Cultural Orientations and Preference for HRM Policies and Practices:

The case of Oman

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Abstract

This study empirically examines the influence of cultural orientations on employee preferences of human resource management (HRM) policies and practices in Oman. Data were collected from 712 employees working in six large Omani organisations. The findings indicate that there are a number of differences among Omani employees regarding value orientations due especially to age, education and work experience. The findings show a strong orientation towards mastery, harmony, thinking and doing, and a weak orientation towards hierarchy, collectivism, subjugation, and human nature-as-evil. The results demonstrate a clear link between value orientations and preferences for particular HRM policies and practices. Group-oriented HRM practices are preferred by those who scored high on collectivism and being orientations, and those who scored low on thinking and doing orientations. Hierarchy-oriented HRM practices are preferred by those scoring high on hierarchy, subjugation and human nature-as-bad orientations, and those scoring low on thinking and mastery orientations. Finally, preference for loose and informal HRM practices was positively associated with being, and negatively associated with thinking, doing, and harmony orientations. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed in detail.

Key words: cultural orientations, HRM practices, Oman, within-culture variance.

Introduction

Globalization accelerates the transfer not only of products and services among nations, but also of management know-how and practice. The transfer of HRM practice occurs mostly from developed nations to developing ones, however, multinational corporations and local organizations in developing countries face a serious challenge in implementing the Western (mainly US-based) HRM practices (e.g., Jaeger and Kanungo, 1990). Successful implementation of HRM practices is dependent in part on the extent to which the practices are perceived to be appropriate by managers and employees alike (e.g., Erez and Earley, 1993). Therefore, studying attitudes towards HRM practices and the cultural factors that influence these attitudes is important from both a scientific and a practical point of view. The study has the primary aim of examining the relationship between cultural orientations and preferences of HRM practices. While addressing the issue of convergence versus divergence in HRM practice in a developing country context, this study seeks to make a significant contribution to the growing scientific literature on the impact of culture on HRM practices.

The last few decades have witnessed significant advancements in the field of HRM (see, for example, Legge, 1995; Schuler and Jackson, 1999). However, most of the research has been conducted in Western developed countries. Research in developing nations is needed both to test the generalizability of theories and practices that originated in Western cultural context and to identify appropriate alternative strategies for different contexts (Ali, 1992; Napier and Vu, 1998, Robertson *et al*., 2002). According to Robertson *et al*. (2001), despite being a politically and economically significant region, with a combined population of some 400 million and extensive natural resources (Ali, 1999), the Middle East is left behind in terms of international and cross-cultural management research. While there are practical difficulties contributing to this state of affairs, the region's relatively underdeveloped private sector and extensive reliance on an expatriate workforce may also

have contributed to this gap. This research attempts to fill this void by providing data from

managers and employees in one of the most important countries in the Middle East - Oman.

Management research in developing countries: A specific focus on Oman

People who live and work in countries described as "developing" comprise 80 % of the

world's population, representing a large and growing market and labour force. The term

'developing country', while perhaps appearing pejorative (Jackson, 2001), is used most

commonly at the United Nations to describe a broad range of countries, including those with

both high and low per capita national incomes and those that depend heavily on the

production and sale of primary commodities. These countries usually lack an advanced

industrial infrastructure, health, education, communications, and transportation facilities

(Punnett, 2004). Developing countries have tended to receive little attention from

management writers, yet understanding management in these countries is particularly

relevant for today's managers (Budhwar and Debrah, 2001; Jaeger and Kanungo, 1990;

Punnett, 2004). For example, a recent UNCTAD survey (The Economist, 2002) found that

829 HQ operations of multinationals were relocated between January 2002 and March 2003,

nearly a quarter of them to developing countries. The pace of outsourcing of key business

processes to the developing world also continues to increase.

The Sultanate of Oman occupying the easternmost corner of the Arabian Peninsula

serves as a gateway to the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean (Selway, 1997) and is therefore

strategically important for access to Asian, Arabic and African markets. Of the total

population of approximately 2.3 million, nearly 1 in 4 is an expatriate (Ministry of

Information, 2004).

Prior to 1970, Oman's economy was based mainly on agriculture and fishing,

although historically it had been a major trading nation with interests stretching to both sides

of the Persian Gulf and the East African coast. However its history during the late 19th and early 20th century was dominated by conflict, first between the Sultanate in Masqat and an imamate based in Nizwa, and subsequently a separatist revolt in southern Dhofar province. Modern development in Oman began when H.M. Sultan Qaboos was installed in power in 1970, overthrowing his father Said bin Taimur whose restrictive policies had kept Oman largely isolated from external influences. Oman's economy, like that of other oil producing countries in the region, is mainly dependent on oil revenues as the major source of income and in common with other Middle Eastern states has been heavily reliant on expatriate workers both for advanced technical and professional expertise and manual labour. By the 1980s, around the time of substantial falls in oil prices, the Sultan and his government recognised the limitations such dependence would have on the future development of the country. The acute shortage of skilled Omani manpower limited the country's ambitious development plans (Al-Lamki, 1998) and a policy of "Omanisation" was adopted, within a long-term development programme called "Vision 2020". This seeks to advance privatisation and free market policies and to develop Oman's human resources, upgrading skills and education as an engine for growth. The parallel programmes of economic liberalisation and Omanisation have resulted in a reduced proportion of national budget being derived from oil revenues and a public sector labour force now dominated by Omanis, with rapid increases in Omanisation in targeted sectors such as banking and finance, and hospitality. The broader developing private sector however continues to be dominated by expatriates.

In common with other states in the region, the population of Oman is predominantly young; it was estimated in 2005 that some 43% of the population were aged 15 or below. Levels of participation in educational and literacy in particular have increased dramatically since 1970. Currently literacy stands at approximately 80%, up from around 20% in 1970, and participation in elementary education has increased over the same period from just 3% to

over 80%. Education is free up to university level. In countries such as Oman, where the state plays a dominant role in national development, it is crucial for the government to develop effective HRD strategies (Budhwar *et al.*, 2002) beyond academic education. Thus, one of the main aims of the "Vision 2020" programme is to develop human resources and upgrade the skills of the Omani workforce through ongoing education and training (Ministry of Information, 1999, p. 89). This policy seems to be paying dividends. Budhwar *et al.*'s (2002) survey of 40 state owned enterprises in Oman demonstrated awareness of and enthusiasm for human resource development (HRD), in particular with regard to change management. However the function was reported to face limits to funding and was not seen as strategic. Furthermore, the nature of ownership placed restrictions on the flexibility of reward strategies, In a subsequent study, Al-Hamadi and Budhwar (2006) identified the perceived importance of religion, socialisation (i.e., cultural beliefs, values, norms, customs, rituals) and early experiences as factors influencing HRM in organizations in Oman. The significant expatriate workforce was also found to be influential in shaping HRM practice.

In summary, the development of Oman has increased rapidly in recent years. The country has undergone a transformation from a harshly ruled, isolationist sultanate into an economically liberalised monarchy seeking to integrate the country into the global economy. While the Sultan retains political authority, participation in the operation of the state has extended to universal suffrage in the 2003 elections to the (advisory) Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura). The developing emphasis on the effective use of all the resources of the country has lead to an increase in interest in particular in Human Resource Development. HRM more broadly is a new phenomenon in Oman. There remain many organisations, both in the public, private, and extensive state owned sectors, with no HRM departments. Arguably Omani organisations are practising Personnel Management rather than HRM. Despite the recognition of the skill shortages within the Omani population, many

organizations lack formal job descriptions and career planning for their employees. As will be discussed in detail in the next section, Islam and the traditional Arab culture seem to play a major role in the design and implementation of HRM policies and practices in Oman.

Impact of culture on HRM Practices: Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Numerous theories offer useful explanations about the ways in which social and organizational context influences HRM practices (e.g., general systems theory, institutional theory, societal effect theory, the logic of industrialization approach; see Jackson and Schuler, 1995 for a review). However, none of these theories explicitly discusses the role of culture in human resource management policies and practices. Within the cultural perspective, there are authors who take an interactionist position to suggest that culture influences some aspects of organizational practice more that others. For example, Tayeb (1995) suggested that the 'what' question in HRM might be universal (e.g., employee selection), but the 'how' question is culture-specific (e.g., relying on in-group networks vs. standardized tests). Similarly, others, such as Child (1981) assert that culture has a moderating effect on organizations. That is, even though the contingent factors help determine the organizational structure, culturally driven preferences influence the exercise of choice between alternative practices (Child, 1981: 318).

As one of the first attempts to explicitly relate culture to HRM practices, the theoretical Model of Culture Fit (MCF), was proposed by Kanungo and associates (Kanungo and Jaeger, 1990). The model was expanded and tested in ten countries (Canada, US, Germany, Israel, Romania, China, Pakistan, India, Turkey, and Russia) with the participation of 2,003 managers and employees (Aycan *et al*., 2000). The model asserts that the internal work culture is based on managerial beliefs and assumptions about two fundamental organizational elements: the task and the employees. Managers implement HRM practices

based on their assumptions on the nature of the task and of employees. These assumptions, in turn, are embedded in the socio-cultural context. For example, it was found that HRM practices that emphasized performance-reward contingency or job enrichment were based on the managerial assumption that it was possible to change and improve employee skills and behaviour. This assumption was held by managers in non-fatalistic socio-cultural contexts where people believed in the possibility of controlling the outcomes of one's actions.

The present study further contributes to the growing body of literature linking HRM practices to cultural context. The theoretical framework that is used in this study is the cultural orientations (CO) framework (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Mazneveski and DiStefano, 1995; Mazneveski and Peterson, 1997). While MCF establishes the link between culture and HRM by using culturally-embedded assumptions held by *managers*, CO framework in this study aims at linking the two by using *employees'* cultural orientations and preferences.

The Cultural Orientations Framework

The cultural orientations framework was initially proposed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), the orientations corresponding to a view of culture as a set of assumptions and deep-level values concerning relationships among humans and between humans and their environment. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) identified a set of four basic orientations with their eleven sub-dimensions (see Table 1 for detailed descriptions).

The human nature orientation How people see themselves and others. Is human nature inherently bad or good, fixed or changeable?

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The person-nature orientation People's relationship to their environment. Do people dominate over their environment, live in harmony with it, or are they subjugated by it?

The activity orientation Preference for being or doing. This deals with our mode of self-expression in our day-to-day lives.

The relational orientation People's relation with other people. This orientation has three subdivisions or dimensions: lineal (hierarchical), collateral (collectivistic), and individualistic.

Insert Table 1 about here

The relationship of cultural orientations to HRM practices has been tested in a number of studies. Sparrow and Wu (1998) used the framework to predict HRM preferences of Taiwanese employees. Similarly, Nyambegera, Sparrow and Daniels (2000) adapted the framework to explore the impact of cultural orientations on individual human resource management preferences in the Kenyan context. Recently, Maznevski and her colleagues (2002) tested the cultural orientations framework and its measurement (i.e., CPQ4) with data from five countries: Canada, Mexico, the Netherlands, Taiwan, and the United States. As mentioned above, this study attempts to link the cultural orientations of employees with their preference for HRM polices and practices in Oman. Before describing the expected relationships between cultural orientations and HRM practices, we first present our hypotheses pertaining to the cultural orientations held by Omani employees.

Cultural orientations of Omani employees

Tayeb (1997) aptly observed that "Religions in many countries, with either secular or religious constitutions, have a certain degree of influence on the cultural characteristics of

their people and their institutions" (1997: 354). This is especially valid for Islam. Oman is an Islamic country, although the Sultan supports religious tolerance and freedom of thought and belief. The majority of Oman's Arab population is Ibadhi Muslim, a moderately conservative but tolerant sect dating from the earliest days of Islam. Most businesses are run on Islamic principles. Because of the strong influence of Islam in day-to-day lives of the believers, it is expected that it has a significant influence on the way human resources are managed in organizations. However, there are few empirical studies which specifically examine value orientations and their impact on the HRM system in Islamic countries like Oman (Ali, 1992; Robertson *et al.*, 2002).

While Islam remains central to Omani identity, the changes it has experienced since 1970 are likely to have had a significant impact on younger Omanis. Studies by Egri and Ralston (2004), Ralston, *et al.*, (1999, both in China) and Mellahi and Guermat (2004, in India) all point to significant inter-generational cultural differences within nations undergoing rapid structural and political change. Inglehart's (1997) generation subculture theory suggests that "significant macrolevel social, political and economic events occurring during the birth cohort's impressionable pre-adulthood years result in generational identity comprised of a distinctive set of values beliefs, expectations and behaviours that remain relatively stable throughout a generations lifetime" (cited in Egri and Ralston, 2004: 210). These value sets become more pervasive as the generation becomes more powerful and influential. Moreover, greater subjective value is placed on those socioeconomic environmental aspects that, during youth, are in short supply. Therefore growing up in periods of insecurity and instability, as experienced in Oman before 1970, teaches survival values of materialism, conformity and respect for authority. The security and prosperity experienced since 1970 would suggest that employees below the age of approximately 40 years would be more likely to espouse values of egalitarianism, individualism and risk-tolerance. Indeed, managed industrialisation on this

argument will tends to promulgate a shift away from traditional (typically collectivist and conservative) values towards greater support for individualism, universalism and an openness to change. It should be remembered however that generational changes in culture are likely to be relatively small, not a wholesale switch from one orientation to another. Ralston *et al*. (1993) term this "crossvergence"; a crossover to a limited extent of one culture's values into another. Therefore, while generational differences in orientation might be expected, younger Omanis would still be expected to appear more Omani than Western in their cultural orientations.

Against this background, recent research by Kuehn and Al-Busaidi (2000; 2002) throw some light on the relationship to work among younger Omanis. On the whole, their research suggests that younger Omanis are relatively dissatisfied with work. In comparison with their older or expatriate colleagues, they tend to be less affectively committed to their current organisation and display less organisational citizenship behaviour, although levels of normative and continuance commitment were comparatively higher. This is attributed in part to their lack of influence in the workplace and also to government policies which restrict the movement of labour. However it does indicate that against a background of relatively high unemployment, despite the Omanisation policy, work for younger Omanis is not viewed as particularly central.

With this in mind, the following hypotheses are proposed regarding likely cultural orientations of Omani employees. Based on the Islamic tradition, the hypotheses reflect the *value* orientations of Omanis (i.e., how Muslims should or ought to behave). What people actually do in *practice*, also part of the culture, is not included in this analysis. Such practices are the products of plethora of factors such as tribal structure, level of exposure to global trends and values, education, age, or profession[2].

Human Nature Orientation. According to Islam, basic human nature is good and all humans are born good. It is the parents, society and the surrounding environment that have major effects on human nature. People can change from bad to good and from good to bad. The Prophet Mohammed said "Every child is born upon the '*Fitrah*' predisposition"; in other words, predisposed to goodness (Tafsir ibn Kathhir, 2000, p. 201). It appears unlikely that outside influences would significantly alter this perception, although the history of internal conflict within Oman may make older Omanis less supportive of this position. Therefore based on this premise it is hypothesized that,

Hypothesis 1:   Omanis believe that humans, by nature, are good.

Person-Nature Orientation. The relationship between a person and his / her environment is carefully guided in Islam, where it is stressed that people should maintain harmony with nature. The *Qur'an* states in more than one place that the God has created the earth for mankind to live in and use, and to enjoy its products. He warns of the danger of abusing it and, according to the *Qur'an,* a day will come when man will think that he has gained total control over the earth and that will be the cause of the end of life on earth. However, nature is controlled by the God, so whatever actions man takes to live with nature, adjust to nature, or control it are all with the Will of the God. Given that periods of insecurity are proposed to result in more materialistic values, older generation Omanis may have developed such a sense of mastery over nature. While younger Omanis have been more exposed to contrasting views on the relationship of man to nature, the sense of powerlessness identified by Kuehn and Al-Basaidi (2002) may limit their sense of influence or control. Therefore it is hypothesised that,

Hypothesis *2*:   Omanis are more likely to prefer harmony and subjugation, compared

to mastery, in their relationship with nature.

Activity Orientation. The 'being' orientation can be delineated in a number of values held

by Muslims, one of which is the concept of 'benevolence', which is displayed through

'goodness' and 'kindness', by being kind to others, doing good things to others, and being

able to feel the presence of God and closeness to God in one's daily thoughts and acts. All the

teachings of Islam urge individuals to give great care to inner development; to think carefully

before taking action. With regard to 'doing', Muslims are encouraged by the Qur'an and the

Sunnah to divide their time between work, worship and social activities (Tafsir ibn Kathhir,

2000). The Islamic Work Ethic (Ali, 1992) suggests that doing is a virtue to be valued ,and

recent Omani development may have reinforced this. Industrialisation tends to be

accompanied by a more individualistic achievement orientation and a higher propensity for

risk taking, thus emphasising doing and de-emphasising being. Hence, it is hypothesised that,

Hypothesis *3*:   Within the activity orientation the thinking, being and doing

orientations will all be high.

Relational Orientation. This dimension deals with how humans relate to each other. The

Qur'an has defined this relationship clearly (in Sorate Al- Hujurat, verse 13, page 517),

where the God says: *O' ye people, we have created you from a male and female. And we have*

made you nations and tribes that you could recognise each other. Lo' the most honourable of

you, in The sight of Allah is the best in taqwa (taqwa means righteousness and piety). To

Muslims, people are created equal in front of God in this life and thereafter, the only element

that distinguishes them from each other is their deeds. However hierarchical relations in day-

to-day activities are maintained. Respect for and obedience to parents, the family and

authority are required and emphasised in the *Qur'an,* associated with obedience to God and His Prophet. The hierarchical structure of Islamic society and the continued emphasis on the absolute rule of the Sultan, (notwithstanding limited participation in state affairs) is likely to reinforce the hierarchical orientation. Collectivism is also highly recommended in Islam. However, it has already been identified that collectivism is likely to be less valued and individualism more valued within industrialising economies. Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is formulated,

Hypothesis 4:   The relational orientation of Omanis will show a strong preference for collectivism and hierarchy, compared to individualism.

The cross-cultural literature shows that value orientations are not homogenous within countries and that there is a certain amount of diversity due to demographic characteristics of individuals (e.g., Buchholz, 1978; Clare and Sanford, 1979; Connor and Becker, 1994; Dickson and Buchholz, 1977; Heller *et al*., 1988; Lincoln *et al*., 1982). In addition to age, this research will explore whether differences exist in cultural orientations among Omani employees due to their gender, education level, work experience, and marital status. These factors will be control variables. However, we will also be able to examine the differences among employees based on the demographics, which will provide clues as to how to address the issue of diversity within the Omani workforce.

Impact of cultural orientation on preferences for HRM practices

Further expanding the scope of the Model of Culture Fit (Kanungo and Jaeger, 1990), Aycan (2005) proposed a typology of HRM practices embedded in three cultural contexts. In the first category, HRM practices vary according to their emphasis on group harmony and loyalty versus high performance. Aycan (2005) proposed that in cultural contexts characterized by collectivism, paternalism, femininity, and diffuseness, HRM practices emphasize loyalty, in-

group harmony and solidarity, whereas in cultures characterized by performance-orientation, future-orientation, and specificity, HRM practices emphasize recognition of individual differences and high performance. Group-oriented HRM practices favour group-based performance evaluation and reward allocation, rather than differentiation among individuals and allocation of rewards for the best performing individuals (Aycan, 2005). In the cultural orientations framework, "activity orientation - being" resembles the femininity dimension, whereas "activity orientation - doing" and "activity orientation - thinking" resemble performance- and future-orientations. Linking the cultural orientations to HRM practices, it is expected that group-oriented HRM practices will be preferred by individuals who value collectivism and quality of life, rather than work centrality.

Hypothesis 5:   Preference for group-oriented HRM practices will be positively related to collectivistic and being orientations, and negatively related to thinking and doing orientations.

In the second category in Aycan's (2005) typology, HRM practices vary according to their emphasis on status hierarchy versus egalitarianism. Hierarchy-oriented HRM practices include top-down decision making in performance evaluation, need determination for training, and career planning. Furthermore, loyalty and seniority are considered to be the most important factors in personnel decisions. Finally, communication patterns are also top-down, and dissemination of information is confined to those who hold high level managerial positions. Hierarchy-oriented HRM practices are expected to be preferred by employees who hold the belief that hierarchy of authority is the best way of structuring the society and its organizations (i.e., "human relation-hierarchical"). Such practices are also preferred by those who have low trust in humans; they perceive human nature not only as bad (i.e., "human nature – evil"), but also incapable of controlling and changing things happening in life (i.e., "relation to nature – mastery") no matter how much planning is involved (i.e., "activity

orientation – thinking"). Hierarchy in effect acts as a substitute control and coordination mechanism.

Hypothesis 6: Preference for hierarchy-oriented HRM practices will be positively related to hierarchy, subjugation and human nature-as-bad / evil orientations, and negatively related to mastery and thinking orientations.

The final category consists of HRM practices that are informal, loose and flexible, rather than formal. Informal and loose HRM practices include those such as loose HR planning, reliance on informal employee selection methodologies (e.g., unstructured interviews), unofficial and unsystematic performance appraisals, and short-term goal setting. Employees who do not believe in the usefulness of the rational approach in managing life events (i.e., "activity orientation – thinking, doing"), due to the possibility of fate intervening (i.e., "relation to nature – subjugation"), are likely to prefer loose and informal HRM practices. Furthermore, they believe that informality would enhance the quality of relationships (i.e., "activity orientation – being"). In contrast, those who are achievement-oriented would not prefer informal HRM practices so that fairness and balance among employees could be maintained (i.e., "relation to nature – harmony").

Hypothesis 7: Preference for informal / loose HRM practices will be negatively related to *mastery*, *thinking, doing, and harmony* orientations, and positively related to *being* and *subjugation* orientations.

Method

Participants

In total, 715 employees working in Omani organizations participated in this study. 1,500 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 712 useable responses were received, achieving an overall response rate of 47.5%. The sample was comprised primarily of Omanis (90 %) with only 10% expatriates. In order to test the hypotheses with a single ethnic group (i.e., Omanis), expatriates are not included in the analyses. Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the Omani respondents. More than two-thirds of the respondents were males. The mean age was 30.98 years old, ranging from 18 to 67. Respondents were, on the whole, well-educated. More than half (61.6 %) had obtained a university or a college degree, an additional 11.9 % holding a postgraduate qualification, 22.9 % had completed secondary school education, and only 3.3 % had not reached the latter education level. This compares favourably with Robertson *et al*.'s (2002) sample wherein less than half the Omani sample had a college degree or higher.

The sample initially included ten occupational categories, although these were regrouped into three categories on the basis of their authority and role within the organisation: managerial staff (top management, middle management, head of sections); professionals (administrators, academics, medical doctors, nurses, engineers); and support staff (clerks / secretaries). The largest percentage of the sample (39.6 %) belonged to the support staff, closely followed by the professional group (37.7 %) and managerial staff (22.7 %). The sample was drawn from six organizations: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH), Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel), Civil Service, Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Water Resources and the Environment, and Petroleum Development Oman LLC (PDO). None of these enterprises operates entirely in the private sector, all being either public sector or state owned enterprises. Hence, the type of organization is not included in the statistical analyses. The mean tenure in the organization

was 8.19 years (SD = 5.32), ranging from 1 to 30 years. Married respondents outnumbered single respondents by 3 to 1.

Insert Table 2 about here

Measurement

Data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire comprising three sections. The first section assessed cultural orientation, the second section assessed HRM preferences, and the last section assessed demographic characteristics.

Cultural orientations.

To assess the cultural orientations, the Cultural Perspectives Questionnaire (CPQ4) developed by Maznevski, *et al*. (1994) was used. The questionnaire was piloted before collecting data for the main study. The questionnaire had 79 items generated to capture eleven cultural dimensions. Respondents indicated their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). A similar questionnaire has been used by Sparrow and Wu (1998) in a study of Taiwanese employees, by Nyambegera *et al*. (2000) in a study of Kenyan employees and by Maznevski, *et al*. (2002) on a large study across 5 different countries.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted to test the fit of data to the theoretical dimensions. The data had a modest fit to the theoretical model (χ^2 = 32.45, p > 0.5; GFI = .78, CFI = .72). Consequently, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted, which yielded a 13-factor solution. Seven items had either low factor loadings (i.e., below .40) or loaded on more than one factor. After eliminating these items, the secondary factor analysis revealed a 9-factor structure. Individualism (RI) and collectivism (RC) were merged into a single factor with high scores indicating a collectivistic orientation. The literature is at variance over whether individualism and collectivism should be regarded as two separate dimensions (e.g.

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Ralston *et al*, 1999) or opposite poles of a singly continuum (Robertson *et al*., 2002). The present dataset supports a single bipolar dimension. The two person-nature scales, (human nature-as-good (HNG) and human nature-as-changeable (HNC)) also merged into a single factor with high scores indicating a human nature-as-bad / evil orientation. This 9-factor solution explained 42.05 % of the variance. The complete results of the factor analysis and scale reliabilities are included in the appendix.

Of the initial eleven scales, *hierarchy orientation*, *activity orientation – thinking*, *activity orientation – doing*, *subjugation*, *mastery* and *harmony* all retained all their original items. The *activity orientation – being* scale retained 6 of its original 7 items. The new *collectivism orientation* comprised 14 items from both individualism and collectivism scales, and the human nature-as-evil/unchangeable comprised 7 of the person-nature items. The reliability coefficients for these scales, ranging from .53 to .76 are at best modest (see appendix), however they are similar to those reported by Sparrow and Wu (1998), Nyambegera *et al*. (2000), and Mazenveski, *et al*. (2002).

Preferences for HRM policies and practices.

This section assessed the preferences of participants for different HRM policies and practices in areas including planning, recruitment, performance evaluation, salaries and allowances, training, and employee relations / communication. The measure was based on Schuler and Jackson's (1987) measure, as used by Sparrow and Wu (1998), Nyambegera *et al*. (2000), and Chandakumara (2003). Each item was presented as pair of alternative statements measured on a five point, bipolar rating scale. For example, the statement 'The organisation should consider cost issues before recruiting the best people' was placed on the right hand side and paired with the alternative statement on the left hand side 'The organisation should design jobs to attract and retain the best people without regard to cost'. Participants were

asked to indicate their preference for how their organisations should conduct specific HRM policies and practices by circling a number from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated strong agreement with the policy on the left and 5 indicated strong agreement with the policy on the right hand side; a score of 3 reflected a neutral attitude to the policy.

Following Aycan's (2005) typology, the items were grouped in three categories. The *group-oriented HRM practices* comprised 3 items capturing the group-based performance appraisal and reward allocation. A sample item was preference for "Focus performance evaluation on the results of group or division to which the individual belongs", rather than "Focus performance evaluation on the personal achievements of the individual". The items in this scale demonstrated a modest internal consistency ($\alpha = .61$). The *hierarchy-oriented HRM practices* comprised 13 items tapping the level of hierarchical vs. egalitarian decision making in HRM processes. Preference for hierarchy-oriented HRM practices was evident if the respondent showed more agreement to the following sample statement: "Let the individual employee have a minimum say on his / her preferred career paths and identify his / her training needs", than its opposite: "Enable individual employee to have a significant say on his / her preferred career paths and identify his / her own training needs". The internal consistency among these items was .65. Finally, preference for loose and informal HRM practices and policies was captured by 9 items ($\alpha = .60$). Those who had high preference for informal HRM practices and policies agreed more with items such as "Create unofficial evaluation systems in which emphasis is put on face-to-face feedback" than with their opposites "Create official evaluation systems in which forms are always filled out and processed".

Results

The main purpose of the study was to examine the cultural orientations of the Omani workforce and how they related to preferences for HRM policies and practices. To test the first set of hypotheses pertaining to the cultural orientations of the Omani workforce, we computed the mean scores of the nine cultural orientations as well as their correlations with the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Hypothesis 1 stated that Omanis were expected to believe that humans by nature are good. Table 3 shows that they scored in the middle on this dimension ($\underline{M} = 4.14$), which did not support the hypothesis. Education level was strongly associated with this belief, the lower the education, the higher the belief that human beings are by nature evil and unchangeable. Both youth and lower occupational level were associated with a stronger belief that humans by nature were evil and unchangeable.

Insert Table 3 about here

Hypothesis 2 predicted that Omanis would have a stronger orientation towards harmony with nature and subjugation to nature, compared to mastery of nature. The data supported the hypothesis with regards to the harmony orientation ($\underline{M} = 5.57$), but not with regards to subjugation and mastery orientations ($\underline{M} = 3.99$, $\underline{M} = 5.63$, respectively). Omanis showed a strong orientation towards harmony and mastery, but a moderate level of subjugation in their relationship with nature. Therefore, the data provide partial support for the second hypothesis. Age and job experience were positively correlated with mastery and harmony orientations. The relationship of age to mastery in particular supports the observations made regarding the perceived powerlessness of younger Omanis. As participants get older and more experienced, they seek harmony as well as control in life. Education correlated negatively with both mastery and subjugation. Those with lower levels of education placed a stronger value on subjugation to nature ($r = -.364$, $p < .001$), than they did on mastery over nature ($r = -.09$, $p < .05$). Finally, participants holding lower level jobs

were more likely to believe in subjugation in their relationship with nature, compared to those holding high level managerial jobs.

In *Hypothesis 3*, Omanis were predicted to show strong preferences for thinking, being and doing orientations. The data provided partial support for this hypothesis; participants scored high on both thinking and doing orientations ($\underline{M}$ = 6.07, 5.22, respectively), but low on being orientation ($\underline{M}$ = 2.89). Age and work experience were positively correlated with both thinking and doing orientations. Higher levels of education were negatively correlated with all three activity orientations. Married participants showed a lower preference for thinking and doing and a higher preference for being orientation, compared to those who were unmarried.

Hypothesis 4 stated that Omanis would have a stronger orientation towards collectivism and hierarchy than towards individualism. As can be seen from Table 3, Omanis showed preferences slightly above the mid-point on both individualism-collectivism (as a single dimension) and hierarchy orientations ($\underline{M}$ = 4.42, 4.09, respectively). Therefore, the data did not provide a strong support for this hypothesis. The collectivistic orientation was positively correlated with age and work experience; Older, more experienced employees prefering collectivism more than younger and less experienced employees. Hierarchy orientation was negatively correlated with gender, education, and occupational status, and females preferred it more than males. The higher the education and the higher job level, the weaker the preference for the hierarchy orientation.

The second set of hypotheses concerned the relationships between the cultural orientations and the preferences for HRM policies and practices. Table 4 summarizes the results of the multiple regression analyses, where three criteria (i.e., group-oriented, hierarchy-oriented, and loose and informal HRM practices) were regressed on nine cultural orientations, controlling for the effects of the demographic variables.

Hypothesis 5 suggested that the preference for group-oriented HRM practices would be positively related to collectivistic and being orientations, and negatively related to thinking and doing orientations. Results presented in Table 4 provide strong support for the hypothesis. *Hypothesis 6* predicted that hierarchy-oriented HRM practices would be positively related to hierarchy, subjugation and human nature-as-bad / evil orientations, and negatively related to mastery and thinking orientations. The data also fully support this hypothesis. Finally, according to *Hypothesis 7,* the preference for loose and informal HRM practices was expected to be negatively related to mastery, thinking, doing, and harmony orientations, and positively related to being and subjugation orientations. Data partially supported this hypothesis; the standardized beta weights for mastery and subjugation orientations were not significant. Although not hypothesized, preference for informal HRM practices was also positively associated with collectivism orientation. It is worth noting that demographic variables (i.e., gender, age, education, work experience, occupational status) explained very little variance (1-6 %) in preferences of HRM practices.

Discussion

Oman is among the most rapidly developing countries in the Middle East. It is undergoing radical transformation from being a country reliant on agriculture and fishing to one relying on a skilled and educated workforce for economic and national development. Oman's vision for the coming decades is to raise the skill level and competencies of the Omani labour force. To achieve this goal, it is imperative to develop human resource management practices that are aligned with the values, beliefs and preferences of the Omani workforce but which support the vision of a high skill economy. This study contributes to the cross-cultural

management literature by examining the cultural orientations of Omani employees and linking them to their preferences of HRM policies and practices.

While findings provided moderate support for the hypotheses pertaining to the influences shaping the cultural orientations of Omani employees, they provided strong support for the relationships between cultural orientations and HRM preferences. With respect to cultural orientations, Omanis were found to be strong supporters of thinking, mastery, harmony, and doing orientations (scores 5 and above), these being aligned with the Islamic Work Ethic discussed by Ali (1992) and tally to an extent with Robertson *et al.*'s (2002) findings. Work-related activities and goals are important, and individual accomplishments should be duly rewarded; rationality, planning and control over events in ones everyday life are valued. Despite the emphasis on rationality, and a performance and control orientation, Omanis also placed high value on harmony and balance in life. The sample scored around the centre point of the scale (4) on collectivism, hierarchy and human nature-as-evil orientations. There was mild support for the belief that one's workgroup was more important than one's own individual performance and that the individual had to sacrifice his / her interests for the good of all. There was also doubt about whether hierarchy of authority would be the best form of organizing societies and institutions. The notion that 'humans by nature are good' was questioned. Finally, Omanis scored lowest on the two dimensions of subjugation to nature and being orientation. For this sample, keeping control of events and getting work done were more important than letting things happen and enjoying life. Although this finding was not entirely in line with our initial hypotheses, it is consistent with the findings relating to mastery, planning, and performance orientation.

In summary, the sample showed a stronger orientation towards mastery, thinking and doing, and a weaker orientation towards hierarchy, collectivism, being, subjugation, and human nature-as-good than had been expected. There may be a number of explanations for

these unexpected findings. First of all, it must be remembered that the data were obtained from a male-dominated, well-educated and professional sample of the Omani workforce employed in the government or state owned sector. This education level is higher than previously reported for studies in Oman, (Robertson *et al*, 2002) and the gender balance also illustrates a slight increase in the proportion of women in the workforce (from 25% in 2002 to 30%). The Omani government does not keep figures of the proportion of women in the workforce but prides itself on the participation of women in Omani society. The absence of respondents from the private sector however is noteworthy. While the majority of Omanis are employed in the public or state owned sectors, there is an increasing Omanisation of the private sector. Differences in work related attitudes and values between the two sectors (e.g. Solomon, 1986; Karl and Sutton, 1998; Naff and Crum, 1999) may result in this sample representing a self-selecting sub-group of overall Omani value sets. These authors tend to report a greater preference for individual and extrinsic rewards among private sector employees while public sector workers value intrinsic rewards more highly, Al-Lamki's (2005) study identifies a general preference among Omanis for government jobs offering convenience and security.

Second, our hypotheses were mainly drawn from the analysis of Islamic values. It may be possible that these values are not fully incorporated into work life. It is also possible that traditional Islamic values might have changed over time and been replaced by contemporary ones, especially in the work context. The findings of the present study are in line with the findings of one of the most recent and comprehensive projects on cross-cultural values and work behaviour: the GLOBE project (House, *et al.*, 2004). The GLOBE project is based on data from managers and employees in 62 different countries, with a Middle-Eastern cluster comprising Kuwait, Egypt, Morocco, Qatar, and Turkey. Although Oman is not included in the project, the countries represented in the GLOBE's Middle-Eastern cluster

showed geographical and cultural similarity to Oman. Parallel to the findings of the present study, the Middle-Eastern cluster in the GLOBE project was found to placed high value on future and performance orientations (resembling thinking and doing orientations, respectively) and a low value on power distance (resembling hierarchy orientation) (Javidan, House, and Dorfman, 2004).

Among the demographic variables, age, education and work experience were the factors most strongly correlated with cultural orientations. As participants get older and more experienced in work life, their inclinations towards collectivism, thinking, mastery, doing, harmony, and human nature-as-good orientations becomes more pronounced. While generational value differences were explored, data did not support the hypothesised differences emerging from a generational subculture approach, although age differences were clearly apparent in many of the structures investigated. It may be that a life stage model (Erikson 1997) of value shift is more appropriate; as people age they become more collectivistic, conforming and concerned for wider societal welfare, and less individualistic, autonomous and concerned with personal prestige and control. The significant effect of age on 6 of the 9 reported orientations supports Mellahi and Guermat's (2004) contention that in developing economies, the younger generation moves away from traditional values. Only education level was more influential than age in shaping values. Furthermore, education was negatively correlated with thinking, mastery, hierarchy, subjugation, doing, being, and human nature-as-evil orientations. The national policy of continuing to develop the education and skills of the population therefore is likely to have a continuing impact on values over the coming years.

Older, better educated, or more experienced participants exhibit a stronger preference for controlling events in their lives, planning and performance orientation than those who are young, less well educated or inexperienced. Diversity of values has the potential to enhance

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organizational performance. However, unless managed carefully, diversity may constitute a threat to organizational solidarity and teamwork. Given that the values influence employee preferences of HRM policies and practices as shown in this and other studies, it may be necessary to adjust the HRM policies and practices to the values and expectations of different groups of employees.

Education and work experience were not only related to cultural orientations, but also influenced preferences for HRM policies and practices. In this study, hierarchy-oriented HRM practices were preferred more by those with lower levels of education. The higher the work experience, the lower the preference for group-oriented HRM practices.

The main research question in this study was the extent to which cultural orientations influenced preferences for HRM policies and practices. Data confirmed the majority of the hypothesized relationships between cultural orientations and HRM preferences. Employees favouring collectivism and maintenance of high quality of life preferred group-oriented HRM practices (i.e., group-based performance evaluation and reward allocation), compared to those emphasizing the importance of individual achievement and rational decision making. Hierarchy-oriented HRM practices (e.g., personnel decisions based on loyalty and seniority; top-down decision making concerning performance evaluations and training needs; keeping critical information to the top level executives) were preferred by employees who believed in the necessity to maintain status hierarchy in society and organizations. They also believed that humans by nature are bad and had to be controlled by those who were in positions of authority. Finally, Informal/Loose HRM practices (e.g., reliance on informal evaluations in recruitment and selection; loose HR planning; ad hoc decision making when determining training needs) were favoured by those who were *not* highly achievement-, planning-, and goal-oriented. Unexpectedly, mastery and subjugation orientations were not related with the preference for loose and informal HRM practices. This may be due to the fact that some

employees believed that controlling events in business life would be diminished by loose and informal HRM practices, whereas others believed that it would be enhanced by the same.

The findings of this study contribute to the literature in several ways. First, they confirm the findings of recent research showing that variations in values, beliefs and assumptions exist even within a relatively homogenous cultural context (e.g., Wagner, 1995). Researchers as well as practitioners should take this fact into account when studying organizational phenomena, and designing and implementing managerial practices. This study demonstrates the extent to which demographic characteristics of the respondents, particularly age, education, and work experience, can explain the variance in cultural orientations and preferences for certain management practices. Such variables are often overlooked in cross-cultural research.

Second, this study pointed out that in transitioning societies, cultural values and preferences undergo change. The stereotypical perception of the Middle-Eastern countries placing high value on collectivism, status hierarchy and quality of life is challenged by the findings of the study. In the case of Oman, the country's vision to transform the society to meet the demands of globalization seems to be reflected in changing values placing more emphasis on achievement, planning, and control. Omani employees did *not* show a strong preference for HRM policies and practices that were group- and hierarchy-oriented, and informal. They seemed to favour a 'professional' approach in managing people and organizations in which there would be less reliance on informal networks, nepotism, groupism, and authority hierarchy. This contrasts with the historical structure of Omani society, based on tribal allegiance and extended obligations. Of course, transferring values and preferences into practice will be a challenge, but developing an understanding of employee attitudes and expectations is the first critical step in changing behaviour.

Establishing relationships between employees' cultural orientations and their preferences for HRM policies and practices is another contribution of this study. There are few studies in the literature systematically linking cultural values to HRM practices (e.g., Aycan *et al*., 2000; Nyambegera *et al*., 2000; Sparrow and Wu, 1997). Accumulation of this type of research will contribute to theoretical advancements in international and cross-cultural HRM literature.

Despite its contribution, this research is not without limitations, in particular the extent to which it generalises beyond Oman. The field work was carried out in Arabic, with the majority of questionnaires translated from English to Arabic and back translated from Arabic to English. While all the translations were done by the local researcher and corrected by a professional in order to guarantee the highest degree of accuracy, some elements of loss of meaning or misunderstanding might have occurred. Second, the research findings were based on a relatively small sample in each organisation. Nevertheless, this is the largest study of its kind carried out in Oman and the first to explicitly link HR preferences to culture, and therefore extends the scope of the literature. Third, the research was limited to two organisations from the semi-private sector and four from the public sector. This may limit the generalisability of the results to private sector organisations. Fourth, this study was based on self-reported values and preferences of participants; this methodology could have evoked a social desirability effect in responses. Finally, the measures used in this study reported low reliability for a number of scales. While this is consistent with similar studies it remains a major limitation of this research.

Future studies should test and validate the findings of this study across different industries and especially private sector organisations which are on the increase in Oman. To highlight the context-specific nature of HRM research and test the established stereotype regarding similarity of management systems in the Gulf region, comparative studies among

Gulf state countries should be conducted. The present study recommends extra refinement to the cultural value orientation questionnaire to suit an Arab Islamic context as some scales showed poor reliability. Future studies may include open-ended questions regarding what aspects of national culture and national institutions significantly influence HRM in Oman. Issues related to gender, unions, legislation, localisation, perceptions of expatriates, Omanisation and Gulf cooperation, which have significant implications for HRM systems need to be examined at length. The key challenges faced by both local and international managers regarding management of their human resources in the global business environment need to be examined. For example, on the one hand, there is an increased emphasis on Omanisation and adherence to Islamic principles, yet on the other hand, globalisation imposes pressures to adopt global standardised HRM practices and policies. The most important issue to tackle in future research and practice is to find out the ways in which the gap between the actual and desired HRM practices could be minimized.

Authors Note.

1. Zeynep Aycan was involved in this project during her sabbatical at Aston Business School, Aston University, UK.

2. We would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

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Table 1. *Descriptions of Eleven Cultural Dimensions in the Cultural Orientations*

Framework and Sample Items

Human Nature - Good/Evil (HNG)	Beliefs of a society that people are either born good or bad. Employers and employees do not trust each other, and as a result employers will try to impose a strict control over employees. *"If employees do not submit receipts for their expenses, they are likely to lie about how much they spent"*
Human Nature- Changeable (HNC)	Belief of a society that anyone can change from good to bad and from bad to good. *"Anyone's basic nature can change"*
Relation to Nature - Subjugation (RNS)	Belief of a society that people's life is destined or controlled by supernatural forces; thus whatever actions societies and individuals take have little influence on the outcomes of events. "*We have little influence on the outcome of events in our lives"*
Relations to Nature-Mastery (RNM)	Belief of a society that human beings have a significant effect on the events in their lives and can do almost anything. *"Given enough time and resources, people can do almost anything"*
Relation to Nature-Harmony (RNH)	Belief that the most effective businesses are those that work together in harmony with each other and the environment. The culture of such a society emphasizes balance in the elements of the environment. "*It is important to achieve harmony and balance in all aspects of life"*
Activity- Being (AB)	Belief of a society that one works to live, and enjoys all aspects of life even at the cost of not getting work done. This kind of society emphasizes quality of life to financial accomplishment. *"Quality of life is more important than financial accomplishments"*
Activity- Doing (AD)	Belief of a society in living to work; such a society puts more emphasis on work related activities and goals, and rewards are based on work accomplishments. *"Hard work is always commendable"*
Activity- Thinking (AT)	Belief of a society to weigh every aspect of business decisions very carefully. Such a society uses a careful logical analysis to reach a predictable business decision and avoids surprise and high risk. *"It is always better to stop and plan than to act in haste"*
Human Relation- Individual (RI)	Belief of a society in a philosophy that encourages the independence and self- interest of its members; such a society also rewards individuals for performance and expects individuals to be accountable. "*Society work best when each person serves his or her own interest"*
Human Relation- Collective (RC)	Belief that one's workgroup or unit is more important than one's own individual performance. In such a culture, society expects individuals to sacrifice their own interest for the good of all. *"Every person on a team should be responsible for the performance of everyone else on the team"*

| Human Relation- Hierarchical (RH) | Belief that hierarchy of authority is the best form of organization. People at higher levels in organizations have the responsibility to make decisions for people below them and maintain a distance between leaders and followers.

"A hierarchy of authority is the best form of organization" |

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of the sample.

	Value Label	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Gender (N=641)	Male	454	70.8
	Female	187	29.2
Age (N=640)	18-25	120	18.75
	26-30	218	34.06
	31-35	177	27.65
	36-40	83	12.96
	41-45	26	0.04
	46-50	8	0.01
	51-55	6	0.01
	56-67	2	0.003
Educational level (N=641)	Ph.D.	14	2.2
	MSc.	62	9.7
	BSc.	246	38.4
	Diploma	149	23.2
	Secondary School	147	22.9
	Preparatory School	21	3.3
	Elementary School	2	0.3
Occupation (N=640)	Top management	51	8.0
	Middle management	48	7.5
	Head of a section	46	7.2
	Administrator	46	7.2
	Academic	17	2.7
	Medical doctor	8	1.2
	Engineer	46	7.2
	Technician	46	7.2
	Nurse	76	11.9
	Clerk/secretary	254	39.6
Length of service (N=640)	1-5 years	243	37.98
	6-10 years	176	27.2
	11-15 years	173	27.03
	16-20 years	33	0.05
	21-25 years	11	0.02
	26-30 years	4	0.006
Marital status (N= 641)	Married	457	71.3
	Single	173	27.0
	Other	11	1.7

Table 3. *Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations among the study variables*

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender[1]	1.29	.45	-	-.134**	.174**	-.066	-.193**	-.136**	.004	.041	-.018
2. Age	30.99	6.27		-	-.395**	.200**	.314**	.709**	-.097*	-.014	.110**
3. Marital status[2]	1.30	.50			-	-.076	-.103*	-.367**	.024	-.047	-.201**
4. Education[3]	4.34	1.11				-	.504**	-.058	-.315**	-.364**	-.090*
5. Occupation[4]	1.76	0.89					-	.150**	-.233**	-.180**	-.060
6. Experience	8.19	5.35						-	-.007	.076	.137**
7. Human nature - evil	4.14	.93							-	.417**	.211**
8. Subjugation	3.99	1.06								-	.210**
9. Mastery	5.63	.79									-
10. Harmony	5.57	.81									
11. Being	2.98	1.08									
12. Doing	5.22	.74									
13. Thinking	6.07	.75									
14. Collectivism	4.42	.71									
15. Hierarchy	4.09	1.00									
16. HRM-group	2.26	.97									
17. HRM-hierarchy	2.34	.58									
18. HRM-informal	2.20	.62									

Notes. N = 641;
*p< .05; **p< .01
1. 1= female, 2 = male
2. 1 = unmarried, 2 = married
3. ranges from 1 = elementary school to 7 = Ph.D.
4. 1 = clerk / secretary, 2 = professional, 3 = high level managerial

Table 3 (continued)

	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. Gender[1]	.048	-.051	.008	.046	-.064	-.118**	-.051	-.064	.030
2. Age	.187**	-.069	.112**	.125**	.165**	-.036	-.071	-.054	-.029
3. Marital status[2]	-.172**	.105**	-.139**	-.185**	-.008	-.064	.052	.034	.068
4. Education[3]	-.021	-.130**	-.161**	-.094*	-.067	-.247**	.068	-.188**	-.036
5. Occupation[4]	.030	.066	.126**	-.085*	.73	-.114**	.076	.033	.018
6. Experience	.165**	-.057	.147**	.129**	.081*	.043	-.119**	.035	.006
7. Human nature -evil	.146**	.200**	.313**	.238**	.222**	.321**	-.068	.171**	-.043
8. Subjugation	.138**	.356**	.271**	.150**	.252**	.356**	-.031**	.236**	.073
9. Mastery	.562**	-.045	.477**	.650**	.295**	.220**	-.117**	-.168**	-.201**
10. Harmony	-	-.080*	.489**	.639**	.312**	.161**	-.108**	-.184**	-.272**
11. Being		-	.010	-.199**	.323**	.284**	.185**	.255**	.232**
12. Doing			-	.549**	.339**	.334**	-.205**	-.051	-.224**
13. Thinking				-	.311**	.193**	-.235**	-.232**	-.361**
14. Collectivism					-	.161**	-.074	.068	.041
15. Hierarchy						-	-.057**	.234**	.013**
16. HRM-group							-	.057	.298**
17. HRM-hierarchy								-	.438**
18. HRM-informal									-

Notes. N = 641;
*p< .05; **p< .01
1. 1= female, 2 = male
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Table 4. *Multiple regression analyses testing the effect of cultural orientations on HRM preferences*

	Preference for Group - Oriented HRM practices			Preference for Hierarchy - Oriented HRM practices			Preference for Loose / Informal HRM practices		
	β	R^2	ΔR^2	β	R^2	ΔR^2	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1: Control variables									
Gender[1]	-.057	.034		-.077	.064		.023	.01	
Age	.003			-.070			-.030		
Marital status[2]	-.010			.010			.076		
Education[3]	.040			-.253***			-.057		
Experience	-.156*			.061			.051		
Occupation[4]	.069			.095*			.062		
Step 2: Cultural Orientations									
Gender[1]	-.039	.128	.094***	-.022	.234	.170***	.076	.212	.211***
Age	-.001			-.054			-.011		
Marital status[2]	-.045			-.047			-.010		
Education[3]	.054			-.134**			-.034		
Experience	-.135*			.081			.075		
Occupation[4]	-.001			.060			-.009		
Human nature - evil	-.007			.089*			-.047		
Subjugation	.009			.120**			.051		
Mastery	.055			-.111*			.043		
Harmony	.075			-.062			-.096*		
Being	.156***			.077			.126**		
Doing	-.133**			-.027			-.108*		
Thinking	-.217***			-.206***			-.311***		
Collectivism	.107*			.057			.123**		
Hierarchy	-.050			.181***			.036		
F	5.641***			11.704***			10.310***		

*N = 641; *p<.05; **p<.01 *** p< .001*

1. 1= female, 2 = male,   2. 1 = unmarried, 2 = married
3. From 1 = elementary school to 7 = Ph.D.   4. 1 = clerk / secretary, 2 = professional, 3 = high level managerial

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Factor 1. Collectivism									
We should try to avoid depending on others. (R)	.82								
It is natural to put your own interests ahead of others. (R)	.78								
Society works best when each person serves his or her own interest. (R)	.75								
Ultimately, you are answerable only to yourself. (R)	.65								
Adults should strive to become independent from their parents. (R)	.63								
An employee's reward should be based mainly on his or her own performance. (R)	.58								
People tend to think of themselves first, before they think of others. (R)	.56								
One's responsibility for family members should go beyond one's parents and children.	.55								
Every person on a team should be responsible for the performance of everyone else on the team.	.52								
Any employee's rewards should be based mainly on the workgroup or unit's performance.	.50								
Good team members subordinate their own goals and thoughts to those of the team.	.49								
Society works best when people willingly make sacrifices for the betterment of everyone.	.48								
It is important not to stand out too much in a team.	.46								
Every person has a responsibility for all others in his or her work unit or department.	.44								
Factor 2. Activity Orientation-Thinking									
It is important to think things through carefully before acting on them.		.77							
It is always better to stop and plan than to act in haste.		.74							
People should always think carefully before they act.		.65							
The outcomes of a work decision can be predicted accurately by logical analysis of that decision.		.60							

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Even if it takes more time, administrative decisions should always be made based on analysis, not intuition.		.58							
All administrative decisions should be analyzed from every possible angle before they are implemented.		.45							
A logical argument is as persuasive as visible evidence that something will work.		.42							
No matter what the situation, it is always worth the extra time it takes to develop a comprehensive plan.		.41							

Factor 3. Relationship to Nature - Mastery

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Given enough time and resources, people can do almost any thing.			.88						
A good manager should take control of problem situations and resolve them quickly.			.86						
We can have significant effects on the events in our lives.			.65						
With enough knowledge and resources, any poor-performing work can be turned around.			.62						
Good performance comes from taking control of one's work.			.55						
Humans should try to control natural surrounding environment whenever possible.			.54						
It is important to try to prevent problems you may encounter in your life.			.49						

Factor 4. Relational Orientation – Hierarchical

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Organizations should have separate facilities, such as eating areas, for higher-level management.				.79					
People at higher levels in organizations have a responsibility to make important decisions for people below them.				.67					
People at lower levels in organizations should carry out the request of people at higher levels without any objection.				.56					
The highest-ranking manager in a team should take the lead.				.55					
A hierarchy of authority is the best form of organization.				.53					
People at lower levels in the organization should not have much power in an organization.				.45					
Employees should be rewarded based on their level in the organization.				.43					

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Factor 5. Relationship to Nature – Subjugation									
We have little influence on the outcome of events in our lives.					.67				
People should not try to change the paths their lives are destined to take.					.65				
Whatever is going to happen will happen, no matter what actions people take.					.55				
Most things are determined by forces we cannot control.					.54				
One's success is mostly a matter of good fortune.					.43				
It's better to be lucky than smart.					.41				
Factor 6. Activity orientation – Doing									
It's human nature to place more importance on work than on other activities.						.76			
Hard work is always commendable.						.74			
People who work hard are the ones who make the society function.						.66			
It is important to get work done before relaxing.						.56			
Once you set a goal it is important to work towards it until it is achieved.						.53			
Effective managers use spare time to get things done.						.51			
Accomplishing a great deal of work is more rewarding than spending time in leisure.						.49			
One should live to work, not work to live.						.44			
Sitting around without doing anything is a waste of time.						.43			
People who work very hard deserve a great deal of respect.						.40			
Factor 7. Activity Orientation – Being									
If you do not like your work environment you should quit your job.							.78		
It is best to live for the moment.							.75		
It is important to do what you want, when you want.							.65		
People should take time to enjoy all aspects of life, even if it means not getting work done.							.61		

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
You should not worry about working when you do not feel like working.							.52		
It is best to leave problem situations alone to see if they work out on their own.							.50		
Factor 8. Relation to Nature – Harmony									
All living things are equal and deserve the same care and consideration.								.80	
It's important to achieve balance among divisions and units within an organization.								.76	
It is important to achieve harmony and balance in all aspects of life.								.73	
When considering a design of a new building, harmonizing with the environment surroundings is a very important consideration.								.71	
It is our responsibility to conserve the balance of elements in our environment.								.66	
The most effective organizations are those, which work together in harmony with their environment.								.54	
Many of the world's problems occur because of our attempts to control natural forces in the world.								.43	
Factor 9. Human Nature – Evil and Unchangeable									
If employees do not submit receipts for their expenses, they are likely to lie about how much they spent.									.67
You should be suspicious of everybody.									.58
In general, you cannot trust workers with keys to the building they work in.									.54
You can't trust anyone without proof.									.50
If supervisors do not always check when employees come and go, employees will probably lie about how many hours they work.									.48
It is possible for people whose basic nature is good to change and become bad.									.45
In general, bad people cannot change their ways.									.44
Eigenvalues	4.2	3.8	3.2	2.8	2.2	1.9	1.7	1.4	1.1
Cronbach's alpha	.56	.76	.54	.57	.59	.55	.56	.58	.53

Note. (R) Reverse coded items.