EFFECTS OF UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE ON LEADERSHIP STYLES IN MALAYSIAN CULTURE

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between uncertainty avoidance and leadership styles (Paternalistic, authentic and democratic) in Malaysian Culture. A cross-sectional field survey was conducted and a sample of 344 doctors was collected from Healthcare sector of Malaysia. Results of linear regression analysis revealed a significant influence of cultural dimension, uncertainty avoidance on leadership styles (paternalistic, authentic, democratic). On the basis of these results, it has been concluded that low uncertainty avoidance culture of Malaysia provides a supportive environment to leaders who adopted paternalistic, authentic and democratic leadership styles. A better understanding of the cultural aspect, uncertainty avoidance will help the leaders to improve the relationship with their followers by understanding what type of leadership style is effective in different societies. Implications and future research directions are suggested.*

Keywords: *Paternalistic Leadership Style, Authentic Leadership Style, Democratic Leadership Style, Uncertainty Avoidance.*

INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization, organizations need the leaders who can motivate, and guide the workforce to achieve organizational goals. Without strong and effective leadership, it might be difficult for the organization to achieve favorable results. CEO of Coca-Cola stated that "*as economic borders come down, cultural barriers go up, presenting new challenges and opportunities in business*"(Javidan & House, 2001). It is an established fact that leaders' style, personality, and attitude are strongly influenced by the culture (Den Hartog, House, Hanges, Ruiz-Quintanilla, & Dorfman, 1999; Dickson, Castaño, Magomaeva, & Den Hartog, 2012; Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges, Dastmalchian, & House, 2012). Leaders should be careful in adopting the styles and behaviors to lead their followers in specific culture as successful leaders alter their behavior and style in response to culture (Dorfman &

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Howell, 1988; Hofstede, 1995; Trice & Beyer, 1984). In relation to this, its an important challenge to understand the cultural values of different countries, to adopt specific leadership styles and behaviorswhich are effective and appreciated by respective culture.

Triandis (1993) argued that it is important to study leadership theories in different cultures to understand what works more effectively in different cultures and countries. Numerous studies have explored the cultural values and their impact on different leadership styles in wide varieties of cultural context(Ardichvili, 2001; Ardichvili & Kuchinke, 2002; House, Wright & Aditya, 1997; Hofstede, 2001; Pasa, 2000; Mansouri & Mhunpiew, 2016). One major example is the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) study which is a remarkable attempt by researchers to understand the cultures and leadership theories across the globe. This GLOBE project aimed to build a strong relationship between cultural paradigm and leadership theories using cross-cultural findings (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004).

Past studies focused more on thetransformational and transactional styles of leadership for studying their role in Western and non-Western cultural paradigm(Bass, 1997; Jogulu & Ferkins, 2012; Muenjohn & Armstrong, 2015). The last four decades of advancement in theory and research in the leadership domain resulted in the emergence of new leadership styles such as paternalistic, democratic and authentic leadership styles (Aycan, 2006). Despite all this extensive research, it remains unclear that how cultural variation may bring the variation in expected outcomes of these leadership theories which are mainly developed in Western cultures while the collectivist culture of Asian countries has a different orientation towards leadership and management concepts as compared to individualistic culture (Hofstede, 1984a) (Hofstede, 1984a). Selvarajah and Meyer (2008) also recommended to understand the different cultural contexts for developing the comprehensive view of leadership theories.

Generally, past studies suggest Hofstede (1980) cultural framework is one of the most influential frameworks for studying the cultural nations and countries. This research focused solely on uncertainty avoidance aspect of national culture to test its impact on leadership styles. Hmieleski and Ensley (2007) highlighted a strong relationship between individual's perception of uncertainty and its relation to decision and policy making. This study advances the growing body of knowledge and extends the research on leadership models particularly in Malaysian cultural settings as recommended by previous researchers (Chan, 2010; Kennedy, 2002; Lo, Ramayah, Min, & Songan, 2010; Selvarajah & Meyer, 2008). Further, keeping in view the future recommendations of Amirul and Daud (2012), to investigate the effectiveness of different leadership styles in Malaysian culture and lack of empirical evidence regarding relationship between uncertainty avoidance and

leadership styles (paternalistic, authentic and democratic) in Malaysian culture is main motivation behind this study.

This study is conducted in Healthcare sector of Malaysia because health care sector is one of the rapidly growing sectors of the world (Bloom, Canning, & Fink, 2008). Malaysia has a multi-cultural environment with adiversity of three different races (Malays, Indians and Chinese) which makes Malaysia an interesting study setting to see the role of culture on leadership behaviors and styles (bin Yajid & Rahmat, 2015; Lo *et al.*, 2010). Malaysian healthcare sector is also multicultural and has a multi-ethnic population as well which makes it an interesting field of study to explore the leadership role in these organizations. The Malaysian government has also taken initiative and targeted key service sectors and healthcare industry is one of those important sectors (Naqshbandi & Idris, 2012). So this study will further shed light on leadership styles and cultural combination in Malaysian health care cultural context.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Hofstede (1980) claimed that "uncertainty avoidance reflects the extent to which members of a society feel uncomfortable in unstructured situation" (p.45). According to culture value framework theory of Hofstede (1984b), cultures in which individuals are motivated to take arisk and accept new experiences and challenges are categorized as low uncertainty avoidance cultures. On the other hand, cultures in which individuals are reluctant to accept new experiences and challenges are categorized as high uncertainty avoidance cultures. In low uncertainty avoidance culture people are comfortable with the changing situation or condition and take it as a new opportunity and challenge (Hofstede, 2001). In a recent research, Hofstede (2006) enlightened that it is important to understand that what level of culture impacts the leader's effectiveness.

Paternalistic leadership style is becoming an important leadership style and has significant potential for exploring its role in non-western research (Aycan, 2006; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). Gelfand, Erez and Aycan (2007) defined paternalism as a "hierarchical relationship in which a leader guides professional and personal lives of subordinates in a manner resembling a parent, and in exchange expects loyalty and deference" (p. 493). Farh and Cheng (2000) also defined the paternalistic leadership style as a style that combines both authority and parental care and benevolent attitude. Further, Jogulu and Wood (2008) concluded that Malaysian leaders also direct their employees and make the final decision. Leaders make decisions with an assumption that they know the needs of their subordinates and take actions as a "caring parent" because an ideal leader leadership style is comprised of 'a benevolent autocrat, or good father' (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005, p. 55). This coexistence of authority and fatherly caring attitude has significant influence on attitudes and behaviors of followers (Niu, Wang, &

Cheng, 2009) and enhance the intellectual capital of their followers as well (Putri, 2015).

Mansor (2000) argued that Malaysian cultural values and preferences have a significant impact on what constitutes effective leadership and they differ from the Western school of thought on leadership. It is argued that in low uncertainty avoidance culture such as Malaysia, the relationship between organizational formalized policy and procedure and centralization will be weakened. As a result, individuals will accept the leadership style and behaviors that encourage and force the decentralization and participative role of employees in the decision-making process. Abdullah (1996) recommended paternalism in Malaysian context as leaders need to give some kind of protection and care in exchange for commitment and loyalty from their followers. Further, Ahmad (2001) also confirmed the effectiveness of paternalistic leadership style in Malaysian Culture. Malaysian culture is low in uncertainty avoidance index Hofstede (1984a) which suggests that individuals are risk takers and they prefer to work in an environment that provides them with delegate working environment. It is argued that caring and fatherly attitude of paternalistic leaders provides an encouraging environment to their subordinates for their participation in the decision-making process so low uncertainty avoidance culture of Malaysia also has some similarities with characteristics of paternalistic leadership style. Thus, following hypothesis was proposed:

H1: *Uncertainty avoidance dimension of national culture is positively related to paternalistic leadership style*

Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009) defined that authentic leadership is "a pattern of transparent and ethical leadership behavior that encourages openness in sharing information needed to make decisions while accepting input from those who follow" (p. 424). Authentic leadership style exhibits the behavior of openness, accepting others' input, and ability to adjust their behavior according to their own values, beliefs and emotions (Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, 2010). According to Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa (2005) leader-follower relationship is one of the key elements of the authentic leadership style. It has been argued that subordinates admire and respect the leaders who express the desired behaviors. Authentic leaders have a positive effect on subordinates' behavior and attitude which ultimately leads to better performance (Khan, 2010).

Abdullah (1992) identified ethnic values embedded in the Malaysian workforce that are supportive of productive business behaviors, trustworthiness, honesty, sincerity and participative decision-making. Authentic leadership is considered trustworthy based on leaders' code of conduct, integrity, ability to communicate and having acaring attitude towards followers (Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998). Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, and May (2004) highlighted the intervening role of trust linking authentic leadership to followers' behaviors.

Previous studies have shown that relational transparency is a key component of authentic leadership and also a significant predictor of trust in the leader (Gardner *et al.*, 2005; Luthans, Norman, & Hughes, 2006).Thus, it is argued that in low uncertainty avoidance culture,authentic leaders increase their followers' involvement that breeds their trust on leadership.

Furthermore, Avolio and Luthans (2006) also conceptualized authentic leadership as a developmental process through positive life's experiences, psychological capital and supportive environment in which planned or unpredictable events trigger the self-awareness, self-regulated behaviors and self-development of authentic leaders. Moreover, authentic leaders develop the strong relationship with their followers characterized by mutual trust, transparency and organizational climate of openness and sharing (Gardner *et al.*, 2005). Due to these characteristics and authentic image, the authentic leaders are successful in managing the situations of uncertainty and risk to bring desired outcomes for the organization (Avolio, Kahai & Dodge, 2001; George & Bennis, 2008). According to Hofstede (1984a), in the culture of low uncertainty avoidance, people are more tolerant to organizational changes as compared to employees in high uncertainty avoidance culture. A low level of uncertainty avoidance in society exhibits a high level of risk-taking attitude and openness trend in the society. Hmieleski and Ensley (2007) also argued that there exists a strong relationship between the perception of people about uncertainty and decision-making process. It is argued that Malaysian employees prefer to work with the leaders who guide and support them for taking new challenges and authentic leaders motivate their workers for innovative and risk-taking attitude (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Thus, on the basis of rigorous literature, following hypothesis is suggested.

H2: *Uncertainty avoidance dimension of national culture is positively related toauthentic leadership style.*

Democratic leaders believe in inclusiveness and participation of the followers in the decision-making process and goal-setting process. These leaders are friendly, open and provide feedback to their subordinates on their performance. (Bass, 1991; Lewin & Lippitt, 1938). Followers' involvement in task, keeping them open for their suggestions, and continuous feedback on their performance, friendliness and positive attitude are considered to be the major dimensions of democratic leadership style (Anderson, 1959; Bass, 1991; Chemers, 1984; Dahl, 1989; Fishkin, 1991; Luthar, 1996). It is argued that democratic leadership varies across cultures (Brodbeck, Frese, & Javidan, 2002; Hofstede, 1980; House, Wright, & Aditya, 1997). The organizations working in low uncertainty avoidance culture give autonomy, freedom and flexibility to their employees and individuals are more person-oriented than in high uncertainty avoidance culture (Cullen & Parboteeah, 2005). Low uncertainty avoidance plays a positive role to foster the openness to experience and risk taking attitude.

Democratic leadership style is a prevalent leadership style based on shared decision making and gives them a sense of ownership in tasks (Gastil, 1994; Luthar, 1996). So it is argued that democratic leaders stimulate their followers or workers for taking a risk and being innovative. It is also expected that democratic leadership is effective in the culture that empowers the individuals by building trust to overcome the resistance and promotes a democratic style of leadership. In Malaysian business environment, trust, empowerment and building the strong relationships are considered the main objectives (Binti, Asad & Francisco, 2016; Tajaddini & Mujtaba 2009; Lo *et al.,* 2010). This business environment reflects the cultural values of courtesy, concern for others and open-mindedness. According to (Kennedy, 2002), Malaysian people value "humane orientation" and pursuit collectivistic instead of individualistic satisfaction. GLOBE research suggests that high uncertainty avoidance cultures are less inclined to endorse participative leadership (House *et al.,* 2004). Saufi, Wafa, Hamzah, and Yusoff (2002) studied a sample of 142 Malaysian managers and highlighted the participative role of Malaysian managers. It is argued that uncertainty avoidance aspect of culture positively related to humane-oriented leadership. In low uncertainty avoidance culture of Malaysia, people prefer to work in an environment that encourages their participation in decision-making process, taking a risk and being open to changes. Democratic leaders accept the input from their followers and encourage the openness by sharing the information and participative role of followers in the decision-making process. So, on the basis of this rigorous literature review, following hypothesis is suggested.

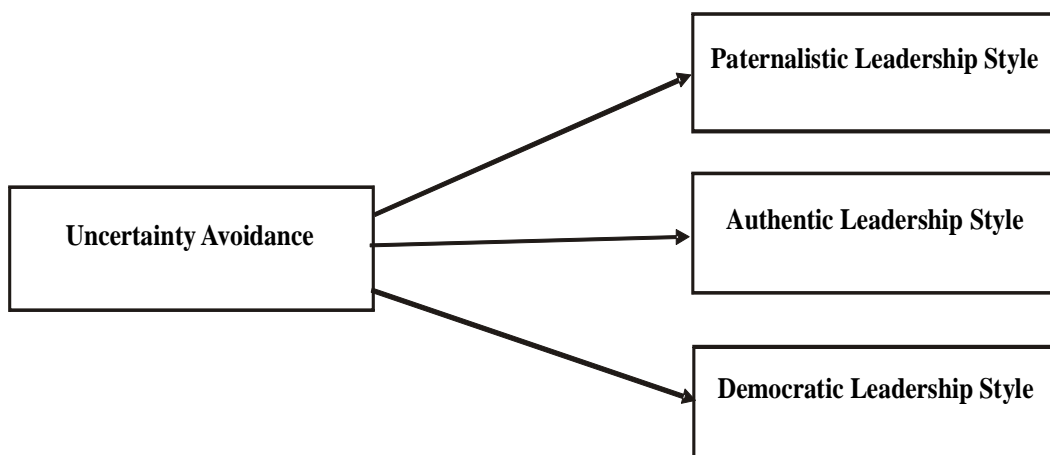**H3:** *Uncertainty avoidance dimension of national culture is positively related to democratic leadership style.*

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection Procedure

The data was collected through survey method from the doctors working in the healthcare sector in Malaysia. In order to make sure the voluntary participants in this survey, a supportive letter from the university with the approval form from the ethics committee was provided for requesting the cooperation with the study author for data collection. A cover letter was also attached with each questionnaire that explained the purpose of the study and assured the respondents about the confidentiality of the data. Before starting the actual data collection procedure, a pilot test was performed on a sample of 70 postgraduate students of the University of Malaya. The feedback and suggestions were further incorporated to improve the survey language for better understanding of the survey questions. The reliabilities of all the study variables were found higher than the widely accepted value of 0.7. The content validity of the questionnaire was also checked by a senior professor from the medical faculty of a leading university in Malaysia.

Data was collected from 8 major hospitals working in main cities of Malaysia (response rate 82%). Out of 344 respondents, 252 respondents were from the public hospitals, 73 respondents were from semi-government and 19 respondents were from the private sector hospitals of Malaysia. Among these 344 respondents, 194 (56.4%) were males and 150 (43.6%) were females. The average age of the respondents was 30 years with an average tenure of 3 years in current organizations and average total experience was 5 years.

Measures

Uncertainty Avoidance

The 6-item scale developed by (Hofstede, 1980) to measure uncertainty avoidance aspect of national culture was used. The sample items included "It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures" and "Instructions for operations are important". The responses for this scale were taken on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The reliability of 0.84 was revealed for the uncertainty avoidance scale in this study data.

Paternalistic Leadership Style

The 5-item scale developed by (Aycan *et al.*, 2000), was used to measure paternalistic leadership style. The sample items included "The ideal boss is like a parent" and "Managers should provide fatherly advice and directions to their subordinates". The responses were taken using 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly

disagree to 6 = strongly agree. The reliability of the scale was found 0.82 from this study data.

Authentic Leadership Style

The 6-item scale developed by Neider and Schriesheim (2011) was used to measure authentic leadership style in this study. The sample items were "My leader describes accurately the way that others view his/her abilities", "My leader shows consistency between his/her beliefs and actions". Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree was used for taking the responses. The reliability of this scale was found to be 0.81.

Democratic Leadership Style

Democratic leadership style was measured using 6-item scale developed by Neider and Schriesheim (2011). The sample item for measurement of democratic leadership style included "Leaders need to help subordinates accept responsibility for completing their work" and "It is the leader's job to help subordinates find their passion". The responses for these items were taken using 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The reliability of the scale was found 0.78 from this study data.

Control Variables

Gender differences play an influential role on the effectiveness of leadership styles as women leaders as more supportive and relationship-oriented as compared to men (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003). So in light of past studies gender was included in control variables to reduce its impact on main relationships. Furthermore, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to depict the significant influence of all other demographic variables.

The results revealed that hospital type, the number of specialists, length of tenure, total experience and income are significantly associated with paternalistic and democratic leadership styles while except length of tenure, all other demographics are also significantly associated with authentic leadership style. So, these demographics were controlled for further analysis.

RESULTS

As this study is cross-sectional in nature and all key constructs under investigation are self-reported so there is a chance of common method biasness that may inflate or deflate the relationships between key constructs (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Thus, Harman's one latent factor test and confirmatory factor analysis with non-rotated factor solution were used to check the common method biasness issue.

Table 1
Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation and Reliabilities

S #	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Org age	2.76	1.32	-											
2	Hospital type	1.49	0.840	0.006	-										
3	No Specialist	3.89	1.272	.361**	.218**										
4	Gender	1.44	0.497	-0.03	-.160**	-0.051									
5	Length Tenure	3.12	4.161	0.054	0.043	0.1	-.160**								
6	T experience	5.05	4.855	0.037	.380**	.132*	-.267**	.467**							
7	Income	2.32	0.770	-0.055	.267**	-0.01	-.240**	.310**	.689**						
8	Employees	4.06	1.211	.421**	0.058	.578**	0.016	.128*	.130*	0.017					
9	P- leadership	3.62	0.741	-0.018	-.309**	-.291**	.148**	-.121*	-.316**	-.254**	-.169**	(0.82)			
10	ATH Leadership	3.46	0.62	-0.079	-.292**	-.359**	0.091	-0.092	-.331**	-.221**	-.252**	.641**	(0.81)		
11	Dem Leadership	3.76	0.595	-0.027	-.263**	-.284**	.152**	-.197**	-.319**	-.201**	-.112*	.637**	.649**	(0.78)	
12	UVOID	3.80	0.606	-.037	-.190**	-.232**	.090	-0.051	-.165**	-.068	-.086	.534**	.502**	.656**	(0.84)

Note: n= 344; Alpha reliabilities are represented in parenthesis. P- Leadership = paternalistic leadership; ATH leadership = Authentic Leadership; Dem leadership= democratic leadership; UVID= Uncertainty Avoidance; *$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$

The results proved that there was no method bias existing in the data. Further, confirmatory factor analysis for single factor model was performed and results showed poor fit for the single factor model. The results revealed χ^2 (87, df = 240) = GFI= .69; CFI= .48; IFI=. 67; RMSEA = .17. Thus, this analysis confirmed that there is no common method biasness issue in the study data.

Table 1 reported mean, standard deviation, bivariate correlation and reliability values of all investigated variables. The results depicted a positive correlation of uncertainty avoidance with paternalistic leadership style ($r = .53, p < .01$), authentic leadership style ($r = .50, p < .01$) and democratic leadership style ($r = .65, p < .01$).

To test the direct effect of uncertainty avoidance on leadership styles (paternalistic, authentic and democratic), hierarchical linear regression analysis was performed as recommended by (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2013). In the first step of the analysis, control variables were entered, followed by independent variable uncertainty avoidance. Paternalistic leadership style was entered as the dependent variable. The same procedure was followed for authentic leadership style and democratic leadership style.

The results of the linear regression depicted a positive and significant relationship between uncertainty avoidance and paternalistic leadership ($ß = .45$, $p < .001$). The variance explained in this equation was ($R^2 =.38$) and the accounted difference in this variance due to paternalistic leadership style was ($\ddot{A}R^2 =.19, p < 0.001$). These results revealed that 19% of accounted change in variance in paternalistic leadership style was due to uncertainty avoidance. Hence hypothesis 1 of this study was confirmed by regression results.

The results further confirmed a significant positive relationship between uncertainty avoidance and authentic leadership style ($ß = .40$, $\ddot{A}R^2 =.15, p < .001$). The results revealed that 15% of accounted change in variance in authentic leadership style was due to uncertainty avoidance.

Furthermore, regression analysis also confirmed the significant positive relationship between uncertainty avoidance and democratic leadership style ($ß =$

Table 2
Regression Results for Uncertainty Avoidance and Leadership Styles

Predictor	P-Leadership			ATH-Leadership			Dem-Leadership		
	β	*R²*	*ΔR²*	*β*	*R²*	*ΔR²*	*β*	*R²*	*ΔR²*
Control Variables		198***			0.23***			0.180***	
Uncertainty Avoidance	0.45	0.38	0.19***	0.40	0.38	0.15***	0.60***	0.50	0.32***

Note. n= 344, P- Leadership = paternalistic leadership; ATH leadership = Authentic Leadership; Dem leadership= democratic leadership *$p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$

.60, ΔR^2 =.32, p < .001), revealing that 32% of accounted change in variance in democratic leadership style was due to uncertainty avoidance aspect of national culture.

DISCUSSION

Comparing the leadership theories across different cultures provides a useful insight to understand the outcomes and influence of culture on different leadership styles. This research has extended the body of knowledge by confirming the notion of previous researches that culture has an influence on leadership styles and behaviors (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Hanges, Aiken, Park, & Su, 2016; House et al., 2004; U. D. Jogulu, 2010; Selvarajah & Meyer, 2008; Wood & Jogulu, 2006). Secondly, this study supports the idea that culture influences the expectations of the individuals with respect to the way they perceive the things to be done (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). In doing so, this research found that paternalistic, authentic and democratic leadership styles appear to be effective in low uncertainty avoidance culture of Malaysia. Employees perform better and accept challenging tasks if they get attention, trust from their leaders and opportunity to exhibit their skills and abilities. This is especially the case of Asian cultures where leaders support and encourage the followers for sustainable personal and organizational performance (Abdullah, 2001). Thirdly, this research concluded that variation in leadership styles is required to work effectively and efficiently in this global economy. Fourthly, this study confirmed the cross-validity of paternalistic leadership style as recommended by Cheng et al. (2014) in their future directions. A country like Malaysia is distinguished as low uncertainty avoidance society so it is argued and empirically proved that this weak uncertainty avoidance culture also has great influence on leaders' tactics and behaviors. In light of attributes of paternalistic, authentic and democratic leadership styles, it is proved that these leadership styles encourage their followers for taking the challenging task in low uncertainty avoidance working environment to achieve both personal and organizational goals.

Further, on the basis of empirical findings from this research, it is argued and justified that low uncertainty avoidance aspect of Malaysian culture endorses the emergence of paternalistic, authentic and democratic leadership styles because Malaysian culture values the leader-subordinates' relationship, decentralized working environment and openness for new challenges and risks. The outcomes of this study also support the notion of cultural-specific studies of Malaysia that leaders are seen as someone who cares and is capable of promoting the personal skill of employees in Malaysia (Lo et al., 2010; Rahman & Hassan, 2009). This study further strengthened the argument that paternalistic leadership style is an effective leadership style in non-western culture (Pellegrini, Scandura, & Jayaraman, 2010). This study also confirmed that authentic leadership style attributes of building mutual trust and organizational climate of openness and sharing (Gardner et al.,

2005) create a positive image for successfully managing the situations of uncertainty and risk to bring desired outcomes for the organization (Avolio, Kahai, & Dodge, 2001; George, 2003). Lastly, in low uncertainty avoidance culture of Malaysia, democratic leaders give a sense of ownership and stimulate the workers for taking new challenges and being innovative (Gastil, 1994; Luthar, 1996). So all these traits of democratic leaders make them suitable in low uncertainty avoidance environment.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study has made a significant contribution to understanding the cultural influence on leadership styles and practices which have useful implications for theory and practice as well. This study analyzed the universally accepted dimensions of paternalistic leadership style in Malaysia. The finding that uncertainty avoidance influences and determines the leadership style implies that organizations should integrate the cultural understanding of leadership style to achieve sustainable performance. Rijal (2016) stated that leadership behaviors and culture are two important factors that influence the organizational learning environment while learning organization has become important in the era. Influence of uncertainty avoidance aspect of national culture demonstrates the need to understand the leadership skills of paternalistic, authentic and democratic leaders in different cultures especially in Malaysia. These leadership skills and practices should be incorporated into job design, performance and promotion review process so these skills and attributes are encouraged in the employees at leadership positions. It is likely that paternalistic, authentic and democratic leadership styles are important leadership styles in low uncertainty avoidance culture of Malaysia. The multi-cultural and multi-ethical workforce of Malaysian organizations and globalized economy demands the effective leadership styles to achieve sustainable growth.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Despite the major contribution of this study in growing body of knowledge in cross-cultural research, this study has few limitations to be mentioned. This survey was conducted only in the healthcare sector of Malaysia which is a significant limitation of this study. For generalizability, this theoretical framework is needed to be tested in other service and manufacturing sectors as well. There is also a need to conduct future research to understand how organizational culture influences the relationship of national culture and leadership styles.

CONCLUSION

This research provides a valuable theoretical understanding of how national culture dimension uncertainty avoidance influences the paternalistic, authentic and

democratic leadership styles in the healthcare sector of Malaysia. The empirical findings suggest that in low uncertainty avoidance culture, leaders (paternalistic, authentic and democratic) will develop a sense of ownership and will motivate their employees towards challenging and innovative tasks. This will further have a boosting effect on organization's productivity and performance. Hence cultural understanding is the key attribute in effective leadership style.

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