlighted that a growth mode that focuses on customer needs and desires can result in creative and dynamic decisions – these are essential in order to excel. The same CEO stated that as part of change behaviour:

> "Today it is extremely dynamic, dynamic to the point of fluidity whereby the whole thing changes. I mean there are lots of events and things which are affected by people's moods and behaviours and the style of life changes in ways which were not accounted for; to illustrate, whoever thought that the cell phone would be such an integral part of life now?"

CEO-12 mentioned that during the economic crisis, the business model in their investment company changed:

> "Our shareholders and investors became more cautious and risk averse. This was reflected in changing the business strategy. The flexibility and adaptability of the business helped me to reshape the way of working and satisfy the shareholders' concern".

In terms of how the employees/people support any changes, two CEOs mentioned that they empathised with people in order to get buy in, and this is important to sell the changes required. CEO-8 mentioned that it is critical to present the "why we need to change", in order to truly convince people that it is the right time for the right people, as he reiterated:

> "You introduce change by making a case for a meaningful change and presenting it with right information to the right audience... each audience has different interests and needs different messages yet we keep consistent and give assurance that people will definitely receive what we say with a high degree of credibility".

CEO-12 emphasised change as a tool to reduce the gap between the next generations, especially in the way the changes were implemented:

> "We need to agree, not only for us but also for our children and the generations to come, on the set of values and skills. There should be professionalism, value and flexibility, which will be key for the period to come. Furthermore, the ability to manoeuvre, the ability to embark on a healthy dialogue with people who do not necessarily agree with you, and the option to be creative is extremely important in order to allow a move from a passive industry to a more active industry".

CEO-12 also shared his concern about the negative side of change:

> "The industry is moving more and more towards finding hidden values, market inefficiency and arbitrage which are occurring because of the turmoil that we are seeing in real estate, currencies, the Euro and in commodities such as gold; so there are definitely many more efficiencies which are creating threats".

In general, they all appreciated the fact that an understanding of the business, as well as an accepting attitude to change, should be deployed as the main tools to evolve and grow. Concurrently, it is also important to perceive the negative changes, as a way of identifying hidden things and opportunities within the internal or external organisational environment. Some of the CEOs changed their

leadership style to adapt to changes that were driven by the business requirements.

It was observed that the CEOs responded differently to the challenges that they faced in the environment. For instance, four believed that during crises, CEOs are supposed to be exemplary and exhibit strong leadership by converting the threats into opportunities. In addition, strong internal control measures have to be put in place to deal with the threats in the environment. This was highlighted by CEO-1, who stated that:

> *"I faced the challenges, especially the Arab Spring where Western companies found it very risky to enter the market – I took it as an opportunity and entered the market".*

In addition, their behaviour in having proper strategic planning positions them to face and deal with the changes, as exemplified by the response of CEO-5:

> *"Our creativity and dynamic and decision-making made us able to change to growth mode during the economic crisis and kept us focused on our customers".*

CEO-6 resorted to scenario and strategic planning in order to deal with the changes:

> *"From a business strategy perspective, we optimised costs, adapted to change in some sectors".*

It is important to note when interpreting these findings the continued support and protection that Kuwait's companies have from the government, by way of financial support, to help them to recover quickly. This point was confirmed by CEO-12:

> *"From the government side, the good relation that the state had with most companies and the provision of financial assistance helped to manage the changes, as well as enter new markets, during the turbulences".*

- Summary of findings

In this theme of CEOs' understanding of the business environment, CEOs suggested that local barriers were more of a hindrance than global barriers. Government regulation and the political system were not helping the companies to position themselves in a proper way. Almost all CEOs had issues with Kuwait being a closed market, unlike the UAE, which opened its economy to outsiders. There were market restrictions to privatisation and security concerns with foreign participation.

Additionally, they felt the economy was not very diversified as it relied heavily on oil and gas (O&G) revenues. The government did not have sustainable development plans and competed with the private sector for talent by offering attractive government salaries in a relaxed working environment where employees did not have to work hard. Furthermore, political interference was not helping to sustain strategic issues.

The global barriers were not deemed significant, but of importance was unity within the GCC countries, which was considered to be missing and as a result, the support to grow was limited. The GCC countries compete against each other and there appears to be no strategy to utilise resources among themselves. In addition, an understanding of what is needed to do business in a global market is not clear in their minds; hence, companies can fail.

In terms of how the CEOs faced and managed changes, this theme suggests that they faced change through "different leadership styles", "scenario planning", "strong corporate government", "adaptability", and being "role models" during difficult times.

5.2.5 Theme 5: CEOs' relationship with board and executives

This theme considers two types of relationship. Firstly, it focuses on how the CEOs perceive building relations with the BoD, in terms of managing their expectations/agendas, and balancing their responsibilities and role requirements. The second relationship focuses on the CEOs' relations with executive team members, in terms of leading the team, building the required alignment among

the team members, and developing them and preparing potential successors. To this end, the following two questions were asked:

- ❖ *Can you describe your relationship with the board?*
- ❖ *Can you describe your relationship with the executives?*

- ▪ Relationship with board

With regard to the first relationship, 14 out of 16 CEOs acknowledged communication skills, corporate government and trust as key for successful relations, as CEO-11 stated:

> *"I do communicate very well, this is what they want, providing the required data before they even ask for it, utilising appropriate and proper engagement means, having open dialogue while also being a good listener... basically, an engagement culture will assure effective communication".*

In addressing this, three of the CEOs considered clear communication protocols to be vital; this includes the utilisation of good reports by detailing how and what to report, as well as balancing the level of detail that should be shared. In addition, they noted that it is also important to ensure that the appropriate people are involved in the detail. As such, a balanced engagement was stated by two CEOs as being important to ensure harmony and a strong rapport.

The criticality of effectively applying the corporate governance roles and regulations was also identified with regards to when new regulations are introduced or when there is no board of managing directors. As CEO-14 mentioned:

> *"My relationship with the board has changed with the new regulations as the chairman is no longer an executive director".*

Seven of the CEOs referred to "trust" as helping to "build alliances through transparency and integrity". CEO-1 had worked in a capacity where most of his board members were from older generations. He mentioned that:

"People around me were older than me, so I could not impose my team's decisions. Therefore, I had to keep debating and negotiating until I was able to get my way by building trust through transparency".

CEO-7 stated that full trust in Kuwait depends on a good reputation and face-saving as part of a good status, whereas CEO-11 referred to the freedom that the CEO can obtain through professional empowerment:

"The sky is the limit if the board trusts you... it is [in the end] their future and their money that they want you to take care of and if they trust you, and if you provide a good plan that intends to make things better, then there is no limit".

Furthermore, politics could make or break relations in Kuwait, thus careful management is required, as stated by four CEOs. For example, CEO-9 stated that:

"It is a very delicate formula, so the way I deal with the board has mainly involved building my career on being a CEO that is on the verge of being fired. I will not play politics. The moment you compromise on the board's politics, you are gone forever – you are hijacked".

The issue of *Wasta* was also highlighted by some executives who alluded to the fact that some CEOs in Kuwait are in positions selected by boards, not necessarily because they were qualified, but because of their relations with influential people in society. For instance, CEO-13 highlighted the following:

"There are executives or CEOs put there by Wasta. They are not qualified and they can damage the organisation in the future. There are CEOs who are in positions because of family linkages and relationships".

Four of the CEOs mentioned the essential nature of a good rapport and harmony between the BoD and the CEO, and the fact that previous business experience helped to build strong harmonies, which was also dependent on having trust between the BoD and the executive team.

The same four CEOs reflected on the importance of the delegation of authority and power between the BoD and the executives. As such, CEO-12 said:

"It is a forum that scrutinises and monitors the execution of duties by the professionals".

▪ Relationship with executive team

Some overlaps occurred between CEO relationships with the BoD and the executive team. Building strength within the internal team, in order to enable them to face external challenges, was mentioned as being important by the CEOs. This focuses on ensuring that strong competent executives can run businesses with less interference from the board. The CEO is, therefore, responsible for managing any negative pressures and interferences. CEO-9 referred to this by saying:

"The challenge with the board is how to make them apolitical and not political. To do this you must build an internal coalition from the leading elements in your organisation... these people, executive team, must be a real gang which sticks together to pursue their dream like zealots".

CEO-8 noted that management of the executives was more difficult than dealing with the board. He observed that the BoD comes to address specific issues on the agenda, whereas executives are dealing with day-to-day issues facing companies with many related to people issues.

CEO-8 felt that his success with his team was dependent on understanding their personalities and he emphasised this by stating that:

"Don't try to bring objectives and issues just for the sake of a challenge, as this will break the relations between the team, [instead] bring value added challenges that they learn from for their own progression, as well as for the business success".

Almost all of the CEOs believed a demonstration of strong communication skills among the executives to be essential; this could mean different tools and things,

from the sharing of proper communication and key messages, to daily interactions and regular meetings with their executives. CEO-16 mentioned that:

"Small things can bring the team together, for example a daily lunch, where all of the general managers meet with me daily to discuss the topic of the day. This is a time that we all don't want to lose".

Engagement is the key skills element that CEO-1 referred to in relation to executives:

"The executives in my organisation are more experienced than me and interaction, horizontal and vertical, will help to assure their development while also accepting environmental challenges and on-going discussions".

More than half of the participants mentioned that they "delegate and empower their executives", while also having an "open door policy with direct relations with their executives". However, CEO-12 noted that he does not empower:

"I interfere a lot; unfortunately, it is not possible to assess my level of interference which may be within the boundaries of empowerment or not, as most people reach their decisions on a consensus basis or not, I don't know".

CEO-9 explains how he inspires, motivates and empowers his executives:

"They are empowered and I treat the executive team the way I would like the board or chairman to treat me… I challenged my executives and asked them one day: 'Do you want to make history or be a subject of history?' We are not in the business of money-making; we are in the business of history making. Those who have made history have made the most gigantic profits in the history of mankind".

The same CEO encouraged his executive team to increase their capabilities and business knowledge by looking globally beyond their internal and local market, in order to be recognised and competent, by stating:

> *"I told our people that if you want to succeed you need to be recognised, don't seek recognition on the Kuwaiti level, you must seek recognition on a global level and to do that you must be open and you must embrace mankind in its totality, regardless of colour, creed, religion or ethnic background".*

CEO-6 mentioned that his executives lacked entrepreneurial thinking, accordingly he, and his organisation, faced issues as his organisation is very traditional in its structure, and the business model is based on providing services:

> *"The service concept and work as an operating company is not well understood, they need to take more risks and identify innovative ideas to expand their profits, I believe this is a culture issue and not only on the organisational level".*

CEO-6 continued to note that executives that are more educated are needed in Kuwait, not only in his organisation, thus one should:

> *"Run the business as per the shareholder expectations, rather than the CEO expectations and dreams, the culture of 'us and them' will hurt the organisation".*

- ▪ Summary of findings

This fifth theme explored the CEO relationships with BoDs and executives. It revealed that CEOs recognise the board's changing role and in response they try to adapt. As boards in Kuwait's organisations assume more leadership roles, the CEOs could perceive it as interference. Having older BoD members is a challenge due to intrinsic respect for elders in Kuwaiti culture, especially when BoD members are older than the CEO, and family owners wield immense veneration. However, the importance of having teamwork among the executives and between the CEO and the BoD is still very important functionally.

Lastly, relationships between the executive and the CEO have also been deemed to be strenuous. CEOs felt the need to have relations with their executive team, through proper communication and encouraging them to be entrepreneurial.

Their leadership could be improved further through persuasion, by being ethical, by showing empathy and by demonstrating logical reasoning.

5.2.6 Theme 6: CEOs' experience and family background

This theme focused on the CEOs' careers by looking at explanations of how their development shaped their own leadership style. This theme also considered other experiences that influenced them over the years, with regard to their work, family and friends. The questions considered within this theme were:

- ❖ *Can you take me through your career and explain how your development has shaped your leadership style?*
- ❖ *Can you tell me something about the way you have been raised and how it has shaped your leadership style and behaviour?*

All but one of the CEOs believed that in general their previous career choices and experiences shaped how they had reached their current position. Of the CEOs, six believed that the way in which they continued to gain learning and experience, by working in different business environments and industries, keeping up to date with knowledge, provided them with power and strength. To illustrate, CEO-2 noted having been fortunate to be mentored by an "expert in the field" as well as working with and learning from expert executives:

> *"For the first 10 years of your career you need to learn technical fundamentals, you need to put your hand on the small things, if you are in an office you need to work administrative work first and if you are in a field you need to climb the ladders in the plant operation".*

Continuous learning is a critical part of developing CEO capabilities, as CEO-14 stated:

> *"Until this day, I am learning every day, I found something new and this is a good, on the spot development approach. It could be from an article or wisdom from someone I meet, it is how you reflect on those learning opportunities that matters most".*

Two of the CEOs referred to the working environment as shaping them when they moved from government to private organisations. CEO-11 noted that they utilised good leadership skills to find the perfect fit:

"Every day was a learning curve that's why I am so blessed – different industries have granted me a lot of skills that I didn't think existed".

CEO-14 referred to the importance of reading:

"Reading of history books and Islamic books (where there are a lot of stories), as religion is all about justice, fairness and the wisdom of leadership… this helped in shaping my leadership character".

One of the CEOs referred to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as having shaped his leadership skills by strengthening his capabilities toward dealing with fear and uncertainty. The period of invasion and how he worked to protect the company's interests was a major part of CEO-2's life and career:

"The main thing that shaped my experience and career was the Iraqi invasion. I was emotionless… I got to know myself more… I gained strength from inside and not from others and I learned to take risks while not letting fear take control of me".

Through exposure, CEO-2, CEO-14 and CEO-15 believed that for the first few years in their careers they had to do some difficult and unwanted tasks, but it helped to "climb the ropes", "do what others consider dirty work" and "accept any assignment", specifically during the start-up of their careers.

Two other CEOs mentioned the challenging period during and after the Gulf War as having shaped their careers. CEO-10 mentioned accepting a very challenging project after the War, which required him to work in a very risky environment. However, his vision led to the success of this project, which will be a legacy for his organisation and a milestone in his career. Two of the CEOs believed that the support they gained from management gave them strength to build their vision. Particularly, CEO-15 mentioned that:

> *"It helped my career; when you have others who also believe in you, those people will inspire you and motivate you and will be part of your journey".*

CEO-15 also noted the way she had mentorship from her superiors. Learning on the job seems to have been the biggest impact on the career development of these CEOs. How they grabbed opportunities gave them a platform to work from while also developing their careers, which helped to build their overall effectiveness. It helped them to take risks and shape their thinking, which is all part of their development as CEOs. CEO-16 stated:

> *"I accepted a job in a location that no one would like to go and this was it… I am not sure I would be in the position I am today if I hadn't taken the risk and taken that opportunity".*

Another form of career development came in the form of education. Education in Kuwait is free, all the way to university level, including study abroad. Many CEOs have continuously developed their careers through on-going education; as exemplified by CEO-2:

> *"I love to educate myself. I do not wait for the education, instead I search for the latest technology and related knowhow. Continuous education is important through being a member of different institutes".*

In terms of the influence of the family and how CEOs were raised, good direction and having very strong support from both parents helped participants to aspire to become CEOs. They were generally given more leeway and the ability to think independently. Furthermore, from a cultural perspective, Kuwaitis shun low-level menial positions and instead aspire for leadership positions. For example, CEO-11 believed:

> *"My mother is my model, my CEO – my chief emotional officer, she shaped my character. She saw in me things no one else could see and built on these characteristics by giving me the freedom to think, act and react".*

Four of the CEOs also reported on stable "family backgrounds", which they felt had helped to make their "childhoods stable". Being responsible from an early age and motivated, being pushed as a leader was something that was also stated by two of the CEOs, as indicated by CEO-14:

"My father was always looking up to me like: 'You are gonna be somebody someday'".

CEO-13 considered her father and mother to be the role models who helped in shaping her leadership skills, both of whom had their own charismatic styles:

"My parents were the true meaning of the word entrepreneur by being very motivated, hardworking and extremely smart, extremely intelligent, extremely independent and extremely powerful – women are strong, they are decision-makers, and they are not puppets".

The female CEOs did not experience discrimination between genders in their families as they had a voice, just like the males, and they all received the support they needed. CEO-2, a female CEO, said:

"My family raised me with full support and trust... there was no discrimination because of my gender and trust is a driver for my independence. My parents taught me that strong women can be feminists as well".

Two of the three female CEOs mentioned that they had support from their husbands. Specifically, CEO-13 stated:

"He is very confident and I manage to achieve a balance between his demands and my career".

CEO-4 came from a background whereby his father was deemed to be a failure in materialist terms, thus he wanted to make a difference and become successful, which prompted him to work exceedingly hard to be where he is today:

"My father is seen as a failure by my relatives – this gave me more strength to succeed. I believe good intentions and hard work will generate success".

CEO-7 referred to his humble origins, as he was from a family that could barely afford basic things, and he never envisaged himself as a CEO:

"My life was very simple, I was lucky because I had the opportunity to grow up in such a family where things are not always affordable. I was not able to afford tuition at a university, but I am now a chairman of this University".

▪ Summary of findings

In this sixth theme, family background was acknowledged by CEOs as having shaped them, in that they had family support and guidance, discipline, direction, trust, equal treatment and stability. In some cases, parents were their role models. For the female CEOs, a key aspect that emerged was the support they received from their husbands and they had equal opportunities within their families. The government policy on education allows and encourages girls to attain university qualifications (Civil Service Commission 1998).

5.2.7   Theme 7: Societal and organisational culture

In order to explore the theme of culture, the following two questions were put to the CEOs:

❖ *How do you describe your organisation's culture?*
❖ *Can you describe your social culture and how this has affected your own or other peoples' leadership styles in Kuwait?*

Two different pillars were identified to describe culture: the "organisational culture", and the "social culture" within which the organisation operates. All of the interviewed CEOs clearly explained their organisational culture by identifying how the societal cultures influence and affect each other.

- The societal culture

In terms of societal culture, there was general agreement amongst the participants in this study that the effect of societal culture is stronger than organisational culture. They discussed how leadership in Kuwait is influenced by the Bedouin culture and Islamic conservative trends. Their values favour tribalism, groupings and clans, they are loyal to their own group and not to outsiders, which may have adverse effects on leadership, particularly if one is appointed on the basis of tribalism. CEO-15 explained:

> *"In my organisation, a large group of employees and leaders come from Bedouin culture, they have their own way of thinking and socialising with other, and I should have clear understanding in how to deal with them. Even educated people from this culture first want to talk about themselves and what is in it for them and not the organisation or the country, they become influential in their way of thinking and behaving and I see even those who are not Bedouin start imitate the same style, sad, one of them told me this is what the country prefers".*

In Kuwait, large numbers of prominent business families and personnel have merchant or fishing backgrounds, which tends to be linked to having business acumen and has led to the formation of some of the most successful businesses in Kuwait, including Al-Shaya, Al-Kharafi and Behbehani. As noted by CEO-7:

> *"Our founding fathers were the old hard working merchants, who unlike the present merchants… were working against all odds, travelling to India... They taught us a culture of conservatism, integrity, and what's more important, the character is more important than the wealth of a person…*

> *"Nowadays it is different, society changed, which affected our original values, guarantees and signatures are needed to complete a transaction while word of mouth was sufficient in the old days".*

Five of the CEOs talked about behavioural changes that resulted from this state of affairs. CEO-12 was even more pessimistic, stating:

"Kuwait's social culture is basically Diwaniya culture; unfortunately, we don't have proper corporate governance… we are a small culture where everybody is related to everybody, everybody is married to everybody… There is a [Great] Wall of China between a proper business-oriented environment and social relationships… family power versus government authorities… there is no proper system. There is Wasta [patronage]".

The Diwaniya (i.e. divan, the traditional semi-informal method of conducting official business throughout the Middle East) is a generally male gathering place that is an integral part of traditional culture throughout the GCC. CEO-14 shared how the concept and its usage evolved historically as an important social institutional unit:

"The notables and dignitaries would go to these places with other people, these places would help them to create leverage and a leader position by facilitating discussions between the people".

Diwaniyas in Kuwait are of different types, with some being mere social gathering places, whereas others are overtly for professional business discussions and political issues. This is a place for any CEO to attend and keep their "ears to the ground", in order to gain insight into what is generally taking place in Kuwait; CEO-14 also stated his concern about Kuwaitis extrapolating Diwaniya social values to the business and political environments, but he thinks they have declined since the 1990s:

"I am not very happy with the proliferation of Diwaniyas in today's Kuwait culture. Even diplomats and expats come attend these Diwaniyas as touristic or folklore places, they talk about the Diwaniyas as if it was a small parliament – but, I don't think this is necessarily true since the invasion took place".

The change in the purpose of Diwaniyas was discussed by CEO-4 who felt that after the liberation in 1991, Kuwait changed dramatically:

"Values have gone steeply down, no sense of responsibility, honesty and, it hurts to say so, but even the Diwaniya plays a big historical role in this. However, if the Diwaniya does not generate the right group setting, then the next generations are unlikely to see anything good".

All of this changed the individual competencies, making them more dependent on relationships and less on business knowledge, competencies and skills. Furthermore, a supporting view came from CEO-6, who believed that CEO positions depend on their relationships – which could be a hindrance to the success of many businesses:

"I know many companies here in Kuwait have lousy leaders, but they are still making millions. This does not mean they are good, it merely means they have a monopoly or they are protected by social relationships and friends, and that's why this social structure in Kuwait affects negatively leadership effectiveness".

Many of the CEOs explained that the country is not moving forward and did not have a long-term orientation. They described the country as very stagnant. These notions were repeated by almost all of the CEOs. For instance, CEO-2 said:

"[There has been] no achievement in this country. When I was in Qatar last week, the whole country was built in five years. In the last 25 years, decisions have been frozen [in Kuwait], nobody is willing to make decisions, nobody is able to make decisions because they doubt their decisions… this country is grinding to a halt".

The perception of the social culture is dependent on the external way in which it is assessed. Specifically, a perception will be formed based on how someone is dressed or labelled for their specific identity, including religious symbols, as CEO-4 stated:

"In Kuwait they look to which party they represent, and if you have a long beard then you are honest".

Kuwaitis are easily distinguished by the type of food they eat, their dress, accent, etc., which are all symbols of societal culture. Broadly speaking, the Kuwaiti culture reflects the Middle Eastern culture which is driven by "human relationships rather than competency", as mentioned by some CEOs. CEO-12 noted that:

"The economy is still dominated by monopolies, nepotism and oligarchy, thus it is not possible to judge the real performance of a CEO by their company's performance. Thus even lousy CEOs can achieve huge profits for shareholders and could be beloved by the board".

CEO-13 mentioned how the culture in Kuwait is affecting children, by hindering them from learning how to become independent and build their own future:

"A Kuwaiti family could negatively impact the future leaders rather than positively supporting them, by spoiling them at a young age... in some cases they relinquish children's desires to work hard and accomplish, as the children receive everything they want with little or no effort – surely, these families are, in effect, killing the future CEOs of Kuwait".

To some extent, the culture is patriarchal, with general dependencies on families and the government. CEO-12, CEO-6 and CEO-4 openly discussed the current debate of how wealth is best distributed. This issue is connected with social culture as the government has considerable amounts of cash, yet it does not know how to handle it. This was reflected by CEO-12, who described Kuwait as a maritime country with three categories of people: the rulers, the merchant families and the artisan or middle classes. He stated:

"Between these three key players, the central debate is about the distribution of wealth and do we go for the short-term strategy, especially when you live in an environment of high oil prices, or do we go for the long-term strategy which considers more sustainable development".

Furthermore, Kuwait is a class-based society, where Kuwaitis amongst themselves are classified into different levels, with the first level being the original

Kuwaitis and the last level being those who acquired citizenship afterwards; this hierarchical stratification was seen as negative by half of the participants.

Reduced efficiency was attributed to being dependent on non-nationals, with the government focusing more on protection than productivity, sustaining free or massively subsidised healthcare, education, housing, utilities and direct citizen salaries. Some CEOs believed that this induced a culture of dependence and laziness, with no incentive for work, productivity or innovation. CEO-14 referred to citizens as being driven by socialising and consumerism:

> *"Males spend their time in Diwaniyas, females spend their time in shopping malls… time is wasted by not adding value".*

Relationships are very important in the culture, as is recognising family and friends' needs, as CEO-12 stated:

> *"In our society we can do anything to keep face-saving, as it is our reputation that will last, and we do more of what people like than what we like. This could end up with many hidden depressed citizens and leaders, where we think we are free but we are not free. We really have a lot of contradictions in our values and life".*

From a gender standpoint, three of the female CEOs mentioned that female CEOs are not readily accepted by the Kuwaiti society/culture for specific jobs, such as leading organisations, executive posts and sales jobs. CEO-13, a female CEO, stated that this was problematic as Kuwaitis are not known for their selling skills, and it is not generally acceptable for women to sell:

> *"I had to overcome such resistance and I had to create a selling and negotiating culture in the company in terms of it being an acceptable job. Now, the male employees like it, as they can make a very big commission, they have realised that it is not degrading and that men will now ask me to sit with them when they are making a deal. It took me a while to convince men that I am selling a portfolio and this is my job… there was resistance when I called and introduced a product".*

- The organisational culture

Participants were asked open-ended questions about how they define their organisational culture. The notion that it is important to have the right culture to drive the business forward was expressed by all of the CEOs, as substantiated in the following cases:

> *"The organisation is like a computer… There is hardware and software, the hardware is your physical environment, systems, processes and strategy, and the software side is the culture. It takes five to seven years to change the culture; it is a very difficult and complex process that needs exceptional leadership in order to not only build a culture, but also maintain it and sustain it" (CEO-9).*

The current Kuwaiti culture has become more about entitlement than productivity, whereas the previous Kuwaiti culture was about hard work and trust:

> *"The country's culture changed after the invasion as there was less efficiency and productivity; consequently, the non-nationals were more productive and the government was competing with the private sector as they were an employer of choice, whereby staff could work less hours for more salary" (CEO-12).*

CEO-2 explained how the decision-making process affects organisational culture:

> *"People in top management positions who make decisions are there because of their relationships rather than their skills. They can't make decisions, they throw decisions to others and they are not empowered, so things will not move forward".*

Three of the CEOs expressed that their organisations' cultures were "dynamic", as they were driven by competitiveness and values of innovation. CEO-11 commented on her organisation's culture:

> *"The private sector gives us dynamics of doing business: pre-feasibility, building a road map, looking at your risks and then ending up with the most difficult step of taking a decision – you have to go with*

your gut feeling… That's why female CEOs are better than men… they have stronger gut feelings… you have to take calculated risks… It's a cocktail of values… if separated, it might not make sense, but together it will be your pattern to build a high performance organisation".

Seven other CEOs explained that their organisations were "performance and results driven", through proper identification of objectives that were cascaded to the organisation's different levels and linked to key performance indicators.

A culture of participation and empowerment was mentioned by eight CEOs and different descriptions were used, such as "openness and feedback" with regard to accepting other peoples' views and positive criticism through encouragement. Specifically, this was identified by CEO-9:

"I promoted an employee who criticised me in front of others in order to give a signal to the organisation to encourage effective feedback and criticism".

In addition, the freedom to share thoughts, negotiate and debate were also identified by CEO-16 as part of an open-door organisational culture:

"My aim was to nurture commitment toward a common vision and this means they might use different methods, but they will all have one aim and the same rules. People were reluctant to enjoy such empowerment to avoid risk, but with encouragement it has been achieved successfully".

Similarly, CEO-8 reiterated the importance of empowering employees:

"Our partner was acquired from another company where they have a set of management processes built on the empowerment concept, which means skilled people to run their responsibilities without supervision. In the beginning, we saw the risk that people wanted to be rapidly empowered to have full authority before being fully trained, and this caused some issues".

Interestingly, despite this CEO/organisation overcoming the fast empowerment issue, the organisation is still suffering. CEO-8 further revealed:

"The concept in general is good and went well, except that we faced issues with two types of employees, those eager to be named as empowered and not well trained, and those who are reluctant to take responsibility and demonstrate empowerment".

CEO-7 highlighted the significance of an operational culture where structure and process driven values were strong:

"Our industry drives us to be very structured, I tried to have fewer meetings and to have room to innovate but it was deemed risky.... We have a command and control culture... really it is not very democratic, I wish it could be a little bit more democratic in the Arab World. We should change as a new generation… new technology needs more participation and engagement among all levels".

Five of the CEOs expressed teamwork to be an important value in their organisation. For example, CEO-15 stated:

"Teamwork is a huge value and is deep rooted in our organisation. It starts with me as a CEO, how I stand by my people and support them in good and bad times, my ability to integrate people to assure harmony, transparency among the team… what I demonstrate, will be demonstrated by other employees".

CEO-6 from a private company complained that an entrepreneurial mind-set and opportunistic risk-taking was missing in the culture of most private companies, due to the way in which people have started to think (the social culture effect):

"Our business is cyclical and volatile and requires more entrepreneurial thinking and trader mentality [consequently], so we designed our organisation's cultural values to support the behavioural mind-set that we want to see, in order to drive the business to success, yet, especially after the Iraqi invasion, the social culture changed and

affected the organisation's culture values, where people will not take risks and prefer the easier route".

One of the female CEOs believed that a company with a good culture would strive to make staff satisfied and enriched while working at all levels. The culture of an organisation could be sustained, as CEO-13 explained:

"When we established another company we managed to have the same culture and same systems, as I believed that the values were strong and they matched the original social culture. Our founding fathers were the old, hard-working merchant Kuwaiti families who worked very hard, against all odds, travelling to India for months and months…".

However, she stated that during the financial crises, those who were not adapted to the culture were undone quickly. In contrast, there was another interpretation from CEO-2, who stated:

"When we started our company we were able to implement our unique organisational culture, whereas these days, in Kuwait, the social culture has started impacting on us and we have to strive hard to shine in such a nation's culture".

- ▪ Summary of findings

This final theme explored national and organisational cultures. Participants defined the national culture as having the following features: short-term oriented, diversified values (Bedouin, merchant/merchandisers, seamanship, and Islamic conservatism), male dominated, social relations (Diwaniya), patriarchal, symbolic and having a class society.

In terms of organisational culture and work practices, the key values that emerged from the analysis of the CEOs' narratives were inefficiency, teamwork, participative, ethical and people driven and performance driven. As the citizens believe that they are entitled to the country's wealth, this causes them to be less hardworking and dependent on others (expatriates) to do the work, while they occupy managerial positions. The importance of having an empowered

organisation by giving employees the freedom to act and to exchange effective feedback was noted. However, most organisations were highly structured, hierarchal and process driven, with very little innovation taking place. Information technology was utilised for fun and to own what others own as systems and programs, rather than for value added and information sharing. There was a tendency to be conservative and follow the founders' roles and styles. Finally, as expected in a collectivist society, teamwork values were emphasised.

5.2.8 Summary of the themes

The main findings from the above qualitative analysis revealed that the dominant perspective within the CEO definition of CEOL is "driving execution" by implementing strategies and realising objectives. On the other hand, the characteristics of effective CEOs emphasise being a role model, having charisma, being a visionary thinker, being knowledgeable, empowering, having proper communication skills, driving people to success, being ethical, trusted and inspiring to others, able to attract and develop talent, and lastly builds proper relationships. In terms of preferred leadership style, there is no one agreed leadership style, but rather it depends on the situation at hand.

As for business environment understanding, CEOs perceive local barriers to be more challenging than global barriers. Moreover, political interference makes it difficult to sustain strategic issues. Furthermore, they are ready to manage change through different leadership styles, scenario planning, strong corporate governance and adaptability. When it comes to CEOs, relationships with the BoD and executives, CEOs recognise the BoD's changing role and try to adapt to it. As for the executive team, proper communication, empathy and being ethical is the key in managing this relationship.

Family background was greatly emphasised as shaping CEOs and providing them with support, guidance, discipline, direction and trust. The last theme was societal and organisational culture. The societal culture was defined as having the following features: short-term oriented, diversified values, male dominated, social relations, patriarchal, symbolic and class society. As for the organisational culture, the key values were inefficiency, teamwork, participative, ethical and people driven and performance driven. Whilst many of the above themes were

driven from the literature, CEO characteristics and their understanding of the business environment were themes that emerged from the empirical evidence. In combination, these themes were conceived to influence CEOL within Kuwait's public and private sector companies.

5.3 Commonalities and differences amongst CEOs

This section explores the following research question/sub-question:

❖ *What are the commonalities and differences that are observed among the CEOs leading successful private sector companies in Kuwait?*

Almost all of the CEOs identified similarities and differences among their peers and the observations varied somewhat. Firstly, it emerged that the comparisons of the CEOs were not solely with reference to those in Kuwait, as comparisons with Western CEOs were also included. In addition, almost all were linked to culture. This section addresses each of the CEO's views in terms of the differences and commonalities. CEO-2 believed many national CEOs not to be competent because they were not fully ready for their positions. Furthermore, culture is of importance to the individual's relationship with others, which also affects family relations and status. To illustrate, CEO-2 also believed that:

"Western CEOs are competitive and they reach the top of the career ladder by progressing through various real career experiences which teach them how to accept both punishment and reward… Westerners are achievers, they need to survive independently, not relating to family support".

In contrast, CEO-3 felt that cumulative experience of the way in which problems are handled properly with sound judgement, based on facts, will differ only slightly with regard to the CEO's nationality and background:

"A CEO in Kuwait, London or the United States is likely to have common characteristics in terms of intuition, leadership, proper decision making and good judgement… If there were any differences worth highlighting, then it is with regards to discipline and innovation

that they would be observed as being more applicable in Western countries due to the culture and organisational environment that supports this".

CEO-6 acknowledged that many Kuwaiti CEOs are different to those of other nationalities, based on directive styles:

"They don't know much about the real and proper management of a company, they only know how to manage the board of directors so they have built one strength only in a scale of many other strong elements that are needed".

A non-national CEO (CEO-7), who had lived in Kuwait for a significant period of his lifetime, identified that:

"The Western style is different in that it is very dogmatic, while the Gulf countries encourage CEOs to move around their business, as the culture is more flexible and relaxed".

Still on the issue of culture, some CEOs see Kuwait as a single dominant societal culture, while others highlighted the subcultures such as Bedouin, merchandiser, seaman and/or Islamic conservatism. CEO-8 stressed that CEOs in other parts of the world only perform high-level jobs, as there are people surrounding and supporting them, while in Kuwait the CEO does the entire job by themselves:

"CEOs in the West have specialised support teams to do the work, people write for them and help them with meetings and agendas, at the end [the] CEO delivers it to the people – this will give him more time to focus".

Clearly, there is a difference in the predominant leadership styles. CEO-15 mentioned that most of the CEOs had no successors, so when they retire, there might not be someone who can immediately take over their role. He elaborated on this point by saying:

"CEOs are afraid to talk about their successors, even if they have a programme, [they] will always say that no one is ready and this

contradicts with their responsibility to have a strong executive team whom he trusts to support him in his day-to-day execution, but not in replacing him".

CEOs are generally keen to develop successors by giving challenging assignments and investing in people, to ensure the priorities are made clear for their role and the subjects that they as CEO want to focus on, such as organisational performance, growth, people development and executive development, which is more elaborate in the West. CEO-13 believed that there were deeper differences between CEOs in Kuwait and Western CEOs:

"Firstly, [it] concerns maturity and the experiences gained through their journey of creating systems, procedures, policies and processes that protect them… They are more advanced in IT, so their access to information and data is much more accurate and much faster… The free economy in which they live, as opposed to the government controlled economy, which can limit opportunities…

"We live in an environment that constrains the capital market, accounting for derivatives, options, warrants, swaps and security… I am shocked with local policies that restrict us. Basic stuff that they have done 100 years ago are not allowed here, so obviously the level of maturity is completely different with these habits".

The difference here was in terms of how they came to be CEOs, with some becoming CEOs by virtue of being family members, while others became CEOs through career progression and hard work.

The main findings under the category of commonalities is that CEOs in organisations in Kuwait are perceived as being less competent due to the culture, a strong emphasis on relationships and the style of leadership being directive. In addition, the government rules and regulations did not help the CEOs to work in a competitive environment. In terms of perceived differences, CEOs relate largely to differences in societal culture between CEOs in the West and in Kuwait, which influences the way they lead their organisations. It was observed that Western CEOs were more concerned with performance and the achievement of results,

whereas the local CEOs placed more emphasis on relationships and face saving. While the local CEOs mentioned empowerment, in reality they hardly empowered their subordinates. The other difference highlighted was a lack of succession planning by local CEOs, which then negatively impacted smooth transitions, especially when a current crop of leaders retire and no one is readily available to assume their roles and responsibilities.

5.4   Participant observations

As is common practice in research, it is important that a qualitative study has credibility and is trustworthy, to which end data from one method can be corroborated with that from another. In this particular case, data was mainly drawn from the 16 interviews, corroborated with data from participative observations of two CEOs.

The purpose of this subsection is to reflect on the day-to-day approach of two CEOs with whom the researcher had direct and personal experience. The researcher was appointed in January 2011 to be part of the executive team. This provided an opportunity for the researcher to gain real and daily experiences of CEO and executive team behaviours. In addition, prior to being appointed as an executive, the researcher was the HR Director for the organisation. Moreover, the experience of working in this joint venture company provided the researcher with the opportunity to be exposed to other CEOs and BoD members.

This section details the researcher's observations for each of the CEOs. To provide a little more background, CEO-A (CEO-8 from the interviews) is the ex-CEO of the company. He is a charismatic and authentic leader who inspired people across the organisation, especially lower-level employees, while CEO-B succeeded the former; they both come from different work cultures but from a similar industry.

The data was collected in different ways; a notebook was utilised to document notes and reminder memos, which were then reviewed at a later time. These notes contributed to the building of content, which was more elaborate. All of the

statements and notes were generated by the researcher, and typed into ten pages of transcript.

Most of the observations occurred in relation to the new CEO. The researcher attempted to highlight how the CEO reacted to specific events and, if possible, provide a comparison with real events that were observed with the previous CEO. Thus, assumptions would be collected concerning similar cases, but these were not all captured as notes.

It should be noted that when it was not possible to write directly into the notepad, the researcher would write notes on yellow pads that were available in all of the meeting rooms – these were then transcribed into the notebook at a later point. On a few instances, notes were also recorded on the researcher's iPhone – these were deleted as soon as they were documented in the transcripts. It is worth noting that two notebooks were utilised, one for 2011 to 2012 and another one from late 2012 to 2014. Both of these notebooks were utilised, not only for observation purposes, but also for other notes, which related to the researching of this thesis, as well as some additional, generic notes – this is why two notebooks were required.

It is important to highlight that the researcher considered the same interview leadership concepts derived from the literature when conducting the observations, as it was deemed that this would ensure better alignment with the research aims by truly exploring CEO perceptions of effective leadership.

The remainder of this observation section focuses on the approaches and practices observed with CEO-A, which were replicated for CEO-B.

5.4.1 CEO-A: Observed approach and practices

CEO-A was nurtured from within the organisation – he had been part of the organisation since its start-up. He strongly believed in strong relations between the leaders and the followers. He was considered to be a role model to the employees of the company because of the way he led by example. The researcher observed his openness in his clear speeches; he was considered to be a role model because of his impressive career progression within the organisation. This is inspiring for the employees as it provides them with a real

example of a person who self-developed and progressed up the career ladder within the same organisation through determination and hard work.

He consistently provided clear direct messages via and on behalf of the organisation – this made him credible. He was a decision maker, decisive and shielded the organisation from political aspects. The CEO had decided to approve the termination of two employees; this captured the attention of the media and the public, and created pressure on him personally and on his executive team. Despite this pressure, he assured all concerned that the credibility of the company was part of his credibility, and his decision-making was solid and was therefore not going to be affected by political pressures.

In terms of empowerment, he was more of an individual decision-maker rather than a team player. The researcher witnessed a number of incidents to support this view. For instance, during an operational function presentation, a decision toward policy change was supposed to be agreed upon by the executive team. However, the CEO made the decision instantly, without any discussion with the team.

CEO-A had a commercial background and therefore knew how to sell and negotiate with regards to ideas and the market. He was tactical, practical and rationalised with leaning toward the short- to mid-term in his thinking, rather than considering long-term planning. For instance, he did not encourage the executive committee's proposal for a real growth opportunity. However, at the same time, he was realistically able to anticipate that the board's support would be weak for long-term growth.

It is worth noting that CEO-A projected a certain image in the way that he would talk and present his ideas – his charismatic style was clear and many employees attempted to copy his style and imitate his ways. Interestingly, many of the technicians, administrators and workers (blue collar) had close relations with CEO-A. These relations were stronger than his relations with management level personnel were. This might be because of the empowerment concept within the organisation; when a new work process was implemented, it was introduced faster than any culture could digest such a mind-set. Thus, the lower-level

workers, under the empowerment concept, were always happy to share their complaints and ideas directly with the CEO. In contrast, the leaders tended to have the view that the CEO was less empowering to them than to workers at the lower levels and was less effectively listening to them.

In terms of ethical values, integrity and transparency were observed to be very high. For example, CEO-A utilised presentations and emails as formal documents to express decisions, he was therefore very clear and confident in delivering his messages.

He was results-oriented and focused in business; consequently, he measured the results very specifically. For example, he was keen to develop and integrate an overall organisation-management implementation process that would help to measure results in a clear way, and he forced this process to cascade across all departmental levels.

In terms of people development, he liked to create opportunities and positions in order to retain certain people; as a result, he formed a committee to nurture senior leader strategic thinking, so as to encourage it to support the company's strategy. However, unfortunately, his coaching and mentoring skills were not perceived well by all, as he failed to encourage the notion of including the executives as coaches when the proposal was shared.

He was very pragmatic and focused on operational excellence, as this was at the core of the organisation. Nevertheless, he was not keen to apply concepts if deemed trendy, such as innovation and customer intimacy; rather he chose core related strategies based on other drivers for business success, such as operational and people excellence.

CEO-A understood the business but not necessarily in-depth, especially with regards to understanding finance and production. Nevertheless, he was not afraid to show this as an area needing further improvement.

In terms of the CEOs reaction to business changes, there is a great example where CEO-A faced economic change during the recession. It was important that he knew where to cut costs. The researcher recalls cutting costs in many

operational projects, as well as people costs increasing, but he did not cut costs for the "learning and development" budget because he wanted to send a message that even during the economic crisis, focus should be on the long-term rather than the short-term employee development. Although this appears to contradict the previous note of being a short-term thinker, it should be noted that this is not how it was perceived by the researcher. As in normal situations, there are many leaders who react differently during times of crises.

In terms of the organisational culture, CEO-A supported a culture that was very much process, performance and reward driven. For example, he pushed to create a department responsible for organisational effectiveness, so as to focus on how effectively the culture was maintained. Furthermore, the company's organisational culture was somewhat conservative, which reflected the CEO's style in focusing on the internal rather than the external community and communication. For instance, the strategic communication and branding plan was very limited during his time. However, the company managed without a critical and clear communication policy and branding strategy.

CEO-A also managed to protect his people from politics. In Kuwait, parliamentary members and government officials had previously interfered in Kuwaiti businesses. For example, when recruiting someone or when terminating the employment of a national citizen, there can be input from parliamentary members as well as from ministries in an attempt to force recruitment or waive termination decisions that may generate opinion among the citizens (or manifest tribal or family affiliations). However, his resistance managed to protect the executives from further interference that could have generated unforeseen results. This example of protecting the organisation is an example of the effect of societal culture on organisational culture. The CEO's refusal to capitulate to the former, at the expense of the latter, resulted in the company gaining a better reputation as a standalone company that was not affected by negative societal pressures. Furthermore, the organisational leaders did not face external pressures like some other organisations. It is important to mention that in Kuwait, it is common practice for politicians to push organisations to make decisions in favour of their political

agenda; in this case, the CEO resisted and protected his company from external and political pressures.

CEO-A managed the relationship with the BoD well, as he considered a good rapport and harmony important for building trust and alliances. This observation was made as a result of attending several meetings between the BoD and executives. In these meetings, the role of the researcher was to present topics related directly to the employees and HR policies. Specifically, the researcher presented the total remuneration survey results, which identified a gap in salaries. CEO-A worked to support the HR presenter while also negotiating to convince the BoD that this was a problem, which should be considered a risk factor. In particular, the researcher recalls (from 2010) CEO-A saying the following to the board:

> *"OK, I understand that this will need a big budget, and I will support the Board of Directors if you don't agree; however, I cannot guarantee retaining nationals and non-nationals working in this organisation, I cannot guarantee that we will have our competent staff to support extra profit".*

This immediately encouraged the BoD to engage and consider the predicted consequences; they considered their decision by accepting the potential result and agreed to close the gaps identified in salaries within a two-year period rather than a one-year period. In addition, this result also clearly demonstrated CEO-A's negotiation skills. In addition, from the researcher's direct interaction with the chairman and some BoD members, for different initiatives, the trust and respect they had in this CEO was confirmed.

In terms of relations with the executive team, CEO-A appears to have been more biased toward the individuals with whom he felt more comfortable dealing with. He was a one-man show and rarely built rapport or harmony among the team. He met monthly with all of the executives and advised about operational topics in a rigid and detailed way. CEO-A rarely exhibited a sense of humour during his meetings; they were always formal and serious. Furthermore, he did not encourage shared thinking and always considered on the spot solutions. For

example, in one specific meeting, a project leader presented the status of their project, whereupon the presenter went into detail and the members were lost, except for the CEO, who stated: "I want this type of information always". This created interference, and the Vice President was very upset because the CEO was interfering in his area and his work, without appearing to add any real value.

In terms of career development, CEO-A started as an employee who built his technical knowledge while working in the commercial side of the business, which provided him with excellent opportunities to deal with various experts and leaders who provided encouragement. For example, when reflecting back on CEO-A's career – specifically when considering a time before he joined this organisation – there was a point when he had the opportunity to challenge his direct leader by sharing information about the unfair treatment that he and his colleagues were facing, but no one was voicing their concerns because the commercial leaders were generally reliant on receiving expert opinions from outside the organisation. This helped the future CEO to develop future industry plans based on what he and his colleagues believed. Furthermore, being a courageous man pushed him to voice his concerns, which in fact opened a door that allowed him and his colleagues to participate in a big project that began the journey that ended with him becoming a CEO.

5.4.2 CEO-B: Observed approach and practices

In terms of empowerment, CEO-B is a team player and is sometimes over-dependent on collective decision-making, which can make him appear indecisive; however, he will hold people accountable where necessary. He cannot sell his ideas, although he does have a vision. He also built a diversification and growth strategy based on his vision, rather than being aligned with stakeholders' opinions. To illustrate, over 18 months the researcher observed that CEO-B had one key corporate strategy, which is mainly a growth strategy that is in place to represent his dream. CEO-B has repeatedly presented this to the BoD, but he did not accept the board's rejection of the strategy, nursing hopes that he could override or bypass them to implement the strategy. He asked the executive team: "What did you understand from this board of directors' discussion?" The researcher advised that she did not see any support, rather there was a feeling

of putting it on hold or even rejecting it, but CEO-B professed to listen to different scenarios then progressed with his own dream regardless, despite the fact that this growth strategy is (and has been for a while) formally on hold.

CEO-B believes in ethics, fairness and honesty; furthermore, he is a strategic thinker and is driven by innovative thinking and approaches. In terms of people development, he likes coaching and mentoring others and believes in teaching. For instance, he supported the executive coaching initiative and the mentoring programme as well as many other innovative development programmes that have been implemented throughout the organisation. Another observed example can be considered from a time when the researcher presented the executive coaching programme; CEO-B was very supportive and open in terms of dedicating his time and budget to people development.

In terms of understanding the business, CEO-B has an understanding of the operational rather than the commercial side. For instance, during his first year, he spent a lot of time in operations even though this was a stable area; he felt more comfort in the plant, thus he shared his direction through many technical and operational interactions, while refrained from doing so in the commercial sphere, which was then facing turbulence. Interestingly, as CEO-B has a sound understanding of economic changes, the observer noticed his drive for growth, which was motivated by his understanding of globalisation and expansion, as this is central to long-term organisational growth.

In terms of the organisational culture, when CEO-B started running the company, he conducted an excellent diagnostic analysis, which identified the positives, negatives and opportunities for improvement. The researcher observed that he spent his first three months conducting a massive number of face-to-face interviews; he also took advantage of any gatherings, whether in the form of training sessions, departmental meetings or leadership forums, as part of his task to understand and diagnose the organisation's culture. The researcher experienced this journey with CEO-B, who concluded that the organisational culture had a number of deep gaps that needed urgent attention.

Coincidently, a cultural survey was conducted in the year in which he joined the organisation that supported his individual diagnostics. Accordingly, he immediately championed a culture of enforcement, which emphasised striving for solutions on a departmental and organisational level, in order to close the cultural gap problems. He stated very clearly to the organisation, "Without having the right culture, we will have nothing correct". The culture survey revealed the executive team to be misaligned and have no consistent message, and he took action toward closing this gap through launching a programme aimed at promoting a highly effective executive team.

CEO-B is also a hard worker; he is the last to leave the organisation at night and he attempts to cover many aspects by even replying to trivial emails. However, he has brought politics into the organisation. His background involved previously working in a quasi-government organisation that was filled with political issues. Generally, in Kuwaiti culture, most politicians believe in extensive lobbying within state and private organisations. The researcher accompanied CEO-B on a number of visits, which he called "courtesy visits". An example will now be included to illustrate this further.

The researcher received an email request from CEO-B to accompany him to visit one of the general managers in another governmental company, as he believed that this meeting could influence the board's decision to approve the growth strategy. During some of the visits, CEO-B started talking about the strategy and how it was put on hold. He repeated this with various decision makers in an attempt to create an indirect pressure on the board.

This could have been to show me that he was a forward-looking thinker; however, this had the negative impact of giving external players room for interference in the organisational strategy. CEO-B was not able to protect the organisational culture from political pressures, despite the organisation being perceived as a standalone company with no relations or partner regulations, and its own policies. To illustrate, on one occasion when a reward was agreed and set by the BoD for all of the employees, there was political pressure from one of the partner companies to hold off on this, as they were unable to provide a similar bonus. As

a result, the bonus was put on hold because CEO-B made it easy for the partners to link the two organisations together.

In terms of relationships with the board, it is obvious that this is a weak area. Key BoD members had issues with him due to his attempts to compel them to follow his agenda by levering external political pressure. In addition, he does have favouritism for people with his same thinking and groups, and he cannot hide this partiality, despite trying to do so. This jeopardised many of the organisation's strategies. In addition, he fails to negotiate and convince people. It is worth noting that running a joint venture needs a different calibre of individuals with special skills. Thus, the CEO needs to understand the mind-set of every BoD member, as each represents a different entity.

In terms of relations with the executive team, he encourages the executives to work as a team in order to build better relations through casual meetings and open discussions. In addition, CEO-B feels that a highly effective executive team programme should be launched to assess the executives, so as to better understand how they manage, analyse and understand the personalities of their peers, and in order to assure alignment.

He created specific values for his team and in the first year of his tenure, and in any strategic meetings, the team now starts by reviewing these values. Furthermore, the researcher has been identifying yearly themes that could be used to drive the agenda of the executive team in a more structured way – as a result, each quarter the team now have a new theme. Accordingly, an offsite meeting was conducted and identified the following themes: strategy, talent development, performance, and budget and forecast. During these meetings, problems are identified and selected for thorough discussion.

However, the characteristics of indecisiveness and favouritism did not support the executive team to work as an effective team, as he created publicity to be seen as the beloved and friendly, but failed to be professional and transparent. He could not bring harmony and transparency to groups with beliefs different to his.

In terms of CEO-B's career development, he started from the bottom and worked his way up because of his technical competency acquired through various job rotations within similar fields. Generally, the findings from data obtained from participant observation corroborated the data obtained from the interviews.

5.4.3 Summary of observational study

The findings can be grouped into characteristics of these two observed leaders with the first being a relational leader, particularly with lower-level employees. Other characteristics observed were being results-oriented, and being more commercially oriented, an individual decision-maker. He had good working relationships with the BoD, but not as good as the relationship with his executive peers. He had also acquired vast experience from working within and rising to become a CEO as part of his career progression. He was generally a good role model and was a low-profile leader.

The other CEO exhibited slightly different characteristics in that he used to make collective decisions. He had weak relationships with both the BoD and the executive team, and generally did not resonate well with employees or the executive team, which in a way weakened his effectiveness. He was a high-profile leader and wanted publicity. However, he was very knowledgeable about business operations.

They were both particularly interested in developing a working culture for the organisation and were both hard working, although it would appear that the day-to-day organisational life is very different from the ways it was described by the CEOs' understanding of leadership. The evidence obtained from participant observation helped in formulating opinions on the day-to-day organisational life, so again it is interesting to compare that with the ways it was described by the CEOs, squared with the literature and interview findings discussed in the following chapter.

5.5 Chapter summary

The chapter presented the evidence, largely derived from the interviews held with 16 CEOs, with additional corroborative evidence from participant observations

using the technique suggested by Golden-Biddle and Locke (2007). The analysis resulted in an operationalisation of the CEOL definition, CEO characteristics and leadership style and several other dimensions that influence CEOL. These dimensions included business environment, BoD and executive relations, experience and family background and societal and organisational culture.

Furthermore, the analysis resulted in an assessment of the commonalities and differences as perceived by the CEOs themselves. Such differences were more pronounced between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti CEOs. However, the numbers were so small that no definitive conclusions can be drawn.

The key findings arising from the data analysis include the fact that participants' understanding of effectiveness relates to driving execution by providing a focused process, knowing how to prioritise, accepting change, and implementing the strategy. It was also found that the main characteristics of effective CEOs are being a role model/charismatic, being a visionary thinker/inspiring, being knowledgeable, empowering, communicating, being people driven/building relations, being ethical/trustworthy, and attracting/developing talent. The third key finding was about the leadership style, with there being no universally preferred style due to sensitivity to situational contexts; leadership styles covered included entrepreneurial, authentic, transformational and distributed.

The study also revealed several contextual factors influencing the success of CEOs in running businesses, such as understanding the business environment, and critically, balancing the external and internal environment so as to face any changes. Although the global barriers were not significant to the CEOs, the importance of the unity between GCC countries was highlighted. As for the local barriers, government regulations and political interference were considered as hindrances to their success. Relations with the BoD and executive was another contextual factor highlighted by the CEOs; they believed that the relationships with the BoD needed to be strengthened through trust and corporate governance. As for relations with the executive team, better communication channels should be used as well as assuming logic to convince peers and empower the team. The last contextual factor addressed by the CEOs was experience and family background; it was seen that experience was shaped through career

development, acquiring knowledge and having exposure to best practices. In addition, family upbringing influences CEOs in terms of shaping their personality, where they were raised to be independent, disciplined, and to take and accept risk in their lives.

The study concludes that the societal and organisational culture has the most profound effect on CEOL. The values of societal culture highlighted by CEOs were short-term orientation, being risk averse, social inequalities, class society and patriarchal issues. CEOs expressed that the old societal culture was preferable, whereby citizens strove to work by themselves as opposed to being reliant on government support. As for the organisational culture, participative decision making, teamwork, and being people driven, ethical and performance driven were the values addressed by the CEOs.

In terms of commonalities and differences observed among CEOs, it was found that CEOs in organisations in Kuwait were perceived to be less competent because they rely strongly on relationships. Moreover, CEOs did not feel the environment to be competitive due to the government rules and regulations. In terms of perceived differences, CEOs related largely to differences in societal culture between CEOs in the West and in Kuwait, which then influences the ways in which they lead their organisations. The study showed that Western CEOs were perceived to be more concerned with performance and the achievement of results, and local CEOs as being more concerned with relationships. However, the sample was too small to make a comparison between Western-born and Kuwaiti-born CEOs, thus this could be a subject for future research. Moreover, it was seen that although local CEOs purported to stress empowerment, in reality they rarely empowered their subordinates.

The above key findings form the basis of discussion in the next chapter, to see if there is conformity with the extant literature and develop our understanding of leadership relating to CEOL.

6 Discussion of the Research Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings relative to the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3, with the view to extending our understanding of leadership by exploring CEO perceptions of effective leadership behaviours in Kuwaiti organisations. So as to conceptualise a model for CEOL and use experienced CEOs' interpretations, understandings and insights about leadership to support less-experienced CEOs.

This chapter builds upon the findings of Chapter 5 and, through abstraction and interpretation, develops an empirical model that explains CEOL as part of the contribution to knowledge on CEOL made by this study (as shown in Figure 3.1). The model explains how the main categories established in Chapter 5 relate with each other to form themes/concepts, and in so doing begins to explain the theoretical understanding of CEOL in Kuwait, as well as the underlying dimensions that influence CEOL. A comparison is thus made between the conceptual model formulated from the literature review of Chapters 2 and 3 (i.e. Figure 3.1), with that which emerged from the empirical findings (Appendix 4) to highlight the contribution of this research to existing knowledge. The chapter answers the major research questions and discusses the key research findings relative to the existing literature, to extend the field of leadership, particularly at the CEO level.

6.2 Answer to research questions

❖ *RQ1: How does the extant literature define CEOL and how do CEOs in Kuwait perceive leadership effectiveness?*

The research revealed that literature definitions of CEOL were limited and there was no general consensus on the phenomenon, thereby making operationalisation of the concept somewhat difficult. It was apparent from the empirical investigations that some of the CEOs could not easily explain the concept and instead focused more on the characteristics of effective CEOs. The

CEO is a person who is isolated at the apex of the organisation, with full accountability when things go well and when things go wrong. It is therefore surprising that the concept of CEOL has not been thoroughly researched as yet, especially as the CEO is generally the highest paid and most responsible member of the organisation (Goleman 1998; Drucker 2006; Myatt 2007; Nadler 2007).

A synthesis of the extant literature led to the conclusion that CEOL incorporates the realisation of objectives. Furthermore, the achievement of these objectives generally follows the successful execution of strategies. This conceptualisation of the concept was then substantiated by the participating CEOs' overall understanding of effectiveness in terms of "driving execution", which was mentioned by the majority of the CEOs (13 of 16). This definition seems to focus on the means rather the end itself. It would therefore appear that CEOs in Kuwait were more interested in the process and not necessarily the achievement of objectives, as commonly perceived in Western contexts.

In addition to formulating strategies, the way in which CEOs drive strategy implementation is fundamentally important. It is thus important to highlight that the definition of CEOL is sensitive to the context in which it is applied.

❖ *RQ2: How do individual CEOs perceive the skills, capabilities and behaviours that are required from effective CEOs in terms of their leadership behaviours?*

CEOs could not clearly define the concept of CEOL, and resorted to describing effective CEO characteristics. The implication is that effectiveness is essentially a subjective phenomenon pertaining to relations with stakeholders (e.g. BoD, employees, shareholders, etc.) and business performance, whose importance contextually varies. Participants described effective CEOs in terms of possessing the following characteristics: being a role model/charismatic, being a visionary thinker/inspiring, being knowledgeable, empowering, communicating, being people driven/building relations, being ethical/trustworthy, attracting/developing talent, decisive. However, it is important to highlight that while they considered these to be ideal attributes, they did not necessarily possess these characteristics.

While no characteristics emerged as preeminent, there was clearly consensus that effective leaders should be charismatic, including being visionary at the same time. In social cultures, people admire those with a good reputation. Several CEOs referred to the importance of role model behaviours to *walk the talk* as well as leave a reputation or legacy, the latter of which is important in face-saving cultures. They are, therefore, role models, but it is unclear who they are role models for: others or themselves.

Empowerment was highlighted from the point of view of empowering successors as part of developing succession planning, whereby the smooth transition from one CEO to the next is something considered important, but which is not necessarily implemented, as other factors tend to come into play when appointing CEOs. Succession planning can be achieved if the executive team members are granted certain powers (empowerment). In the same context, it was essential that effective identification, development and retention of talent occurred, through various incentive measures.

It was also important for the CEOs to have a very good knowledge and understanding of the overall business, including good financial acumen. At the same time, there was less social acceptance of continued learning at the CEO level.

With reference to the capability to lead change or adapt to change, the findings revealed that change management was not a strength for most of the CEOs, as they felt a need to maintain the status quo. The CEOs were expected to be good decision-makers, even in situations of uncertainty, where they were expected to take calculated risks and also take advantage of economic opportunities.

Having good relations with their peers, BoD members and other stakeholders were generally considered important characteristics to possess, particularly in an environment where social relations are considered important.

❖ *RQ3: To what extent do the CEO leadership behaviours identified reflect existing leadership styles?*

The extant literature highlights several leadership styles, but it would appear that the entrepreneurial, authentic and transformational leadership styles were commonly referred to styles for effective CEOs. The other leadership styles identified recognise the need to distribute responsibilities, especially at the level of CEO, and recognise that power is not a zero-sum game. Contemporary leadership theories also acknowledge the need to get the work done through other people, as opposed to the CEOs doing the work themselves, as enunciated in followership theories. It is a "collective responsibility" (Jerry 2013: 351) that requires both parties to play a reciprocal role to achieve the same goal. It is worth mentioning that the subjects of followers and followership have been studied much less extensively than leadership. The present study did not involve subordinates, but rather focused on the CEOs themselves.

In a male-dominant society such as Kuwait, men would generally have examined their leadership style and behaviour in gathering places, such as the Diwaniya, where these topics would be discussed. The dialogue would be debated to such an extent that these Diwaniyas acted as social schools providing real-life examples and stories for those who wanted to learn, lead discussions and engage in debates, which facilitated major discussions and strategic decision-making leading to CEOL; however, their role has declined since the Gulf War.

The descriptions and interpretations of leadership, as mentioned by the CEOs, were not always very explicit. In some cases, it was necessary to try to obtain further understanding of their meanings in order to interpret them accordingly.

❖ *RQ4: What are the contextual factors that drive and/or hinder the success of CEOs to run their organisations?*

Several contextual factors were shown to influence the effectiveness of CEOs, including an understanding of the business environment, relationships among peers and the board, and career/experience and family background, among other things.

6.2.1 Understanding the business environment

In terms of the CEOs' understanding of changes in the business environment in which they operated, an understanding of the situation and examination of the

choice of whether or not to cooperate with the changes in the external environment were found to be key aspects of balancing all factors and turning threats into opportunities.

This study revealed that the main internal barriers came from government policies and restrictions, political interferences, and the slow development of basic infrastructure. For example, Kuwait's government has spent much time and effort competing with the private sector, for instance in areas of salary scales and the undertaking of projects normally left to the private sector; however, the government also has a monopoly over many private business aspects (in addition to protectionist policies). The GCC economic zone, which could have given many opportunities to Kuwaiti companies, has not really taken off and instead the effects of the Arab Spring/regime changes have affected Kuwait by extending political interference, weakening the political and economic system and entrenching nepotism.

6.2.2 Relationship with the board and executives

The CEOs believed in the importance of strong relations with the BoD and executives, which was observed and emphasised in the discussions. However, it was unclear how these business relations could be built in terms of a professional or friendly relationship. Kuwaiti society is more oriented toward a relationship culture wherein the personal and business spheres of relationships are not clearly differentiated. Other important issues were highlighted with regards to strengthening BoD relations through trust and general corporate governance, and attempting to focus on issues of transparency, accountability, independency and fairness etc. CEOs could be persuasive, particularly using rational appeals (logic), empathy and being ethical (Goffee and Jones 1998). An ethical reputation is important to inspire trust (Stern-Gillet 1995; Goffee and Jones 2006).

Relations with other executives could also be improved using better communication channels, being inspirational, assuming logic to convince peers and by empowering executives, which helps them as part of their career progression and succession plans.

6.2.3 CEO experience and family background

Family upbringing appears to influence CEOL, as well as how they develop themselves. In terms of career development, acquiring knowledge and having exposure to best practices were considered important. Career development could also be through mentorship, a role that the BoD and in particular the chairperson could play. On-the-job training was considered the most important way of learning to develop oneself.

The family also had a big role to play in terms of endorsing equal treatment for gender, where female CEOs had received significant guidance and support from parents and spouses. CEOs from more privileged backgrounds tended to perform better, citing respect from their families, who believed in them, gave them responsibility from an early age, and encouraged their education; they also described their parents as hard workers. The majority of participants referred to their families in some way as inspirational figures that had significantly affected their lives.

Most of the CEOs noted that they were raised to be independent, disciplined and to take an acceptable amount of risk in their lives, in terms of considering and choosing their own futures and solving their own problems. It is likely that this style will have helped the CEOs to stand independently from their families.

❖ *RQ5: To what extent is there a relationship between culture and CEO leadership effectiveness?*

Culture, both societal and organisational, was considered to have the most profound effect on CEOL. The prominent values of societal culture included: short-termism, being risk-averse, social inequalities, clan and class society, uncertainty avoidance, patriarchal society and conservatism. The participants expressed that Kuwait's old societal culture was preferable as there was more trust and respect among citizens striving to work by themselves, as opposed to being reliant on government support.

It was noted that the social culture influences whether performance and behaviour feedback will be given and whether it is accepted in the organisational hierarchy. Some of the CEOs identified problems from the more senior BoD

members or from founding families – these relations made it difficult for them to challenge opinions or even attempt to convince them of more modern leadership styles and changes.

The main aspects of organisational culture that were emphasised included: participation, decision-making, teamwork, being ethical, people driven, performance driven and being customer focused. When it came to the perception of organisational culture from the female CEOs, they acknowledged a type of feminine/parenting style toward the organisation. Specifically, they referred to the organisation as an extension of their home. These female CEOs mentioned that they liked to talk and listen in order to resolve people issues on the spot. It is believed that this approach is supportive of more diversification, which indicates the importance of integrating women within the top management structures of an organisation. The more recent literature supports the notion that it is important to have women at the executive and BoD levels.

Empowerment could be defined as facilitating others to make decisions or to be accountable; however, these definitions rarely acknowledge the fact that in order to have empowered people you need to work to develop people, so that they have a clear understanding of the balance of consequence, in the form of rewards and punishments. Thus, empowerment takes a significant amount of effort. Within empowered cultures there will be clear boundaries for everything, as employees will be equipped to make decisions, based on which they must learn from their mistakes and successes.

An entrepreneurial culture was perceived as desirable by many of the CEOs, and they highlighted the need to take initiatives, take risks and accept the consequences in the form of failure or success.

> ❖ *RQ6: What are the commonalities and differences observed among CEOs in leading companies in Kuwait?*

A key part of the study was to explore the commonalities and differences in the CEOs' perceptions of leadership behaviours in Kuwait. The aim was to compare the differences between the views of CEOs. This information helps in understanding what makes some CEOs more effective than other CEOs. To

illustrate, they could be working in the same cultural environment, but this could be a very different learning experience for each CEO.

During the discussions, it emerged that most of the CEOs compared themselves with their Western counterparts outside Kuwait, giving the impression that there were negligible differences among CEOs in Kuwait, but a gulf between them and Westerners. For example, Western CEOs were perceived to be performance driven, to produce financial results and to meet their targets, while CEOs in Kuwait were perceived to focus on maintaining good relations within a collectivist society, finding their apogee in the *Diwaniya* culture. The learning experience here could be a recommendation to place CEOs on real performance driven contracts, the renewal of which should be subject to their performance and stretched goals, along with remuneration policies calibrated to economic performance.

The other noticeable difference highlighted in various sections was the relationship between the CEO and the BoD, with some CEOs being willing to have close interfaces with the latter, while others wanted to maintain some distance from them and their perceived interference. Noticeable differences were also observed in their style of leadership, with non-Kuwaitis exhibiting transformational and entrepreneurial tendencies, whereas the majority of the Kuwaiti CEOs were more entrepreneurial, authentic and relational, which may be as a result of their religious and cultural backgrounds. This reinforces that leadership, in particular CEOL, is context specific. It ought to be emphasised that this was not a cross-sectional cultural study, but this aspect was meant to assist in making recommendations for CEOL.

6.3 Key research findings

Based on the answers to the research questions addressed in the previous section, the key findings can be discussed in detail. This section relates back to the existing literature in order to extend the field of leadership at the CEO level.

6.3.1 The definition of CEO effectiveness

The literature review noted that leadership is an intensively researched topic that lacks consensus on fundamental issues, such as the definition of leadership itself (Stogdill 1974). If the phenomenon is to be operationalised, it is fundamentally important that a concise definition of CEOL be established. Some authors (e.g. House et al. 2004) even believe that although leadership itself varies between cultures, a universal definition for its effectiveness can be formulated for particular contexts. This study has taken the view that there have been as many definitions of effective leadership as the study of leadership itself, and that any such definition must be context specific and sensitive.

This section presents the general consensus of the participating CEOs, with regard to their understandings and meanings of what CEOL is. It then compares and contrasts these findings with the existing literature. As a result, the chapter answers questions concerning CEO definitions of effective leadership and the required characteristics in terms of the skills, experiences and behaviours. As observed in Chapter 5, the CEOs conflated CEOL definitions with specific CEO characteristics, thus although they did not clearly envisage CEO effectiveness *per se*, they did know what they considered to be the characteristics of effective CEOs. The overarching meaning of CEOL was "driving execution", as mentioned by the majority of CEOs (13 of 16).

At the forefront of the CEOs' meanings and understandings of their effectiveness was the ability to implement and execute the strategy. This is different from the literature, which understands that leaders should master the formulation of strategy, but not so much the implementation of the resultant strategies, which in many cases is left to the lower level managers to execute (Mintzberg 1994). It is equally important that the CEOs see their strategies through their implementation.

The CEOs expressed the *how*, but not the *what*, in terms of CEOL drivers in the short and long term. The short-term reflection mainly concerned achievement of results, but there were no links to indicate that this was executed in such a way as to position the company for long-term success in terms of focusing on building and achieving a deeper organisational vision.

This definition of CEOL needs to be compared with the existing literature (Drucker 2006; Myatt 2007; Ulrich and Smallwood 2013). A synthesis of the extant literature led to the conclusion that an effective CEO is defined as the one who drives execution and has visionary thinking, with the capability to adapt to different situations. Ultimately, their effectiveness should be measured by whether they deliver the expected results. The realisation of objectives is therefore a key attribute of effective CEOs and the realisation of results should follow from the successful execution of strategies.

The whole notion of long-term strategic thinking is relatively alien to many societies (Hofstede 2001; House et al. 2004), and organisations in Kuwait have had little impetus to achieve due to the cushioning from state patronage, welfare and subsidisation, freeing CEOs to focus on other agendas, as observed from CEO-B. However, such perceptions of running businesses may change as the economy is gradually liberalised and subjected to global competition for a post-oil age (El-Erian 2010).

6.3.2 Characteristics of effective CEOs

The findings from Chapter 5 also revealed CEO views concerning desired characteristics for effectiveness, namely, being charismatic/role model, visionary thinker, knowledgeable, empowering others, communicating, people driven, building relationships, attracting and developing talent and decision-making. However, decision-making and talent-development were only spontaneously mentioned by four participants each, suggesting that succession planning is not an important role of CEOs, as in some cases the next CEOs may be political appointees, even from outside their organisations.

This form of political influence is not one that is found in the Western literature, where governments are not seen to interfere so directly in company affairs. Thus, although they talk about the need for similarity with Western models, they are acutely aware of the difficulties of using such approaches in Kuwait's unique environment.

- Charisma/role model

In terms of having charisma and being a role model, these attributes are described in the literature as being linked with the ability to inspire people, provide motivation and advice, as well as build self-confidence, strong moral values and dominance (Northouse 2013). The image of the leader reflects the way in which they are viewed by others and, if this is positive, this can provide hope and faith in life and so on. Charismatic leaders are expected to encourage others by providing a balance between being firm (mind) and being kind (heart), while continuing to maintain respect for others.

Kuwaiti CEOs strive to have a good image and reputation, because this persona creates status, image and reputation among a group (Al-Enezi 2002). Thus, being charismatic is more concerned with the inspirational attribute, rather than adding actual value. The question that arises is whether charismatic leaders are effective or not, and the literature yields mixed findings. Waldman et al. (2001) argued that the outcome depends on the environment, particularly whether it is uncertain and volatile, in which case a good charismatic leader can play a decisive role, while it is minimally related to organisational performance when the environment is perceived to be more certain and stable. This study did not specifically pursue and link leadership effectiveness with organisational performance because of the time constraints, but the organisations selected in this study were generally performing well, although we cannot link such performance to leadership charisma.

- Visionary thinking

Visionary thinking was a characteristic highlighted in the literature review as being linked to effective leaders (Myatt 2007; Charan 2008; Finkelstein et al. 2009), specifically associated with leaders in the upper echelons of organisations as opposed to lower-level leaders. Such leaders have the ability to create a coherent vision of the organisation with clear direction and purpose, through the use of different business models that they develop depending on the specific scenario. They also have the ability to anticipate where they want the organisation to be in the future. This was echoed by participants in this study, with some particularities associated with Kuwaiti culture.

When this type of CEO is from a religious background, as is common in Kuwait, it is likely that they may have a dependency on their faith as holding the ultimate power/ability to predict their future, as opposed to trying to envisage the future less certainly for Western leaders. This pertains to the deep belief in fate in Arab-Islamic (and other) societies and reflects Islamic beliefs, as noted in the literature review (Mohammad 1998; Beekun and Badawi 1999) and substantiated by the empirical findings. Thus, their own thoughts about the future are wishes (suffixed by "*Insha'a Allah*" – God-willing) rather than a reality. However, in a global environment, CEOs need to appreciate the need to survive in a competitive environment, whereby the leader (along with their faith) needs to place more importance and emphasis on strategic thinking and envisioning the future of the organisation. This will enable them to formulate corporate strategies that will enable the organisation to have a sustained competitive advantage and enhance shareholder value. As noted by Abdullah and Al-Homoud (2001), it is difficult for leaders in the Arab world to secure commitment to a long-term plan because of populist religious beliefs (not substantiated by Islamic doctrine) about leaving things to fate.

- ▪ Knowledgeable

Amongst the 11 cardinal principles and values identified in the reviewed literature (Khan 2007) that leaders from Islamic countries such as Kuwait must possess, is knowledge of both operational and commercial aspects of the business. The CEOs concurred that business and industrial knowledge were of importance in helping run businesses efficiently, however few focused on the importance of understanding global markets and trends, despite the obvious importance of the global dimension in trade. In addition, enhancing the capabilities of executives is important, but less emphasis was captured from participants with regard to financial versus business aspects. This could be due to the majority of participants attaining the position of CEO based on their technical know-how and knowledge of the industry.

It was noted from the participant observations that the CEOs were generally very knowledgeable about their industry and work. For those who were not, the obvious remedy would be a leadership development programme, including self-

learning, but not many CEOs acknowledged their limitations/weaknesses, and such leadership development initiatives are not common within Kuwait, as some people might misinterpret attendance of such initiatives as a sign of weakness. CEOs are expected to be very broadly knowledgeable and do not see the need to learn something new after reaching such a high position. However, the organisational culture and in particular the use of *Wasta* sometimes downplays the need to appoint a leader who is knowledgeable and experienced, as a *Wasta* appointee is considered to suffice, bolstered by affirmative action under the *Kuwaitisation* policy and political interference. Although these factors are not blatant in Western business environments, it should be noted that favouritism is by no means unknown.

- ▪ Empowering others

Empowerment is conceived from the literature as a leadership style adopted to enhance employee motivation, in order to foster their individual development to achieve organisational goals (Kanter 1977; Konczak et al. 2000). It was a concept that the participating CEOs considered important for effective leaders as it fosters ownership of the individual and the group, through the promotion of proper individual and collective discussions that reflect the boundaries of the authorities. It is important to recognise what motivates people, as this is integral to empowering them.

It was noted from participant observation that one of the leaders used to make collective decisions, possibly against the wishes of his immediate subordinates, which undermined relationships with both the BoD and the executive team, possibly because it may have been a practice foreign to them, although it increased buy-in across the organisation, particularly among lower-level personnel.

In high power distance cultures, such as Kuwait, top management can feel undermined and marginalised by increased autonomy for juniors, also the aura of sin conferred on usurping elders by religion undermines such empowerment (Ather 2005). Tannenbaum and Cooke (1979) suggest that power is not finite, and it is expandable. Fenton-O'Creevy (1998) also suggested that empowerment

management techniques increase total control in an organisation, as increased power for subordinates can lead to more, rather than less, control for managers.

A culture of empowerment needs to be adapted depending on the individual/organisation, thus it needs preparation and the employees need to be highly skilled to assume greater responsibilities. As such, a proper process and trained people are needed, but the extent to which empowerment will be successful will be dependent on the organisational structure and hierarchy. The literature also notes that empowerment leadership aims to develop a team's capability to lead without the presence of a formal leader. As such, it helps to support the team's autonomy (Manz and Sims 1987). However, such Western leadership practices remain alien to Kuwaiti organisations.

- Communication

Communication can foster an open dialogue that allows the organisation to have normal discussions and allow the free flow of information (bottom-up as well as top-down and laterally) among employees. Apart from keeping every person informed of important issues taking place in an organisation, communication helps CEOs to have information at their fingertips, which helps in their decision-making and can improve their effectiveness. Improved communication in organisations supports better relations between people, while also fostering transparency and clearer messages that can be cascaded across all levels of the organisation. The literature notes that the leader should have the ability to communicate, to make sound decisions, and to get things done with and through people (Bowman et al. 1964).

The empirical evidence confirmed the importance of communication in business, although within the Kuwaiti context of informal venues, such as the *Diwaniya*, which tends to direct communication through particular groups of people who think in a certain way (and which certainly confines it to Kuwaiti nationals in most cases).

Lastly, in collectivist societies such as Kuwait, word of mouth has tended to be an effective tool of not only communication, but also in the marketing of products and services effectively, which may be different from other contexts where there

may be emphasis on the use of formal communication channels. It ought to be noted that the use of emails and other social media, such as SMS and Whatsapp messages, are used extensively for communication purposes in Kuwait, due to being cheap and having wide coverage (and GCC countries have ubiquitous smart phone penetration and use). Furthermore, these tend to be used for business purposes for which more formal communication methods would be expected in Western contexts.

- People driven

The concept of being people driven is very similar to what the literature refers to as follower-leadership. As Yung and Tsai (2013) argue, the relationship between leaders and followers resembles a miniature democracy, which supports the interplay between leaders and followers. People driven emerged as one of the defining characteristics of an effective CEO, which is generally associated with creating an environment where people are allowed to bloom. Here, the CEO motivates and directs individuals or teams; they coach and mentor employees with the aim of getting the best out of them by knowing the things that motivate these employees. Therefore, future leaders are expected to be more humanistic in their approaches, thereby favouring social relations (Ali 1990). Although this was a characteristic highlighted by the participating CEOs, it does not necessarily mean that they practiced follower-leadership. There was no specific evidence from the interviews, nor from the observations made, that these CEOs were particularly motivating people or deliberately allowing meaningful follow participation, as expected of leaders if they are to be effective.

- Building relationships

The literature noted the issue of relations and networking in the form of *Wasta* (patronage) as a way of doing business in Middle Eastern countries, such as Kuwait. Meles (2007: 16) noted that, "*Wasta* has become a right and expectation" in Arab societies.

Building relations is critical for CEOs, both with the BoD as well as with their executive peers. Having social relations is a characteristic of a collectivist society such as Kuwait, however a balance between professional, family or social relationships in a culture that mixes the realms was not perceived by the CEOs

as critical. Nevertheless, one of the roles of the BoD is to provide counsel to the CEO, which can only be realised if there is rapport between the BoD, and in particular, the chairperson and the CEO. Furthermore, CEOs can only be effective if there is a good relationship between the CEO and the rest of the executive team, so that they can "pull together" and gel as a team with values aligned together, instead of being "warmongers". Such relations can also be enhanced if there is trust between the BoD and CEO, and between the CEO and his immediate peers (Das and Teng 1996).

In a tribal tradition and collectivist culture, personalised relationships are endorsed, exerting a broad and profound influence on the group and its members, and limiting cooperation with non-members (Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001). However, many of the participant leaders were particularly critical of *Wasta* and generally portrayed it as a poor practice. They did not wish to be perceived as people who got to where they were due to personal favouritism, but because they deserved to be there.

- Ethically inspiring

Idealised influence is a key dimension of transformational leadership (Avolio and Bass 2002; Kouzes and Posner 2010). Followers idealise and emulate the behaviours of their trusted leader, which means that leaders must be exemplary in their actions and deeds. Ethical inspiration and establishing trusted relationships, along with high moral standards and integrity, were considered important characteristics of effective CEOs. This is expected to be the case in a society that has values shaped by religion. It is worth remembering that in a culture where face-saving is important, keeping one's integrity high is one of the most important considerations, although morals and ethics in Kuwait have changed in recent decades, especially since the Gulf War.

Possible underlying reasons are that the government was weakened by the Iraqi invasion and did not manage to reconstruct national cohesion as it was previously. Instead, attention was focused on giving material rewards to citizens. In general, Kuwaiti society has not been emphasising abstract values and ethics, but rather material advancement by *Wasta* and loyalty to the status quo.

- Attracting and developing talent

The ability of CEOs to attract and develop talent, especially at the executive level, by creating career opportunities through leveraging their strengths is also a hallmark of CEOL. This may also assist in a smooth succession in the event that the CEO leaves the organisation or retires. It is important that succession is based on skills and experience, rather than on *Wasta,* as is the case with some CEO appointments in Kuwait.

There is a tendency to take on replacements that think and act similarly to the existing CEO, as opposed to encouraging diversity and differences in thinking, or the injection of a new way of thinking and culture to an organisation. Therefore, it is important to not only identify the successor, but also invest in them, as it is not appropriate to rely on chance. Furthermore, the current CEO must believe in planning for the successor. Few CEOs highlighted the need to "emphasise creating the right opportunity", however, in line with the existing literature, planning for management continuity is an important element in an organisation's success (McConnell 1996).

It was observed from the majority of participant accounts that succession planning has not been very successful in Kuwait for a number of reasons, including: too little long-term planning, *Wasta*, political interferences, too little global exposure, an organisational culture that is not amenable to succession planning, and fear among existing CEOs of becoming dispensable. Succession planning is possibly something that the BoD and CEO should consider to be assessed as part of their effectiveness.

- Decision-making

Ali (1990b) notes that the hallmark of a manager is the ability to make the right decisions. CEOs are expected to be decisive and balanced in their judgements and intuitions, even in ambiguous situations. Their decisions in some cases may not easily be reversed and they may have serious consequences for their organisation.

This was the last characteristic gleaned from the evidence presented by the participating CEOs. Quite often CEOs face situations where there is no precedent

and decisions are not always based on rationality; instead, they have to balance the competing forces. It was noted that CEOs need to be able to anticipate the consequences of their actions, taking into consideration internal and external environmental factors, to make critical judgements.

The findings in Chapter 5 revealed that the ability to deal with ambiguity and effectively cope with changes, the ability to make decisions without having the total picture and the ability to handle risk and uncertainty were not seen as critical characteristics, as evidenced by the fact that only four participants spontaneously cited these as important characteristics. These few participants felt that the invasion made them the people they now are, because it forced them to take risks. Part of this explanation may be due to the uncertainty avoidance culture in Kuwait (House et al. 2004).

Moreover, making proper decisions through consensus, as part of the consultation concept considered to be the spirit of decision-making in Arab-Islamic tradition, was not implemented correctly (Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001). Rather, consultation appears to be used to satisfy the egos of parties involved, rather than to improve the decision output in the Arab World. In addition, the influence of tribal values shows support and loyalty to the in-group and consulting with them is a form of nepotism, which could weaken consensus decision making in broader groups. However, the data findings reveal that decision making was not a major consideration among the majority of interviewees. Furthermore, the observations of CEO-B revealed characteristics of indecisiveness and favouritism, which rendered the executive team less effective.

6.3.3 *Leadership style and its implications on CEO effectiveness*
The review of the leadership literature in Chapters 2 and 3 identified various leadership theories, from historical leadership theories such as traits, to contemporary leadership theories such as relational, distributed and followership theories. At the CEO level, some of these contemporary theories, such as distributed and followership theories, as advanced by Gronn (2002) and Burns (1978), considered the lack of inclusion of followers as one of the most serious failures of leadership.

The findings from the empirical evidence from the participating CEOs revealed variations in leadership styles, which possibly confirms that there is no one best leadership style, but rather it depends on the situation. Some leadership styles were perceived to be effective, such as transformational, authentic and entrepreneurial, in some situations.

Five CEOs mentioned authentic leadership styles, in terms of them being driven and guided by their values and ethics when running their organisations. As noted from the literature review, authentic leaders (Avolio and Gardner 2005) increase their followers' awareness of ethical behaviour by instilling confidence in their subordinates as they "move followers to go beyond their self-interests for the good of their group, organisation, or society" (Bass 1998: 171). Furthermore, as noted by Walumbwa et al. (2008), given the spate of high-profile cases of unethical leadership since the 1990s, some companies have actually folded due to poor corporate governance issues.

It was observed that one of the leading banks in Kuwait nearly collapsed due to poor corporate governance issues in the financial sector, but it was bailed out by the government. George (2003) identified a number of dimensions of authentic leadership as follows: being passionate about their purpose, understanding their own values and behaviour, able to build connection and share stories, feel leaders' openness and transparency, are focused on their goal and consistent through self-discipline, and are compassionate and open.

The other three CEOs stated some of the transformational attributes as highlighted by Avolio and Bass (2004) and Burns (1978): idealised influence (attributes), which occurs when followers identify with and emulate those leaders who are trusted and seen as having an attainable mission and vision, and inspirational motivation to embrace a new vision or set of ideas and holding high expectations (followers are motivated and energised by attainment of a common goal).

However, in reality, these CEOs were not necessarily entrepreneurial, in that they rarely came up with new products and services and had an organisational culture that tended to be risk averse. The societal culture is also short-term in orientation,

thereby hindering the CEOs from taking a long-term perspective and being visionary, which is in-line with the existing literature (Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001; Hofstede 2001; House et al. 2004). Long-term thinking is also constrained by people's interpretation of religion, in that people tend to be fatalistic/externalist in their orientation and leave issues to providence, as opposed to displaying strong faith in man's agency (Ali 1990).

It also emerged that for CEOs to be effective, they ought to be able to collectively share responsibilities with other executive team members, therefore, a distributed leadership style was considered important. In view of the fact that Kuwait is a collectivist country where personal relations are important, it was also demonstrated that relational leadership was important for the CEOs. It was important to have good relations with the BoD, amongst themselves, as well as with other stakeholders.

However, there was some incongruence between the desirable leadership styles and the actual leadership styles, as supported by the evidence. The participants were expressing the characteristics associated with CEOL, but these were not necessarily their own characteristics.

6.3.4 Business environment and CEO effectiveness

Waldman et al. (2001) and Kouzes and Posner (2010) revealed that in order for a CEO to make a sound decision at the right time, a deep understanding of the business environment is required. This includes consideration of the economic status of the country in which the CEO operates, as well as the global situation, since this environment may affect decision making. Enhanced knowledge of the economy, politics, rivals and competitive advantage may also enable good decision making.

The findings of the business environment theme identified a range of challenges, whereby internal/local barriers need attention and should be considered alongside the external factors, in order to ensure that Kuwaiti organisations can adapt to changes. The business environment in Kuwait is politically driven; it is not really very open and the opportunities inside are only applicable to certain businesses and some people. Thus, the business style and the majority of

changes are not common practice, as the internal challenges (political and bureaucratic) are connected directly with the societal culture. The majority of the CEOs involved within this research shared their stories and wisdom by reflecting on the challenges that they faced, as well as the way in which they reacted to them.

Kouzes and Posner (2010) noted that the business environment ultimately has a greater effect on the performance of an organisation than CEO characteristics. Furthermore, it is also important to determine whether the environment is volatile and uncertain or stable, as the literature identifies both of these as instrumental scenarios (Waldman et al. 2001).

Some of the more recent literature supports the notion that CEO personality is of importance in driving organisational performance, as it can enable strategic flexibility and generate links with the external world (Lim et al. 2010). Personality may also influence life and career choices, work performance and entrepreneurial behaviour (D'Intino et al. 2007). Furthermore, a thorough understanding of the external stakeholders, their competing interests and how these interests correspond with the capabilities and limitations of the organisation are all vital aspects that can affect CEO performance.

Government regulation and political interference may be hindering Kuwait's working environment by prioritising nationality over performance (Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001). The relaxed working environment, where an entitlement culture overrides the productivity culture, needs to be addressed with emphasis being placed on performance.

This research also showed that in order for a CEO to continually make sound decisions, both proactively and reactively, a deep understanding of key business factors is required. This includes consideration of the economic status of the country where the CEO's business operates, in terms of the global situation, which will have a direct and indirect effect, knowledge of the global economy indicators, politics, rivals and the competitive advantage that they want in order to differentiate their organisations. Moreover, knowledge of the local and global barriers hindering their success should help to identify opportunities for success.

Some unclear areas from the literature were seen with regards to barriers within the region. Specifically, there appears to be no collaboration among the GCC countries to face the external world as a united group. A common currency within the Gulf countries has not been developed, despite it being muted several decades ago. It is worth noting that unity could increase all of the GCC countries' individual strengths and leverage.

The Arab Spring has signalled change for the region. CEOs with entrepreneurial characteristics are needed to face these changes, as highlighted by CEO-1 and CEO-2, who acknowledged risk-taking and different decision-making styles as being important in crises. Miller and Toulouse (1986) found that CEOs with high internal "locus of control" (a theory in personality psychology where individuals believe that events in their lives derive primarily from their own actions) are more likely to deploy product innovation strategies, whereas CEOs with high needs for achievement would be more likely to choose broad market strategies.

In general, the contextual findings reinforce the observations by Kouzes and Posner (2010), who suggested that the truth about leadership had not changed, and, if anything, what might be different is the context. Moreover, in order to motivate democracy, and to consider living in an open environment that can compete globally, it is important to utilise knowledge, which was supported by Al-Naqeeb (1990), regarding how knowledge and power interface and advance knowledge, leading to better method of control.

6.3.5 Board and executive relationships and CEO effectiveness

The literature review clearly highlighted the importance of having good relations between the CEO and BoD, as well as executive peers. CEO effectiveness can be enhanced if there is teamwork and there are good relations between the CEO and executive peers. As such, if the relationship between the BoD and the CEO fails, the company may fail (Nadler 2007).

The participating CEOs emphasised the need for harmony and team spirit, not just within the executive team, but across all levels in the organisation. The same cordial relationships between the CEO and BoD were highlighted as contributing

to CEOL, therefore, the whole notion of good corporate governance is important in these organisations.

Kuwait generally has a very socially oriented culture, thus relations will always be a priority, and issues of trust between parties are prioritised. CEO-11 stated that, "The sky is the limit if the board of directors trusts you". Nonetheless, little attention has been given to how CEOL influences top management dynamics, even though this is likely to affect firm performance (Peterson et al. 2003).

CEO-6 mentioned that his executives lack entrepreneurial thinking, thus he and his organisation face issues, as his organisation is very traditional in its structure. The high power distance, where centralisation is the norm, makes subordinates accepting of being told what to do, without challenge or productive feedback. This is aligned with previous research (Ali and Al-Kazemi 2002), where Kuwaitis were found to be pseudo-consultative, whereby subordinates are prepared and primed to accept pre-made decisions in the guise of consultation.

6.3.6 *Experience and family background and CEO effectiveness*

The context explained in Chapter 3 highlighted the importance of family to a typical Kuwaiti household, seeing that the prevailing culture is collectivist in orientation (House et al. 2004). Furthermore, Popper and Mayseless (2003) stressed that parents provide the role models for children, in the same way that transformational leaders do with their followers. The effectiveness of CEOs also stems from their family upbringings, as well as from their career path and work experience. It is important to note that the majority of the participants referred to working hard as being central to their progression. The majority of the CEOs were raised in an independent and disciplined way. Although the CEOs would not state it openly, one of them explained having reached the CEO position by virtue of family connections, while another had strong Islamic conservative support from his executive team, thereby reinforcing the role of *Wasta* and family patronage within Kuwaiti society. However, it is important to note that all of these participants were in their positions through hard work, competencies and merit.

Furthermore, the three participating female CEOs noted that they had support from and had never been discriminated against by their families. The same

women were open to talking about their husbands' support, unlike their male counterparts who did not share details about their wives' roles, and many did not even mention their mothers. This could be linked to the culture of protecting family status, whereby there is a general taboo among men from the GCC to speak publicly about their wives. The government has been supportive of education for both boys and girls; but even with all of these governmental initiatives, many women are unable (or unwilling) to venture into the mainly male word of executive leadership.

6.3.7 *Culture and its implications on CEO effectiveness*

Societal and organisational culture both emerged as significant influences on CEOL (House et al. 2004). Islamic religious values are deeply rooted aspects of everyday life throughout Middle Eastern societies (Hutchings and Weir 2004). Hofstede (2003) also highlights this fact by showing how Islam plays a significant role in Muslims' daily lives, including in the professional sphere. However, discussion of religion, particularly in a way that could be seen as critical or confrontational, is taboo in Kuwait. As a result of this, it is difficult to research, as many participants do not want to openly talk about it for fear of transgressing social mores.

Social culture was also a factor influencing CEOL, through the mechanism of organisational culture; interestingly, societal culture possibly had the most profound effect on CEOL. The findings reveal that Kuwait's culture had several sub-cultures, including merchants, Bedouins, sailors and Islamic conservatives (Al-Naqeeb 1990), all of which seemed to have their own different agendas of furthering their own interests, be it in the governmental, company, business or even family settings.

There is significant debate over the influence of culture on leadership, with some authors arguing that certain aspects of leadership may go beyond cultural boundaries. In contrast, other authors argue that specific cultural traditions, values, ideologies and norms can affect the degree of cooperation, morale and commitment toward and within the organisation. Consequently, while the importance of culture is acknowledged or implied (Schein 2004), its influence on CEOL has not been systematically studied. It is worth noting that the latest Globe

study (House et al. 2014) attempted to look into strategic leadership across cultures, although Kuwait was not included.

The study revealed the following as key societal values in Kuwait: short-termism, social inequalities, uncertainty, social relations, conservatism, patriarchy, class society/tribalism, risk-averseness and intolerance. For instance, areas such as Jabriya and Mishref in Kuwait are reserved for Shia people, and Jahra is dominated by Bedouins. These findings in many ways conform to those of previous authors (Hofstede 1983; Ali 1990; Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001; House et al. 2004). These cultural values influence CEOL in many ways. For instance, the traditional and tribal society has implications in terms of the reliance on membership of groups for identity and status, whether obtained in the form of social classes, communities, religions or extended families – it is this that has partly given rise to *Wasta* and favouritism. Although *Wasta* is generally criticised in theory, it is widely accepted by many people as a natural way of conducting business. Although it is translated as "nepotism", *Wasta* in fact is a social and welfare glue in Arabic society, but it can have negative results for organisations when appointments are made based on social connections and/or position, rather than based on qualifications, skills and experience.

People emphasise lobbying and the use of networks and relations, which makes it difficult to view issues professionally or to even conduct proper staff appraisals in the workplace. It is widely acknowledged that some leaders are appointed not because of their capabilities, but based on political or personal affiliations (Cunningham and Sarayrah 1993). The Globe study (House et al. 2004) also confirmed that there was a tendency to work in groups in collectivist cultures, including families.

Being a male-dominated society has had implications on the CEOs reaching higher echelon positions in the first place. This is reflected in only four female participants (25%) taking part in this study. Although women were granted the right to vote in parliament in 2005, not a single female candidate has been elected to Parliament, although the Amir has appointed one woman as a cabinet minister. To further substantiate this point, of the 12 appointed managing directors of the Kuwait oil companies in 2013, none of them were women. This is despite the fact

that the Kuwaiti census showed a ratio of more women than men (51:49), and also more women graduating from Kuwait's institutions of higher learning.

Social conservatism and religious claims have reinforced differentiation between gender roles and kept women away from top management positions in the Arab World (Sidani and Gardner 2000). Women have therefore generally remained an under-represented group within the upper echelons of organisations in both public and private sectors; this is an area requiring further empirical research to fully understand women's experiences and practices of leadership (Twenge 2001). As per the Social Security Law passed by Parliament in 2007, women are eligible for early retirement after working for 15 years if they have one child or more. With undertones of Islamist conservatism and paternalist patronage, this was to free up job opportunities for men and the ever-increasing younger population, cajoling the minority of working women over 30 out of the workplace, despite the fact that they are known to bring important leadership qualities to the boardroom that men often lack (Kashima et al. 1995).

The study revealed that Kuwait's leaders were short-term in orientation, therefore, strategic planning and envisioning the future of their organisations were not natural characteristics or behaviours of the Kuwaiti CEOs, thereby hindering their effectiveness. However, the leaders acknowledged being visionary as an important characteristic of an effective CEO. Religious fatalistic tendencies might partly explain such behaviours (Ali 1990).

Although the study did not specifically explore the issue of religion and its influence on culture and business practices, it emerged that Islam tends to engender conditional obedience in exchange for just and beneficent rule. Employees are expected to be submissive and obey those placed in authority over them, which tends to shape an authoritative leadership style by CEOs. Whilst such a leadership style works in emergent situations and when performing simple tasks, it is not ideal for many situations, as it can adversely influence CEOL (Hayes and Schaefer 2000).

It was also observed that the CEOs were risk averse, a finding previously observed by Hofstede (1983) as part of his uncertainty avoidance dimension. As

discussed earlier, it is inevitable that the world is becoming a global village and Kuwait's organisations cannot expect to remain isolated and protected by the government; instead, they will need to take risks and boldly venture into global environments to benefit from new opportunities. The CEOs in Kuwait appear to be struggling to think in a global manner, thereby rendering them ineffective.

The cultural changes observed in Kuwait are due to the culture of dependence and entitlement induced by the government's extensive welfare provision; this has resulted in an overstaffed and bloated public sector that offers sinecures and easy living to Kuwaiti nationals. This is despite attempts to wean them off dependence on the state and encourage them to enter the private sector as competitive knowledge workers. The Kuwaiti people are now more accustomed to having what they want, when they want it, compared to when they had very few material things. They feel an entitlement to this money, expecting that it should be distributed to all citizens, regardless of their performance or their job type, as they feel that this would be equal and fair (reflecting national collectivist orientation). The implications are that this has affected the effectiveness of CEOs, as in many cases they cannot easily discipline Kuwaitis; consequently, this context has had adverse consequences on CEOL and ultimately on organisational performance.

Government policies entrench tribal group behaviours to achieve material security and advancement, at the expense of genuine skills and education. Despite material prosperity, the country is declining in many things, including education, health and even economically due to losing the values of integrity, hard work and entrepreneurialism (Al Naqeeb 2012).

6.4   Emerging empirical model

Arising from the qualitative analysis, the discussion of the evidence/findings from the 16 CEOs, and from the data from the participant observations, is a model of leadership to explain CEOL (Figure 6.1). This model was developed from the empirical evidence and this needs to be compared with the theoretical model (Figure 3.1) from the literature review to establish the similarities and differences. However, the empirical model needs to be explained first. It must also be noted

that this was a qualitative study and, as such, the model was not tested to see, for instance, how CEOL impacts on organisational performance; thus, this subject needs further study.

The model shows that CEOL, which is primarily viewed as driving execution, depends on several dimensions, including leadership style, relationships between the BoD and executives, experience and family background, culture, *Wasta*, religion, business environment and CEO characteristics. The leadership styles included aspects of entrepreneurial, transformational, parenting/ feminine and authentic, in addition to relational, distributed and followership leadership aspects. However, it was noted that these CEOs did not necessarily exhibit these styles, rather, they considered them to be important for ideal CEO effectiveness.

Relationships, particularly between the CEO and the BoD, and between the CEO and executives, were deemed to be immensely important in CEOL. It was noticed that the roles of boards in some organisations had changed, with directors seeking to accrue a more active role, therefore it was fundamentally important to establish conducive relationships between the boards and the CEOs. This is even more relevant in a collectivist society, where relations are important and are enhanced through social gatherings *Diwaniyas*.
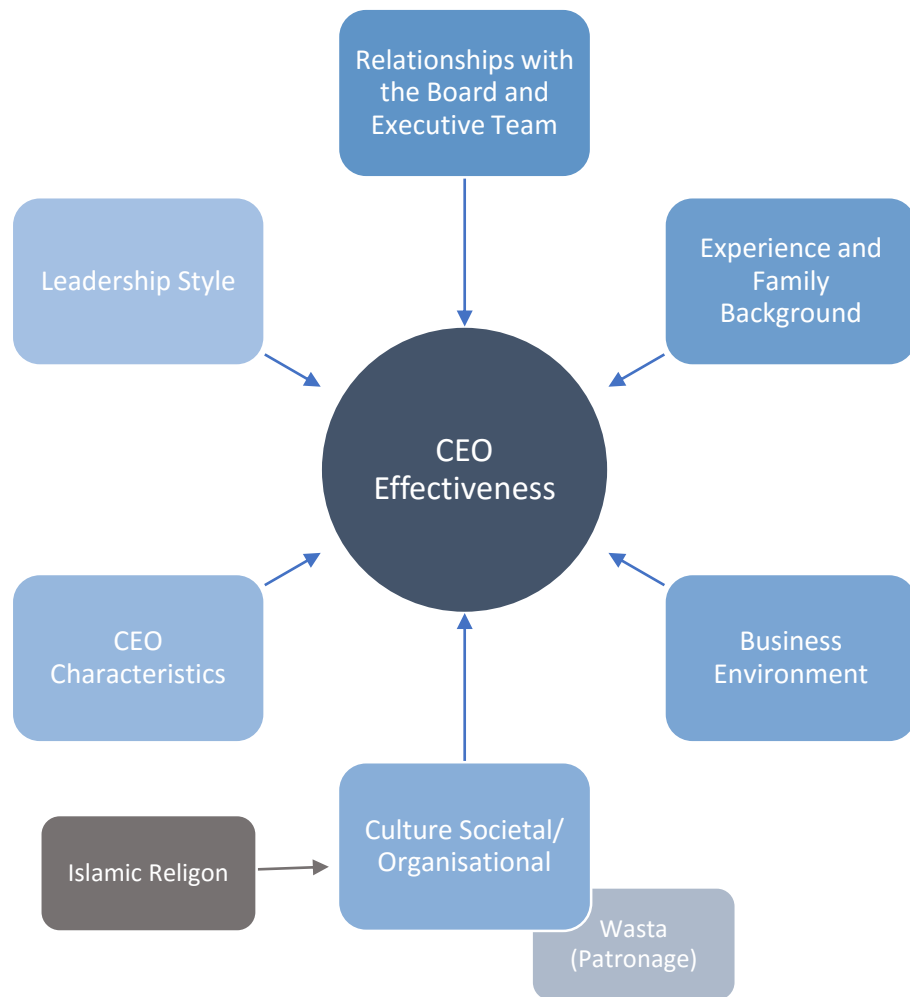
Figure 6.1: Empirical model of CEO effectiveness

Effectiveness is also a function of the characteristics of the CEOs themselves. For example, the CEOs highlighted the need to be visionary, empower their subordinates, make difficult decisions and be role models, etc. For effectiveness, CEOs had to exhibit other characteristics, such as good communication, being ethical and inspiring, and attracting and developing talent.

The business environment within which these CEOs operate also influences their effectiveness, as they have to consider opportunities and threats presented by the volatile environment of the Middle East (Waldman et al. 2001; Bandiera et al. 2011). With globalisation and liberalisation of the economy, these organisations increasingly have to compete with international organisations, without government protection, unlike before.

It was observed that CEOL is affected by the societal culture within which these CEOs operate, notably one with a high power distance culture and Bedouin traditional practices commonly exhibited by Kuwait's leaders, as well as the influences of Islam, family background and past experiences. For example, those brought up in family business backgrounds exhibited more entrepreneurial leadership styles. Family support was particularly important for female CEOs in enabling them to make career choices. This is extremely important in conservative societies where women tend to be cloistered or restricted to "feminine" professions, such as healthcare and education, rather than commercial environments with greater interaction between the sexes. Successful female CEOs, such as CEO-2 and CEO-13, clearly indicated that they had very strong family support and had been provided equal opportunities in their upbringings.

Although many of these CEOs denounced *Wasta*, which is synonymous with cronyism, nepotism or favouritism in the West, and *Gaunxi* in China (Weir and Hutchings 2005), in reality *Wasta* is ubiquitously practised when possible for beneficiaries. This may include activities such as getting paperwork facilitated in government ministries (this may not be corruption in the traditional sense, but may show preferential treatment in terms of quicker processing times of otherwise legitimate procedures). Appointments are not always based on merit, especially when the most senior leadership positions are to be occupied by Kuwaitis as part of the *Kuwaitisation* policy. As a result, *Wasta* has tended to influence CEO effectiveness, especially if CEOs or their subordinates have been put in positions because of their strong patronage networks.

Whilst the main themes of leadership style, relations with the BoD and executive team members, experience and family background, and societal and organisational culture were derived from the literature, the literature did not fully explain what was contained within each of these dimensions. This is a feat that the empirical model addresses within the Kuwaiti context. Similarly, the empirical model identifies these themes as supported by the empirical evidence, and it clearly explains what these themes mean within the Kuwaiti context.

The empirical model goes on to include two more themes, namely the business environment and CEO characteristics, which were not clearly identified from the literature review chapters and thus not part of the theoretical model (Figure 3.1).

The empirical model also clearly explains what CEOL means within the Kuwaiti context, namely driving execution, with little focus on strategy and positioning the company for the long-term in terms of focusing on building and achieving the organisational mission, whereas in the literature it is more about accomplishment or realisation of objectives.

In line with the qualitative analysis, the empirical model also explains the identifications of properties, structure (conditions), and consequences of key aspects of the phenomenon. A key aspect of this process (relating structure/ condition with process) was described by Strauss and Corbin (1998: 127):

> *"By answering the questions of who, when, where, why, how, and with what consequences, analysts are able to relate structure with process… structure or conditions set the stage, that is, create the circumstances in which problems, issues, happenings, or events pertaining to a phenomenon are situated or arise. Process, on the other hand, denotes the action/interaction over time of persons, organisations and communities in response to certain problems….one must study both structure and process to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of events".*

Through higher-level abstraction and interpretation, it was possible to devise a model that identifies how the themes relate to each other. For instance, religion (although not exhaustively investigated because of the sensitivity of the matter) strongly permeates the culture of Kuwait. In the empirical model, *Wasta* (patronage) was considered as a subset of the culture.

The *Effectiveness Model* clearly explains Kuwaiti CEOs' viewpoints, meanings and understandings of their effectiveness, from their own perspectives, by providing real insight into their understanding of what influences their effectiveness. The influence of societal culture on their effectiveness is

particularly important. It is believed that this integrated model explains CEOL in Kuwait and takes into account contextual issues.

6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the findings with respect to the extant literature and served to answer each research question thoroughly. Several important characteristics of effective CEOs were presented, such as being a role model, visionary thinking, being knowledgeable and people driven, developing talent, and decision-making, but participants did not necessarily exhibit these characteristics. There was therefore incongruence about what they viewed as necessary for CEO effectiveness and reality, which suggests that they may not necessarily be as effective as they would like to be, due to a number of dimensions. For example, whilst the *Kuwaitisation* policy (and the exodus of foreign managers during the Gulf War) brought Kuwaitis into leadership positions due to their ethno-national qualifications, some were not necessarily technically competent. Furthermore, the observations of leadership in practice showed that effectiveness was adversely affected by weak relationships with the BoD and/or with the executive team and lower level-employees.

It was concluded that aspects of the local business environment, such as government regulations and political interference, are more likely to hinder than the global environment. Moreover, societal and organisational culture both emerged as significant influences on CEOL. It was concluded that there was no unified leadership style among CEOs, and the adopted style is generally situational. The relationship with both the BoD and executives appeared to be one of the contextual factors influencing CEOL, with the former being strengthened by trust and corporate governance, while the latter can be improved by empowerment and applying better communication channels. Finally, experience and family background proved to play a critical role in shaping CEOs' personalities and careers. Subsequent analysis and abstraction, along with observation and consideration of the relationships between the several categories discussed, led to the conceptualisation of themes and resulted in the formulation of an integrated model of CEOL from the perspective of Kuwaiti CEOs, as shown in Figure 6.1.

7 Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis, and makes some theoretical and managerial recommendations. The study identified that little is known about CEOL within Kuwait's private and public organisations, which is partly because of the shortage of research on leadership in Kuwait and Middle Eastern countries in general (Beekun and Badawi 1999). Most of the studies on leadership have been conducted from a Western perspective, and fail to take into consideration important contextual factors such as societal culture and Islamic religion, as in the case of Kuwait. The present study adopts a positivist qualitative research approach (Cresswell 2013) that aims to explore CEO perceptions of effective leadership behaviours in Kuwaiti organisations with the view to conceptualising a model for CEOL and using experienced CEOs' interpretations, understandings and insights about leadership to support CEO development in Kuwait.

The objective of this study was therefore to gain a detailed understanding by clarifying the concept of CEOL, in order to develop an empirical model of CEOL and effective behaviours, from the perspective of Kuwait's private and public sector CEOs. Such a model takes into consideration the contextual factors, particularly societal culture.

It is believed that the results obtained in this study have some noteworthy implications for policy and management practices. This chapter answers the major research questions, and makes theoretical and practical recommendations. All studies have limitations, thus these limitations as well as explanations regarding how the limitations were minimised, are provided here. The chapter ends with some suggestions for future research, based on ways that the study can be taken further, followed by some final personal reflections in the following chapter.

7.2 Methodological contribution

This research makes methodological, theoretical and empirical contributions. From a methodological perspective, it collected data from some of the most influential CEOs in Kuwait, people that are inaccessible to many studies. The study was conducted to seek further insight and information from people at the highest level of an organisation, namely the CEOs. As there is usually only one CEO for each organisation, the number to choose from was limited; thus, they could not easily be randomly selected.

Furthermore, the study considered very sensitive aspects of culture, including Islamic issues, which are difficult to investigate in terms of their influence on leadership. It was therefore decided to explore the subject using a positivist qualitative research that not only sought to understand CEOs' perceptions, but provided insights into the practice of leadership (Cresswell 2013). It gave the researcher the opportunity to explore such sensitive topics and enable a better understanding of how and why leadership does or does not work in such contexts.

Moreover, the approach provided an opportunity to explore issues of CEOL from the CEOs' own perspectives, thereby enabling deep insight into a very complex subject, which has facilitated this research study to successfully expand upon the theory of CEOL.

7.3 Empirical contribution

The hallmark of qualitative research is its ability to generate rich data and reach places that other research methods cannot. The data was solicited from very prominent CEOs in Kuwait, which was not an easy task. The study obtained approximately 71,000 words of interview transcript and 10 pages of observational notes from two CEOs. All of this data contained the CEOs' views and experiences of the subject matter. This is very rich data, which could be used as the foundation to build future studies with the permission of the CEOs in question. For now, such information is held in confidence, in line with the researcher's undertaking to these CEOs and the University of Bradford's ethical regulations (subject to the UK Data Protection Act, 1998).

Furthermore, the study shed light on what is going on in Kuwaiti organisations, and how leadership and its effectiveness may be culturally variable.

7.4 Theoretical contribution

The main contribution of this study is in its ability to put in place the empirical model of CEOL in Kuwait (Figure 6.1). In addition, the model explains the characteristics of effective CEOs and the underlying dimensions that influence CEOL in Kuwait, as perceived by the CEOs themselves. It is hoped that this model will become the basis of future theoretical propositions, which could potentially be tested scientifically as part of future studies. The study thereby fills a gap in the leadership literature, insofar as there is no substantial body of academic literature on CEOL in the Middle East, or Kuwait in particular, where the context is different from the West.

It is very apparent that the upbringing of these CEOs mattered in shaping them and preparing them for their future careers. For example, those who were raised in business-owning families developed entrepreneurial skills even during their childhoods, learning to be more resilient and learning how to make difficult decisions. The other skills and competencies, such as the ability to motivate, empower and be a role model, etc. could be acquired on the job through experience and job rotation, mentorship and other leadership development programmes.

Entrepreneurial leadership is therefore one such leadership style that ought to be advocated in highly competitive environments, such as that to which Kuwait's organisations are headed. The literature on entrepreneurial leadership is relatively new, but it can be seen as one leadership style that could increase the effectiveness of CEOs in Kuwait. Such leadership theories naturally emphasise the need to be visionary and combine entrepreneurial practices with leadership practices, a feature that these CEOs ought to possess. Entrepreneurial leadership is not yet a significant research field (Fernald, Solomon and Tarabishy 2005; Tarabishy et al. 2005), but is emerging as a new paradigm, and hence the undertaking of this research is necessary in order to gain in-depth knowledge, so

that leaders within the Kuwaiti context can become more proactive and competitive in a global market.

It was emphasised that culture, particularly societal culture, which permeates into the organisation, had a profound effect on effectiveness. This is of more importance in cultures/societies where relations and face value matter. This gives credence to relational theories in better explaining CEOL in societies such as Kuwait.

The notion of distributed and relational leadership is very important for CEOL, as leaders have to collectively share responsibilities and the study recognised that power is not a zero-sum game. It was also noticed that the role of BoD members in Kuwait was changing, whereby they seem to be assuming more executive roles, thereby sharing some of the responsibilities with the executive team. At the lower level, effectiveness could be enhanced if more responsibilities could be delegated to followers. Delegation, which is considered to be a relational process from one group to another, is an important contribution of this research in enhancing CEO effectiveness. Many studies have considered delegation from one individual to another, or a dyad of individuals working together in a hierarchical context. However, followers (those who are currently not leading) are not involved in the decision-making processes for reasons that may require further exploration and studies. CEOL is not just reliant upon the CEOs themselves, but also upon other organisational members, and indeed actors from outside the organisational setting.

Another important contribution to leadership knowledge is that CEOL may occur due to the characteristics of the CEOs themselves, therefore it is necessary to pinpoint these in order to develop CEO effectiveness.

7.5 Managerial recommendations

The study also has managerial implications, which if adopted could enhance CEOL, particularly as participating CEOs could not easily define the concept and hence possibly struggle to operationalise it. This could imply that they are not as effective as they want to be, which could have resultant implications on

organisational performance. Nevertheless, their experiences, understandings and insights about leadership and interpretations can be used to support less experienced CEO leaders.

In terms of business environment and change management, the study highlighted the fact that the CEOs were not ready to face changes, possibly due to fear of the unknown. As a result, CEOs and employees could experience difficulties from economic changes at the company level, as all organisations appeared to be protected by the government to some degree from competitive forces. Change could be more easily managed through adapting to the changes taking place in the environment, adopting scenario planning, being flexible and having an organisational culture that accepts change when it occurs.

Based on these findings, some CEOs believe that the political environment hinders the entrepreneurial mind-set. Indeed, this research identified specific examples of political interference and interference in internal businesses (due to nepotism). However, if CEOs are willing to resist such interference, and they have the support of their organisations, they can successfully manage their firms without capitulating to the retrograde forces in Kuwaiti society. Thus, the role of boards may need to change, in order for them to exhibit a different kind of competence. Competent boards should support their CEOs and shield organisations from the many forms of political interference.

CEOs need to manage the board's expectations and relationships, through understanding that new BoD roles have shifted to become more active in the formulation and even execution of strategy. This can also be achieved if CEOs explain rationales (logic) for actions and display empathy and ethics. Such relations can also be enhanced if there is trust between the CEO and the board, and between the CEO and the rest of the executive team, strengthened by the display of meeting commitments, attaining objectives and effective communication. Effective CEOs need to get to grips with their strategy and understand that the key to their effectiveness lies in their ability to implement strategies and see through their implementation.

Career experience and family background was observed to help CEOs shape their future, in addition to the experience they acquired incidentally during their careers. It is therefore recommended that closer attention be paid to the way CEOs and future CEOs are nurtured with regards to responsibility, respect and discipline, in addition to the proper acquisition of knowledge, exposure and experience.

Societal culture *per se* is not easy to change as it evolves over time; it is therefore important to embrace societal culture as it permeates organisational life and adapt to it with minimal confrontation, while encouraging aspects of being ethical and exemplary, leading as a role model, avoiding certain bad practices such as favouritism and nepotism, avoiding poor decision-making and authoritative tendencies, etc. The culture can evolve with time, especially when the CEOs and other influential people in the organisation gain exposure and best practices from other countries.

The other recommendation to enhance CEOL, and to ultimately improve shareholder value in Kuwait, is to place the Kuwaiti CEOs on measurement-driven short-term renewable contracts, which may encourage them to become more driven by a culture of performance and financial results.

Leadership development for CEOs should be aimed at developing the identified characteristics of effective CEOs, as well as continuing to develop their minds, in that effectiveness can be better realised if they are to learn to collectively work as teams and distribute responsibilities amongst team members. Furthermore, CEOs can be more effective if they also involve followers in the decision-making process. CEO roundtables could be encouraged, whereby CEOs from Kuwait's different industries attend sessions to discuss issues, support and challenge each other.

7.6   Policy recommendations

Research interviews and the previous literature showed that government regulations are hindering development in the country (Abdullah and Al-Homoud 2001). Therefore, government policies should aim to boost the private sector and

put in place incentive measures, rather than compete with the private sector in areas such as salaries, hiring and project implementation, etc.

This research revealed that some CEOs consider conservative Islam to restrain growth and modernisation in Kuwait; in reality, it is unlikely that a wave of Islamic conservatism is creating this gap. Rather, in a challenging economic climate, people cling to national, religious and other social identity groups and factions in order to avoid alienation and enlarge their *Wasta* networks (for material self-interest), rather than because of intrinsic ideological beliefs or doctrines (Rachman 2015). Addressing this sociological issue requires significant government efforts beyond the scope of business studies.

The Kuwaiti national culture needs to be harmonised to minimise sub-cultures and tensions among the community, and to build a spirit of togetherness and unity by fighting intolerance and tribalism. This could be given in the form of education and awareness campaigns, emphasising the common interest all citizens have in the economic survival of Kuwait in the 21st century.

7.7 Transferability of findings

Qualitative research is commonly criticised for its inability to generalise its findings. It is worth acknowledging that the main aim of this study in no way intended to generalise the findings, because this was not in line with the philosophy adopted. The generalisation of qualitative work is problematic partly because of the small number of participants; for instance, this particular study included 16 CEOs who all voluntarily participated in the research. The findings in this study might be different in another setting because of the influence of culture and contextual factors. Thus, the dynamics apparent in one social setting may not be presumed to have any relevance toward understanding other contexts (Bryman 1992).

The approach adopted aimed to formulate a theory, rather than to generalise findings. Although the commonalities and differences cited by the CEOs highlight differences between CEOs working in Kuwait and in other cultures (particularly "the West"), the study was not a cross-sectional cultural study. As noted by

Menges et al. (2011), greater cross-cultural validity can be achieved by sampling organisations from diverse national backgrounds. Future research could strive to obtain larger numbers of participants from several organisations to further generalise the findings.

However, the qualitative approach adopted in this research provides readers with good raw material for their own generalisations (Stake 1995). Furthermore, there may be generalisations that can be made at a more abstract level. In addition, it is assumed that readers will be able to subjectively generalise the study's findings to their own personal experiences (Denzin and Lincoln 2000).

7.8   Study limitations

This study acknowledges certain limitations that ought to be factored in when interpreting the results. The number of participants was relatively small (16 CEOs), albeit adequate for in-depth interviews, but this makes it difficult to generalise the results (as mentioned previously). Nevertheless, the selected CEOs are considered to be the most influential and successful CEOs in Kuwait – consequently, their views about CEOL ought to be considered seriously.

Although the interviews were conducted in English as far as possible, it must be acknowledged that for all but one of the CEOs, English was not their first language. In some cases, they were able to express themselves better in Arabic, and it was the responsibility of the researcher to translate into English; in so doing, certain content might have been lost in translation. Furthermore, some of the more conservative CEOs were not willing to discuss their family and upbringing, which was an important aspect being explored by this research – this may have been because the researcher is female. This limitation was partially overcome by obtaining such family information from other sources, as well as by immediately transcribing and revising the contents, which were also compared with the written notes jotted down by the researcher during the interviews.

The analysis was conducted manually, as opposed to using software such as NVivo; consequently, some elements of bias could have been introduced, especially during the coding and categorisation stage. However, this was

minimised by being reflexive in order to prevent the researcher's values interfering with the analysis.

In spite of these limitations, this study is among the very few that examine the importance of CEOL in Kuwait; as such, it provides interesting results that have important theoretical and practical implications for understanding leadership, providing a basis for future research.

7.9   Recommendations for future research

Having put in place Kuwait's CEO Effectiveness Model, future studies should build upon this to test the emerging hypotheses, including the most effective leadership style that these CEOs could adopt in order to be more effective.

The data used in this study was not longitudinal, and future research may want to gather historical and longitudinal data that closely follows the culture of Kuwait to determine how it has evolved and influenced leadership, in particular CEOL. Such longitudinal data could better ascertain if certain combinations of leadership styles are more effective, given that certain attributes of the organisational context are necessary conditions for CEOL. Such work could also be extended to include other countries, particularly comparative studies within the GCC.

Further research should also examine the link between CEOL and organisational performance, since it is still debatable whether organisational performance is mainly attributed to CEOs. In the same domain, future studies on CEOL may also involve other organisational members (followers), rather restricting it to CEOs only.

8 Personal Reflections

8.1 Introduction

I gained many meaningful values, on both a professional and personal level, as a result of the six-year journey travelled during this research. This chapter recounts my experiences – all of which are written directly from my reflective perspective – for the benefit of other researchers.

8.2 Literature review

Considerable time was spent undertaking the literature review, partly because I could not easily ascertain whether I had comprehensively covered all the material that I needed in order to be knowledgeable in the area of leadership, and also in order to establish the gaps in my research. New material was continuously added to my literature chapter. As a result, this became very large, without necessarily enriching the knowledge base. As this was a qualitative study, maybe I did not need to spend quite so much time on the literature review, since it is largely an inductive study and to some extent based more on grounded theory.

8.3 In the field

The setting up of interviews was not as difficult as imagined and it was done generally within two weeks, with the exception of just a few that took longer because of the CEOs' busy schedules. This was also partly because the topic was of great interest to these CEOs, and they were really interested in learning more about the outcome of the results. It is therefore recommended that researchers choose topical subjects that will be of interest to participants.

I did not expect interviewees to be very open during the discussions, but in general they were – this could be because they had nothing to fear, as they were all prominent CEOs in Kuwait.

8.4 Experience with supervision

It is important to have a good relationship with your supervisor, as this is needed in order to obtain valuable comments from them. Whenever a student meets with their supervisor, it is probably good practice to take concise notes/minutes of the discussions, for future reference. In line with the DBA policy, students should take such minutes for sharing with their supervisors.

8.5 Professional

As I was a part-time student at the same time as occupying an executive position, I had many evolving responsibilities to manage between work and study. I utilised my weekends well and took vacation time for my studies, so that I could also attend courses at the University. The mini courses taken at the university enhanced the output of my work, in areas such as compensation and succession planning, all of which were related to my professional work. The study added value to me personally, as it required me to think in a more critical, interpretative, reflexive and logical manner. I faced challenges in my work, as a result of added responsibilities and the restructuring of my position, but I accepted the new challenges and turned them into opportunities.

The participative observation helped me to remove my emotions and deal with the facts, as much as possible, so as to avoid being biased.

8.6 Chapter summary

On a personal level, I learned the importance of having a long-term objective. On reflection of my life vision, I knew that in order to reach this part of my life's vision I would need commitment, dedication and resilience in order to conduct a research project of this magnitude; however, I knew that this would ultimately strengthen my capabilities, while also identifying any gaps that I need to work on after the completion of this journey. Finally, although aspects of research can be laborious and tedious, it is important that one generally enjoys undertaking the research and is interested in the subject and its potential value.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: CEO INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Mr/Ms xxxx, CEO

I am a part-time Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) student at the University of Bradford, UK. My research is concerned with exploring leadership effectiveness from the perspectives of CEOs working in major companies in Kuwait. This is a unique research project for the Kuwaiti business community as CEOs are important for achieving high organisational performance. The study recommendations will lead to the development of a model for assessing CEO leadership effectiveness to help guide future CEOs.

You have been identified as a high-profile CEO and I would like to meet with you to ascertain your views on this important topic. The questions for the interviews are attached. I am targeting 20 CEOs from different industries in Kuwait with the aim of getting the views of a representative sample of CEOs in major corporations across the country. With your consent I would like to record this interview (for research purposes only). Your responses will of course remain confidential and anonymous. Interview data will be analysed qualitatively, and these results will, in part, be used in aggregate to develop a survey for the second stage of this research.

I hope you will agree to participate in the research at a date and time of your convenience. This approach is made with the support of my supervisor, Dr David Spicer, and if you have any questions about the research please do not hesitate to contact either myself or Dr Spicer (D.P.Spicer@bradford.ac.uk).

Participants in the research will receive an executive brief summarising the findings, and I will personally present to you a summary of the output if you wish.

Thank you for taking the time to read this request, I look forward to your support. Should you decide to consent to be interviewed, your office administrator will be contacted to arrange an appointment.

Regards,

Abeer Al-Omar

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Introduction

The questions are designed to be aligned with the research objective, which is an exploration of individual CEO views and practices relating to their perceptions of effective leadership attributes/behaviours, including drivers and barriers to successful behaviours (including CEO characteristics, the business environment, the Board of Directors and the executive team relations, and the societal and organisational culture).

This will help me to shape the conclusion, which will include the recommendations and all the answers will be built on your own perceptions.

Feel free to ask me to skip any question if you would prefer not to be asked about certain issues, and feel free to add any other elements that I might have missed that you believe to be important; this will add value to the research output. This research has been fundamentally designed with you in mind as an end user (and beneficiary) of the research findings.

General questions

Effective CEO leadership behaviour
What is your definition of effective leadership behaviour for someone at your level?

Effective CEO leadership requirement
What are the required skills, experiences and behaviours?

Leadership style
Can you describe any specific leadership style that you are using in leading your organisation?

Business environment
Can you tell me something about your understanding of the changes in the business environment you are operating in? What are the facilitators and barriers?

Specific questions

Board of directors
Can you describe your relationship with the board?

Executive team
Can you describe your relation with your executive team?

Career development
Can you take me through your career and how your development shaped your leadership style?

Family background
Can you tell me something about the way you have been raised and how it shaped your leadership style and behaviour?

Social culture
Can you describe the social culture and how it can affect your, or any, leadership style in Kuwait?

Organisational culture
How do you describe your organisation's culture?

Overall commonalities and differences in leadership behaviour
What are the commonalities and differences that are observed among the CEOs leading successful private and public sector companies in Kuwait? Is there anything particular about being a CEO in Kuwait?

APPENDIX 3: CATEGORIES AND CODES FROM THE RESEARCH

CODE	CATEGORY	THEME
Focus/business oriented Achiever driven Flexibility Change manager Ability to implement/execute Process oriented Results and performance driven Strategy manifested by shareholders Prioritisation Measure result	Driving execution	Effectiveness definition
Lead by example Walk the talk Living the organisation Charismatic Aspire Dedication Wisdom Firm Balanced heart and mind Respect others	Charismatic Role model	Characteristic
Had vision, mission and strategy Build business model Ability to anticipate Photographic memory Create innovation culture Diversification and growth strategy Have different scenarios	Visionary thinker	
Business acumen Global insight (global awareness, international exposure, institution exposure, economical mind-set) Technical knowledge Finance acumen	Knowledgeable	
Team player Collective decision making Ownership/build culture Teamwork Recognise others for their work Give authority to others Hold people's accountability	Empowering	
Sell idea/negotiate Influencer Listening Proper contact Consistent Good communication/presentation skills	Communicating	

CODE	CATEGORY	THEME
Human process Moral fabric Motivational skills Sense of humour Coaching/mentoring skills Dedication Humble approach Empathy	People driven	
Good relation with stakeholders and community Proper contact Socialism Build network Professionalism	Building relationship	
Integrity Honesty Ethics Credibility Trust Transparency Fairness	Ethical/ inspiring trust	
Create opportunities Retain talent Build talent Attract people	Attracting and developing talent	
Analytical thinking Sounding judgement Decision making Risk taker	Decision making	
Ethics/trust Moral fabric Transparency/honesty	Authentic	
Humble approach Sense of humour	Relationship	
Empower /collaboration	Followership	
Team work/group work	Distributed	
Results and performance driven		
Entrepreneurial thinking Competitive/innovation/dynamics Take risk and go for globalisation Seeking opportunity Dedication/professionalism	Entrepreneurship	
Merchandiser thinkers, trading skills. Social influence Feminine/ motherly style	Situational /task oriented	
Promptness Orchestrator/interactive /influential Visionary Social skills/human centric Motivate others Target build talent Empowerment/self-empowered/share responsibility	Relationship Parenting style	

CODE	CATEGORY	THEME
Team oriented Followership Charismatic Relationship human oriented relationship Transformational/ Distributed	Leadership style	
Market restriction Not very democratic Monopoly/no free market Control Risk averse environment No challenges for government sector employee and no need for learning Government became employer of choice/government competing with private sector Consumerism, high purchasing power Unstable government/political impact on culture Lack of honesty/lack of ethics Political interference	Government policies Political interference	Business environment barriers – local

APPENDIX 4: KUWAITI CEO EFFECTIVENESS MODEL

KUWAITI CEO EFFECTIVENESS MODEL

Relationship	
With Board	**With Executives**
Corporate Governance	Inspiration
Trust	Empowerment/Succession
Strenuous Relationship	Strenuous Relationship
Communication	Communication
Demarcation of Roles	Relations
Executive Boards	Team Work
	Distribution of Duties

Experience/Family Background	
Experience	**Family**
On-the-Job Training	Family Support
Resilience/Hard Work	Guidance
Knowledgeable	Responsibility
Mentorship	Discipline
	Equal Gender Treatment
	Child-Upbringing
	Stability

Leadership Style
- Authentic Leadership
- Relation Leadership
- Distributed Leadership
- Entrepreneurial Leadership
- Transformational Leadership
- Parenting/Feminine Style
- Followership Leadership

CEO Characteristics
- Role Model/Charismatic
- Visionary Thinker
- Knowledgeable
- Empowering
- Communicating
- People-Driven
- Building Relationships
- Ethical/Inspiring Trust
- Attracting/Developing Talent
- Decision-Making

CEO's Effectiveness: *Execution*

Business Environment
- GCC Unity
- Government Policies
- Arab Spring
- Political Interference
- Dynamic/Change Environment
- Business Opportunities
- Managing Risks

Islamic Religion
- Submissiveness
- Sectorial
- Fatalistic

Culture	
Societal	**Organizational**
Short-Term Oriented	Team Work
Social Inequalities (Women)	Participative
Social Relations	Ethical
Conservatism	People Driven
Patriarchy	Performance Driven
Class Society/Tribalism	Customer Focus
Risk-Averse	Decision-Making
Intolerance	
Uncertainty	
Authoritarian	
Entitlement	

Wasta (Patronage)
Favoritism, Nepotism, Unfair Promotions, Appointment Relations, Bypassing Procedures

APPENDIX 5: FINDINGS ANALYSIS SUMMARY

(overleaf)

Q 1: What is your definition of effective leadership behaviour for someone at your level?				Semi-structured - participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Focus/ business oriented	Result oriented	Driving execution	Effectiveness definition		x			x				x	x					x		5
Achiever driven	Performance oriented										x	x				x				3
Flexibility													x							1
Change manager	Adopt to market change					x							x	x	x				x	5
Ability to implement/ execute								x		x										2
Process oriented							x													1
Results and performance driven				x						x						x		x	x	5
Strategy manifested by shareholders									x		x									2
Prioritisation																x				1
Measure result	KPI					x					x					x				3
10		1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	3	2	3	1	1	4	0	2	2	28
				x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	14

Q 2: What are the required skills, experiences and behaviours?				Semi-structured - participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Lead by example	Try to excel above yourself and compete with yourself only, he is against role model	Charismatic Role model	Characteristic	x	x							x	x			x	x			6
Walk the talk Living organisation				x	x								x			x	x			5
Living the organisation						x														1
Charismatic	Have image									x		x		x				x		4
Aspire																			x	1
Dedication																	x			1
Wisdom																		x		1
Firm																	x			1
Balanced heart and mind	Treat them as you want them to treat you												x							1
Respect others													x							1
10				2	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	4	1	0	2	4	2	1	22
				x	x	x				x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	11
Had vision, mission and strategy	Leading by objective/ set target	Visionary thinker		x	x	x		x	x	x		x				x			x	9
Build business model					x									x						2
Ability to anticipate						x												x		2
Photographic memory														x						1
Create innovation culture																	x		x	2
Diversification and growth strategy										x										1
Have different scenarios														x						1
7				1	1	3	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	3	0	2	0	2	1	18
				x	x	x		x	x	x				x		x		x	x	10

Q 2: What are the required skills, experiences and behaviours?				Semi-structured - participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Business acumen	Understand business	Knowledge-able			x			x	x					x	x	x	x	x	x	9
Global insight (global awareness, international exposure, institution exposure, economical mindset)	Building knowledge institute					x							x		x	x				4
Technical knowledge													x					x		2
Finance acumen	Have sense of the numbers				x									x	x					3
4				0	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	2	3	2	1	2	1	18
					x			x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
Team player		Empowering		x		x													x	3
Collective decision making	Distributing responsibility			x		x														2
Ownership/ build culture				x		x														2
Teamwork	Quality of the team																	x		1
Recognise others for their work													x						x	2
Give authority to others				x	x	x	x							x			x			6
Hold people's accountability	Distribute responsibility												x							1
7				4	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	2	17
				x	x	x	x						x	x			x	x	x	9

Q 2: What are the required skills, experiences and behaviours?				Semi-structured - participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Sell idea/ negotiate		Communicating				x		x			x								x	4
Influencer	Influence relationship											x			x					2
Listening	Influential											x		x						2
Proper contact	Relationship								x			x		x					x	4
Consistent	Listening											x		x						2
Good communication/ presentation skills clear	Flow of information																			0
6				0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	4	0	3	1	0	0	0	2	14
						x		x	x		x	x		x	x				x	8
Human process	Context manager	People driven										x								1
Moral fabric	Relationship									x		x								2
Motivational skills												x						x		2
Sense of humour												x								1
Coaching/ mentoring skills	Coaching/ mentoring skills/ followership			x					x											2
Dedication																	x			1
Humble approach															x					1
Empathy				x													x			2
8				2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	12
				x					x	x		x			x		x	x		7

Q 2: What are the required skills, experiences and behaviours?				Semi-structured - participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Good relation with stakeholders and community	To avoid strenuous relationship	Building relationship										x				x				2
Proper contact	Influential								x			x		x					x	4
Socialism	Interaction														x					1
Build network	Through distribution leadership																x			1
Professionalism																	x			1
5				0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	2	0	1	9
									x			x		x	x	x	x		x	7
Integrity		Ethical/ inspiring trust			x								x							2
Honesty					x								x							2
Ethics												x	x					x		3
Credibility	Consistency											x								1
Trust												x							x	2
Transparency													x						x	2
Fairness	Avoid favouritism												x				x			2
7				0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	0	0	0	1	1	2	14
					x							x	x				x	x	x	6

Q 2: What are the required skills, experiences and behaviours?				Semi-structured - participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Create opportunities		Attracting and developing talent			x							x							x	3
Retain talent					x							x								2
Build talent	Succession planning															x				1
Attract people	Have strong culture				x							x								2
4				0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	8
					x							x				x			x	4
Analytical thinking		Decision making					x													1
Sounding judgement												x								1
Decision making						x						x								2
Risk taker	Calculated risk					x	x			x										3
4				0	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
						x	x			x		x								4
62		10	1	9	11	12	3	3	5	5	1	21	13	11	6	8	11	9	11	139

Q 3: Can you describe your specific leadership style that you are using to lead your organisation?				Semi-structured - participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Ethics/ trust		Authentic	Leadership style							x	x	x	x				x	x		6
Moral fabric										x		x								2
Transparency/ honesty										x	x		x				x		x	4
Humble approach	Serving others										x				x					2
Sense of humour	Charismatic/	Transformational							x			x								2
Results and performance driven		Entrepreneurship		x	x		x	x		x					x	x		x	x	9
Entrepreneurial thinking	Dynamics, take a risky decision (private sector)			x					x					x		x				4
Competitive/ innovation/ dynamics	Gut feeling/ women are better in dynamics			x										x				x		3
Dedication/ professionalism																	x			1
Merchandiser thinkers, trading skills/ patient	Old trait					x			x						x					3
Take risk and go for globalisation				x											x					2
Seeking opportunity				x	x		x			x						x		x	x	7
Feminine style	Motherly/ parenting	Parenting												x						1
Promptness	Situated/ task oriented																x			1
Orchestrator/ collaborative/ share accountability	Team oriented/ influence relationship	Distributed/ relationship						x	x					x						1
Teamwork/ work through and with others	Team work/ group activity	Relationship/ interactive									x	x			x			x		2

Q 3: Can you describe your specific leadership style that you are using to lead your organisation?				Semi-structured - participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Visionary	Sophistication/ transform/ entrepreneurial/ charisma			x		x						x			x			x		5
Charisma	Charisma/ authentic/ Transform/									x		x		x				x		4
Social skills/ human centric	Motivational/ human oriented/ transform	Relationship/ followership										x				x		x		1
Motivate others by spreading duties among others	Work to make them motivated and useful	Distributed/ relationship/ transform									x	x	x					x		2
Target: build talent																x				1
Empowerment/ self-empowered Sharing responsibilities	Distributed/ transformational/ entrepreneurial	Distributed/ transformatio nal									x	x	x						x	2
22		7	1	6	2	2	2	2	4	6	6	8	6	4	6	4	4	7	5	74

Q 4: Can you tell me about your understanding of the changes in the business environment that you are operating in? What are the barriers or elements which hinder you?				Semi-structured -participant response																	
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Market restriction	No diversified transformation	Barriers- local gov. policies	Business environment barriers -local	x	x									x	x					4
Not very democratic	Civil liberty					x			x	x									x	4
Monopoly/ no free market	Due to monopoly, you cannot judge the success of the CEOs in Kuwait; lousy leaders are still making millions			x	x	x			x											4
Control	Authoritarian and centralised			x	x	x														3
Risk averse environment	No risk taking as easy to copy paste projects	-						x		x	x									3
No challenges for government sector employee and no need for learning	Encourage laissez-faire leadership													x						1
Government became employer of choice/ government competing with private sector	Less working hours, competitive salary, so citizens prefer to work in government			x	x															2
Consumerism, high purchasing power	Consumerism			x											x					2
Unstable government/ political impact on culture	90% of projects fail due to political interference, not technical issues	Barriers - local political interference					x	x			x	x								4
Lack of honesty/ lack of ethics	Unethical and no punishment																x	x		2

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Q 4: Can you tell me about your understanding of the changes in the business environment that you are operating in? What are the barriers or elements which hinder you?				Semi-structured -participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Political interference	The politicians are also driven by corrupt government systems													x		x				2
11		2		5	4	3	1	2	2	2	2	1	0	3	2	1	1	1	1	31
Understand global business implications very well - no copy paste - global big organisations have more than 100 years age	How profit can dictate business as the global countries are not business as usual in Kuwait - it is not copy paste	barriers - regional - Change environment	Business environment barriers - regional				x		x	x					x	x		x		
Gulf and Middle East collaboration is missing	No optimisation of resources	GCC/ ME Unity		x								x		x	x			x		5
How to make e-business in country like Kuwait while government is behind	Technology in government/ infrastructure	Understanding globalisation								x						x				2
3		3		1	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	1	2	2	0	2	0	13
Government support to other countries	Humanitarian aid to those countries, government easy access during Arab Spring	Opportunity Arab Spring	Business environment opportunity		x					x										2
Business opportunity of Western concern to enter during instability	Fear to enter Arab markets opportunity for Kuwaitis	Business opportunity			x	x				x					x	x				5

Q 4: Can you tell me about your understanding of the changes in the business environment that you are operating in? What are the barriers or elements which hinder you?				Semi-structured -participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Iraq invasion strengthen their capability to manage in such environment	Iraq invasion strength/ facing fears and risk/ ability to predict			x	x															
To change their business model/ change economy theories	Money driven economy is not a fit theory for this century			x	x	x				x						x				5
Freedom, outgoing		Open society										x								1
5		3		2	4	2	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	15
No business growth opportunity	Easy to lose talent	Threat -No Growth	Business environment threat													x				1
Risk management business	Make them conservative and need to be careful	Managing risk - mindset			x															1
Change requiring new mindset	Like going thin	Managing change					x													1
Performance in cyclical business	Can't be against cyclical															x				1
4		3		0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4
23		11	1	7	8	4	3	2	4	6	2	3	0	5	5	6	1	3	1	60

Q 4: Can you tell me about your understanding of the changes in the business environment that you are operating in? What are the barriers or elements which hinder you?				Semi-structured -participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Adaptability culture	Being conservative all the way/ strong culture	Adaptability	How they face and manage change						x	x					x					3
Readiness	By proper strategic planning/ many scenarios								x								x	x		3
Provides good example	Flexibility to adapt others opinion/ emergency team meeting to face changes/ invest in areas where others afraid to be in/ diversification and saving/ diversified portfolio protect them from crisis	Be role model/ charisma		x	x		x											x		4
Be accountable in good and bad times	More accountability																	x		1
Government support during recession helped by our good relations		Building relationship				x				x										2
In crisis you know your people	Reflection/ you know your soldiers													x	x			x		
Change is not easy in their sector	Adapt to global, regional, cyclical business	Corporate governance				x	x			x									x	4
Robust internal guideline	Rely on internal guidelines								x											1

Q 4: Can you tell me about your understanding of the changes in the business environment that you are operating in? What are the barriers or elements which hinder you?				Semi-structured -participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
People support/ what's in it for them?	Get people buy in/ make it meaningful	Empowering others									x				x					2
Dynamic culture	Endless, it is positive, dynamic to extreme fluid, be in love with change	Love change						x				x								2
Evolved in the face of difficulties	Optimistic/ make challenge opportunities	Optimistic		x	x															2
Criticise what went well and bad	Reflection	Reflection																x		1
Growth mode	Decision making style during change/ with focus on customer strategy made them move	Strategic thinking						x				x								2
Creativity and innovation	Ability to change business model						x	x							x					3
Proper forecast and judgement										x										1
Their way to make profit	Optimise cost						x													1
																				0
16		9		2	2	3	4	3	2	4	2	1	0	1	4	0	1	5	1	35

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Q 5: Can you describe your relation with the board?				Semi-structured - participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Open, good listeners/ understanding	Communication protocol	Communication	Board relations	x										x			x			3
Do not be involved in politics	Independent	Corporate governance							x			x	x			x				4
Internal guidelines	Policy adherence																	x		1
Not involved in details or operations										x			x						x	3
Delegation of authority	Independence/ responsibility													x	x				x	3
Fairness	No *wasta*	Corporate governance													x	x				2
Convincing	Rhetoric	Logic										x								1
Good forecast							x													1
Challenging with results								x												1
Provide with data before they ask				x																1
Good rapport/ harmony	Relational	Relational			x			x		x				x						4
Walk the talk	Role model	Trust											x							1
Trust/ building alliance/ transparency/ integrity				x			x				x	x		x	x				x	7
Good reputation	Face saving													x						1
14	9	5	1	3	1	0	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	5	3	2	1	1	3	32

Q 6: Can you describe your relation with the executives?				Semi-structured - participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Engagement		Communication	Executive	x				x												2
Interaction	Limit interaction with political bodies			x											x			x		3
On the spot solution	Logic	Decision making						x												1
Empowered team	Direct/ open door	Empowerment		x		x		x				x	x	x			x	x	x	9
Succession plan																x			x	2
Inspiration		Inspiration					x													1
Make history	Stretch your target, dream big											x								1
Encourage entrepreneurial thinking	Coming up with new and innovative ideas	Logic							x											1
Casual lunch	Relational	Relational																x		1
Harmony	Relational							x		x										2
Understanding personality												x					x			2
11		6	1	3	0	1	1	4	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	25
25		11	2	6	1	1	3	6	2	3	3	4	4	6	4	3	3	3	6	57

Q 7: Can you take me through your career and explain how your development has shaped your leadership style?				Semi-structured - participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Diversification in knowledge/ experience	Diverse understanding and knowledge of business/ work in different industry	Exposure	Experience	x		x							x	x			x		x	6
Keeping up with technology		Knowledge			x														x	2
Education and reading	Continuous education and reading			x	x					x			x						x	5
Support	Management support/ empowerment/ dealing with expert	Mentorship			x						x					x			x	4
Starting gradually from the bottom	Grasp opportunity.	On-job training		x					x						x		x	x		5
Hard work/ passion	Challenging assignments/ opportunity	Resilience					x					x				x			x	4
6		5	1	3	3	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	5	28

Q 8: How can you describe the way you were brought up? Family background, etc.				Semi-structured - participant response																
Codes	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Discipline		Discipline	Family background			x			x	x										3
No discrimination/ trust		Equal gender treatment			x									x		x		x		4
Good direction/ support/ motivation		Guidance		x	x											x	x	x		5
Vision								x												1
Strong father						x			x			x					x			4
Strong mother						x				x				x				x		4
Good education from family		Knowledge		x						x										2
Independence/ responsibility		Responsibility				x		x							x			x		4
Stable family	How they are brought up	Upbringing						x								x	x	x		4
9		6	1	2	2	4	1	2	2	3	0	1	0	2	1	3	3	5	0	31
15	0	11	2	5	5	5	2	2	3	4	1	2	2	3	2	5	5	6	5	59

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Q 9: How can you describe your societal culture? And, how the social culture affected your organisation?				Semi-structured - participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Tribe concept everywhere Tribal/ family	People want support from the family/ citizens are classes/ prejudice / fanaticism	Class society/ tribalism	Societal culture		x		x							x	x	x	x	x		7
Guided by religion without rationale	Fatalistic	Conservativ e Islamism					x		x						x		x			4
Ignorance of other religions' needs	…look at his explanation	Intolerant					x		x						x					3
Some had internal guidelines to reduce risk, some avoid risk (risk averse mindset will not help facing issues)	…especially for M and A, emerging CULTURE is very difficult	Risk averse (culture)				x	x													2
No long-term grand projects in the country	Five points as one majority	Short-term oriented		x	x				x			x			x			x		6
Could be for board as well/ bureaucratic	Favouritism (*wasta* - culture)	Social inequality			x		x		x			x	x		x		x			7
Woman as a CEO is not yet accepted		Social relationship												x				x		2
Negative impact on future CEOs: spoiled, career choices	Relationship/ spoil kids	Patriarchy		x																1
Middle Easterners relationship driven, not competency driven					x	x														2
Kuwaitis are very social							x							x						2
Diwaniya culture														x	x		x			3
Security attitudes towards foreigners		Uncertainty			x				x											2

Q 9: How can you describe your societal culture? And, how the social culture affected your organisation?				Semi-structured - participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
No decision making/ sense of responsibility	Kuwaitis by nature are gamblers, they don't value too much risk decision processes, they follow gut feeling for many reasons because opportunities are very limited; no way to create wealth … private doors are closed… depressing… culture of quick profitability… *motharabeen* (where there is wealth there is carelessness). No one knows what is expected from him or her/ everyone wants a piece of wealth cake	Social responsibility			x			x	x	x	x	x			x		x	x		9
13		9	1	2	6	2	6	1	6	1	1	3	1	4	7	2	5	4	0	51

Q10: How can you describe your organisational culture?				Semi-structured - participant response																
Code	Comments	Category	Theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	16
Indecisiveness	Observer B as well	Decision making	Organisation culture		x															1
Less efficiency and less productivity	Ineffective	Productivity		x																1
Open for debate and negotiation/ freedom to share opinion/ accept criticism/ open door policy/ flat no hierarchy	Very challenging when dealing with people older than him	Participative culture		x			x				x	x	x	x			x		x	8
Teamwork		Teamwork									x	x	x			x			x	5
Trust/ integrity/ transparency/ self-guide/ driven by ethics and Sharia compliance		Ethical				x				x		x		x	x				x	6
Employees satisfied, motivated/ family oriented		People driven		x	x						x	x						x		5
Clear cascaded KPIs/ no political driven agenda it is always clear objective	Process driven	Performance driven		x							x	x		x		x		x	x	7
Organisation of collective people/ diversity		Diversified		x				x								x		x		4
Customer focus		Customer focus														x		x		2
9		9	1	5	2	1	1	1	0	1	4	5	2	3	1	4	1	3	5	39
22		17	2	7	8	3	7	2	6	2	5	8	3	7	8	6	6	7	5	90
185		67	10	41	36	31	23	20	24	29	22	48	31	36	31	35	30	38	36	601

Excluding change element