Power-Influence in Decision Making, Competence Utilization, and Organizational Culture in Public Organizations: The Arab World in Comparative Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes and tests an integrative model of multiple associations between power-influence sharing in decision making, work-related outcomes (WRO), and organizational culture in public sector organizations in Saudi Arabia. The analysis is based on a survey of public administrators (n = 390). To date, little research has successfully addressed these conceptual linkages, especially in public sector organizations. The structural equation model analyses show that participative practices are significant predictors of effective utilization of competence (knowledge, skill, and ability). This in turn has an impact on perceptions of WRO including information sharing, decision quality, predictability and acceptability of authorized decisions by employees, job satisfaction, and motivation. The results also suggest that elements of organizational culture have some impact on both decision making and perceived WRO. The study has profound implications for organization development and leadership, particularly in bureaucracies in transition. It is essential for public organizations to understand the importance of human capital utilization and complexity of adjusting decision processes, as well as organizational norms at various stages of capacity development.

INTRODUCTION

Much of the research on bureaucracy and organizational performance in developing countries in general, and in the Arab states in particular, identifies problems of over centralization of power and control (Al-Awaji 1971; Palmer, El Sayeed, and Leila 1985), ineffectiveness of decision making (Ali 1993; Alshalan 1991; Al-Tweam 1995), low productivity (Abualjadal 1990), unpredictability of bureaucratic decisions, and lack of sustainable and meaningful modes of empowerment and representation in most state institutions (Al-Yahya and Vengroff 2004; UNDP 2002, 2003). In most Arab states,

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capacity development in the form of investments in human resources and education has long been the most common, if not the sole, approach to institutional development and improved performance. However, the literature continues to report that this expansion of human capital development does not seem to have had any effect on organization-level performance, reporting patterns of unaffected performance and development in work organizations (Abualjadail 1990; Al-Abdullatif 1995; Alkahtani 2000; Al-Meth’heb, 1998; Al-Yahya 2004; Benhabib and Spiegel 1994; Hakim 1989; Kassim 1994; Pritchett 1999). This article argues that the approaches to organizational development (OD) and performance improvement have been one sided and largely divorced from the broader enabling “institutional” environment within which strengthened capabilities and empowered individuals must operate. The role of public administration is, according to Jreisat (2005, 235), “to restructure and reshape societies from within.” A key element of that reshaping involves modifying the modes of decision making and empowerment and utilization of human capital resources. Here, I use both terms “power-influence sharing” and “participation” interchangeably.

Participation and empowerment can be realized through arrangements associated with three factors: structure, systems, and culture (Zamanou and Glaser 1994). First, participation programs involve flattening organizational structure to enhance information sharing and communication, as well as creating autonomous, empowered units such as self-managed work teams. Second, organizations undertaking participative programs also readjust their systems by adopting new policies and procedures that support influence sharing and interactions, linking financial rewards and other incentives with participation (Pasmore and Fagans 1992), and by designing programs and opportunities that increase an individual’s skills and abilities (Vroom 1964).

Finally, culture-specific theories emphasize the role of cultural values and norms and matching the internal characteristics of organization (strategy, structure, systems, and practices) to the key external characteristics (national culture, history, and political institutions) (Al-Yahya et al. 2008, forthcoming). Organizational culture theorists suggest that culture change is invariably necessary for participatory management to have any success in implementing functional change (Lundberg 1985; Schein 1985). This is because a participation strategy entails changing the shared values and perceptions of organizational members created through mission, hierarchal structure, communication, and social interaction (Drennan 1992; Rousseau 1990; Schneider 1990).

In this article I use the case of Saudi Arabia to delineate and test an integrative, multivariate model of participation and its correlates, as summarized in figure 1. First, I examine the extent of influence-power sharing (IPC) in decision making and its effects on perceptions of work-related outcomes (WRO) including competence utilization (CU), quality of decisions, predictability and acceptance of authorized decisions, information sharing, job satisfaction, and motivation. Second, I am interested in examining whether organizational culture has any significant effect on decision making. Finally, in light of previous research, the present study evaluates the effect of certain demographic and organizational characteristics on these relationships. These include factors such as respondent’s education level, hierarchal/managerial rank, experience, age, gender, and group size (number of workers belonging to the same work unit/team). To adequately capture these hypothesized, multiple associations in the proposed model, I use a structural equation modeling (SEM). SEM is particularly appropriate because it allows estimation of multiple associations by simultaneously incorporating observed, indicator factors (power-influence
sharing, CU, age, group size, managerial rank, experience, education, and gender) with latent factors (organizational culture and perceived WRO).

Little research has been done to examine these associations in the public sector. Participation and its correlates have been largely unexplored and sometimes avoided due to difficulties associated with accountability and conflict, as well as availability of reliable measures and data (Nutt 2006; Perry and Rainey 1988). In comparative public administration and development management, research on hierarchy and decision making faces even greater conceptual and empirical challenges. For instance, the influence of cultural values and norms on decision behavior and organizational outcomes has been highly debated. This debate is attributed mainly to a group of researchers who subscribe to the universality hypothesis as opposed to culture-based theories. The universalist hypothesis is based on the idea that at some basic level, managers in organizations think and act similarly (aiming toward best practices) regardless of the organization’s cultural settings and that these similarities can be the basis for a generic theory of management and organization development (Al-Yahya et al. 2008, forthcoming; Vengroff, Lubatkin, and Ndiaye 1997). Among the universalists, there is a subgroup of convergence theorists who, while accepting the proposition that culture has an important but limited impact on management, suggest that the impact varies inversely with the level of economic and institutional development. Hyden (1983), for instance, states that cultural differences in management will disappear progressively as countries develop. In other words, with increasing international integration and the accumulation and diffusion of knowledge, the influence of economic and technological factors will become stronger than the impact of culture.

This debate and the lack of adequate theory have led some decision-making researchers to avoid systematic examination of organizational norms and values as a means of explaining the substantial variations in the use and effects of participation across organizations and countries. At the organizational level, with the exception of a few studies (Al-Yahya 2004; Cameron and Quinn 1999; Denison 1990), most studies have relied on anecdotal evidence about the interplay of participative practices, culture, and performance. The relevance of organizational culture is often acknowledged or implied in various
writings, but it has not been adequately studied within the context of participation and power-influence sharing, especially in more complex public sector settings.

Saudi Arabia is a unique place in which to test propositions derived from leadership and organizational behavior literature in public administration. First, there is a shortage of data coming from the region that in general has not yet received enough attention from social scientists and organizational analysts. Moreover, the region has been frequently cited for the lack of real progress in achieving good governance and organizational performance (UNDP 2002, 2003). In spite of some efforts to diagnose and understand these problems, analysts tend to look at the region from the outside and rely on impressionistic approaches rather than evidence derived from reliable data collected in the region. The present study attempts to address this gap in the extant literature and sheds some comparative light on the concept of participation in decision making and its correlates in Arab work organizations.

Furthermore, in recent years many work organizations across the region have undertaken different OD and administrative reform initiatives by adopting new management and organizational practices, including administrative decentralization and information-knowledge management, to improve organizational performance. At the public bureaucracy level, public organizations have been also considering and experimenting with various ideas and practices borrowed from new public management (NPM), total quality management (TQM), organization development and change, and the transfer of and reliance on some market principles including counteracting out and competition. Another emerging trend is the government’s policy of “agencyification” by establishing new semiautonomous agencies such as the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority, Communications and Information Technology Commission, and Supreme Commission for Tourism with great degree of administrative and financial autonomy. In choosing a quasi-government agency model, the government hoped it would steer clear of inefficiencies associated with conventional structures of government bureaucracy and ensure quick communication and execution. The new agency model was also seen to be more flexible in developing organizational capacities that could innovatively and efficiently address the problems arising from rapid social and economic change.

Another step taken at the operational management level is the policy by the Saudi Ministry of Civil Service to delegate the responsibility of hiring new civil servants (for low grades 1–5, with the inclusion of other higher grades currently under study) to managers in individual agencies. This was a major shift in the way public administration operates; a move that may signal, along with the increased investments in NPM programs, a general tendency toward relative decentralization and debureaucratization. These attempts at change may have significant implications for any future changes related to decision making and organizational culture. For example, the degree of and reliance on bureaucratic control and formalism limit the amount of autonomy and involvement affecting not only the effectiveness of decision making for achieving valued outcomes (Neumann 1989) but also the potential for organizational change and success. The increased reliance on these new practices in public organizations requires scholars to learn more about the multiple factors influencing the adoption and effectiveness of power-influence sharing and its outcomes.

**IPC in Decision Making**

Decentralization of decision making and increasing participation of human resources are often launched as part of broader initiatives, such as reinventing government, innovation,
continuous improvement, quality of working life, OD, TQM, NPM, and decentralization (Cotton 1993; Lawler, Hohrmann, and Ledford 1995). Participation can be defined as an organizational process by which management shares influence with hierarchical superiors and subordinates on decisions (Sagie and Koslowsky 2000; Wagner and Gooring 1987). Glew and his colleagues argued that the “essence of participation is a conscious and intended effort by individuals at a higher level in an organization to provide visible extra role or role-extending opportunities for individuals or groups at a lower level in the organization to have a greater voice in one or more areas of organizational performance” (Glew et al. 1995, 405). Participation takes a variety of forms, including direct participation in decisions on how work is performed, consultation often consisting of informal face-to-face interaction between manager and subordinates (where workers do not have a veto or complete decision making power), employee ownership, and representative participation.

The complexity of modern organizations and the increasing variety of problems and situations they tend to encounter led to further extensive examination of the different patterns of power sharing and decision behavior. Heller et al. (1981, 1988) developed a comprehensive model that described a five level of “influence-power continuum” (IPC) whose highest levels are joint decision making (i.e., participative decision making) and worker control over the decisions (i.e., delegation). IPC became the basis of a major series of longitudinal international studies called “Industrial Democracy in Europe” and “Decisions in Organizations”. In the present study, I use the IPC instrument to assess the extent of participation in decision making.

HYPOTHESES

Effects of Participation on WRO

The arguments for power-influence sharing in decision making are abundant in management and organizational behavior literature. Theories of human relations and human resources have long proposed that participation in decision making is associated with a variety of work attitudes and behaviors. Among them are job satisfaction, motivation, sense of control, resonance of ideas, role and task clarity, and the acceptance of and commitment to authorized decisions or shared work goals that workers are expected to carry out (Eby et al. 1999; Erez and Arad 1986; Locke and Schweiger 1979; Sagie and Koslowsky 2000; Spector 1986). Recent research regarding satisfaction and motivation in the public service sector suggests that policy makers and public managers should consider employees in decision making and planning processes to advance public service motivation and performance (Kim 2002; Rainey 1997).

In spite of these positive results, findings within the extant cross-national research on the effectiveness of participative practices and values in the public sector are largely inconclusive. For instance, Lines (2004) reviewed the recent research and concluded that “the average effects of participation on attitudinal outcome variables such as job satisfaction and commitment are modest. The average effect of participation on group and organization level outcomes, such as productivity, is virtually zero.” Lines concluded that “participation is a much more complex issue than is often held, both as a theoretical construct and as an empirical phenomenon” especially when studied in cross-national settings (194). Similarly, Sagie (1994) conducted meta-analysis of 69 correlations examining the relationship between participative decision making and job performance and found a low overall effect of participation on performance.
In light of this inconclusive research especially within the extant public management literature, I use a relatively large sample of Saudi public administrators to examine these propositions. In particular, I intend to examine the perceptions of public administrators toward participation in decision making by the following hypotheses:

H₁: There is a positive relationship between participation in decision making and WRO.

H₁a: There is a positive relationship between participation in decision making and the quality of decisions. Increasing participation in decision making helps improve the quality of decisions.

H₁b: There is a positive relationship between participation in decision making and the acceptance of the decisions. Increasing participation in decision making helps to increase the acceptance of authorized decisions.

H₁c: There is a positive relationship between participation in decision making and information-knowledge sharing. Increasing participation in decision making helps to increase the exchange of information and knowledge.

H₁d: There is a positive relationship between participation in decision making and job satisfaction. Increasing participation in decision making helps improve job satisfaction.

Furthermore, participation can help facilitate cognitive-based effects such as utilizing untapped human skills, abilities, and knowledge (utilization of competence or human capital resources) (Al-Yahya 2004; Fiedler 1995; Heller 1998). The term utilization can be defined as “the degree of match or congruence between an individual’s skills and the opportunity to use these skills in that individual’s work role” (O’Brien 1980). Al-Yahya (2004) argued that the extent of underutilization and underemployment of human capital resources can represent a serious challenge to modern organizations. He envisaged that if human capital resources are not activated and used or not used properly, the desired effects of their accumulation are “lost.” In cases of underutilization, organizations experience considerable losses due to reductions in effectiveness, productivity, satisfaction, and worker alienation (Heller and Wilpert 1981; Humphreys and O’Brien 1986; Karasek and Theorell 1990; Kornhauser 1965; O’Brien 1980). In light of previous research, albeit limited and almost nonextant in public management literature, CU can be viewed as a dependent variable of power-influence sharing. This is because greater opportunity for participation in decision making allows organizational members to engage in various phases of decision process. The opportunity to engage and interact helps to activate and utilize an employee’s untapped skills and ideas. Therefore, I propose the following,

H₂: There is a positive relationship between participation in decision making and utilization of competence. Individuals who have more participation in decision making are more likely to exhibit higher levels of utilization.

An alternative way of conceptualizing the interaction between participation, utilization, and improved work outcomes is a three-path model in which CU serves to facilitate the positive effects of participation on work outcomes such as the quality and effectiveness of joint decision making and job satisfaction. In other words, CU may play a mediating role in the relationship of participation to job satisfaction as often suggested by the human relations approach (i.e., participation Ú utilization of competence Ú satisfaction) and to
quality and effectiveness of joint decisions as frequently referred to in the human resource model (i.e., participation Û utilization of competence Û quality and effectiveness of joint decisions). Heller et al. (1988) attempted to explore the mediating role of utilization in the relationship of participation to job satisfaction in their study of three European countries (the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Yugoslavia) but could not conclude that CU was a strong intervening factor in the participation-satisfaction relationship.

In light of the inconclusive evidence and as an alternative to the hypothesis regarding the direct interaction between participation and WRO, I intend to examine the potential role of CU in the relationship between participation and perceptions of WRO, namely job satisfaction, motivation, quality of joint decisions, acceptance of decisions, improved communication, and information sharing.

H₃: CU plays a role in the relationship of participation in decision making to WRO (i.e., the relationship between participation and WRO is likely to run via utilization).

**Decision Making and Organizational Culture in Arab Organizations**

Previous studies of Arab work organizations suggested that a common approach to decision making can be characterized by the duality of both consultation in decision making and directive management. The essence of participation in organizational decision making largely takes the form of frequent consultations between managers/leaders and subordinates, often at the group level, with the leader making the final decision on his own. Management does not genuinely share or transfer powers to the employees, and in return, employees are generally not keen on seeking power and its corresponding responsibilities (Mendonca and Kanungo 1994; Muna 1980; Saigie and Aycan 2003).

The consultative norms in decision making in Arab work organizations are often derived from the principle of *Shura* (mutual consultation), which is rooted in Arabic traditions as well as in the principles of Islamic governance (Abdalati 1975; Ali 1998; Huyette 1985; Lipsky 1971). Some writers note that although this process of consultation is conceptually well established and symbolizes a type of representation, in practice this informal open door policy tends to be very conditional and often only a few selected people or committees are generally consulted (Bjerke and Al-Meer 1993).

The assumption in the literature of the frequency of directive management in the Arab world is supported by a few studies conducted in 1980s. These studies concluded that management uses directive-consultative decision styles rather than more formal forms of participation or a delegation of authority (Badawy 1980; Muna 1980). For example, Muna (1980) studied the leadership behavior of Arabian business executives in six Arab countries and found that directive management with frequent use of consultation was the predominantly preferred style of Arab managers. Muna (1980) noted that the directive-consultative decision making by Middle Eastern executives reflects regional social and cultural traditions. He concluded that joint decision making is unlikely to be widely adopted in Arab organizations (Muna 1980). Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) attributed this view to the cultural values observed in Arab countries. In light of these assertions that cultural norms and values can facilitate or restrain the effectiveness of management practices, this study model integrates and empirically tests the influence of organizational culture on attitudes toward decision making.

Organizational culture can be defined as what is typical of the organization, the habits, the prevailing attitudes, and the patterns of accepted and expected behavior. Glaser,
Zamanou, and Hacker (1987) identified four major elements of organizational culture grounded in both management and communication research: teamwork, climate-morale, involvement, and management-supervision. Organizational culture has been linked to a number of organizational outcomes and functions including personal performance and productivity (Akin and Hopelain 1986), strategic planning and policy implementation (Schein 1985), recruitment and selection, socialization, and innovation in new product development. The influence of culture can also manifest itself in employees’ different attitudes (particularly employees from different cultures) toward work values and management practices, such as working in teams, material rewards, promotion practices, and repaying personal favors. According to these views, it is important to match the internal characteristics of an organization (strategy, structure, systems, and practices) to the key characteristics of the cultural context in order to produce better performance outcomes (Conger and Kanugo 1988; Hofstede 1994; Lines 2004; Newman and Nollen 1996).

Against this background, I explore the potential role organizational values and norms may play in influencing decision making and organizational outcomes as suggested by the organizational culture approach. The question raised here is whether the extent and effectiveness of participatory practices is influenced by prevalent organizational culture. It is suggested that current characteristics of organizational culture (teamwork, climate-morale, involvement, and management-supervision) in Saudi Arabian work organizations have some effect on the extent and effectiveness of IPC in decision making.

H₄: Participation in decision making is influenced by elements of organizational culture (i.e., organizational values and norms related to teamwork, climate-morale, involvement, and management-supervision have a moderating effect on participative decision making).

H₅: Organizational values and norms related to teamwork, climate-morale, involvement, and management-supervision have effects on perceptions of WRO.

Although previous research suggests that decision making in Arab work organizations range from directive to consultative, one can expect to find significant differences in the degree and effectiveness of participation due to demographic and organizational variables, including decision type, managerial level/rank, gender, education, group size, experience, and functional responsibility. In the view of prior research about the relationship of these factors to IPC,

H₆: There are differences in participation in decision making based on participants’ managerial position, education level, age, years of experience, group size, decision type, and functional responsibility.

H₇: There are differences in perceptions of WRO based on participants’ managerial position, education level, age, years of experience, group size, and functional responsibility.

METHODS
Sample and Data Collection
Data for this study came from a survey of administrators representing 14 large public organizations in Saudi Arabia. Participating organizations included such agencies as the
Departments of Finance, National Economy Affairs, Education, Information and Communication, and Health. Public bureaucracy in Saudi Arabia provides a suitable ground for testing our study’s propositions. Public organizations currently employ about 70 percent of the national workforce (Looney 2004). The researcher distributed 500 surveys although only 390 responses were successfully completed and collected, resulting in a response rate of 78%.

Before the beginning of the fieldwork and before sending the questionnaire to the actual subjects, a pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted with a selected sample of 28 participants in the in-service seminars held at the Institute of Public Administration. The pilot test ensured that the survey respondents understood the questions and issues raised in the questionnaire, and it also drew attention to any vague questions, ambiguous concepts, and items sensitive to the local culture. After addressing most of the problems raised during the translation and pretesting period, the questionnaire instrument was ready for distribution to the actual subjects.

The sample consisted of three different managerial groups: 103 top managers, 160 middle managers and supervisors, and 126 subordinates, all classified as professional job holders. Subordinates were included in response to the limitations of previous studies that solely surveyed the perceptions of top managers, with little attention paid to employees at lower levels in the hierarchy. The sample includes employees from various occupational functions including general management, office administration, personnel, finance and accounting, legal, technical, and research and development. Education levels of respondents range from high school (4%), to 2-year college (29%), bachelor degree (56%), and postgraduate degrees (11%). The size of the unit in which respondents work ranges from 3 employees to 45. The average respondent is a 37-year-old male, university graduate with 12 years of work experience and has completed at least two extensive (4 months or more) on-the-job training programs in his respective field of expertise.

**Measures**

**Decision-Making Method**

Participation in decision making was assessed by the IPC (Heller and Wilpert 1981; Heller et al. 1988). The IPC helps extend the analysis of decision making and participation and further understand the dynamic interactions between decision styles and important outcome variables. The IPC, which also bears some resemblance to the model of participation in decision making developed by Vroom and Yetton (1973), has five alternative decision methods ranging from (1) authoritative—decision without prior explanation or information, (2) benevolent authoritative—fairly detailed information about the decision being made, (3) consultative—explaining the problem and giving the employee opportunity to give advice with the superior making the final decision, (4) participative—decisions are made jointly by superiors and subordinates, and (5) delegative—authority to make decisions is given to the employee or work group.

In order to measure decision-making styles, the study used 19 common organizational decisions and tasks. Respondents were asked to indicate (1) the actual decision-making method across all decision types and how much power or influence they have over the 19 different decisions and tasks and (2) the ideal or preferred decision-making style and how much influence they would like to have on the same list of decisions and tasks. Examples of these decisions range from deciding on how to arrange and plan the work within work groups, assessing organizational technical needs and deciding on who can go to training, to
identifying work problems, and determining the appropriate policy changes and improvements to operating procedures. To ensure the reliability of IPC in our testing ground, I conducted a reliability analysis and found that the index was highly reliable (Cronbach’s alpha = .862).

As suggested before, decision-making methods may differ depending on the type of decision and situation. The decisions are divided into five categories: organizing functions, coordinating functions, personnel functions, planning functions, and functions related to physical environment and support.

Organizational Culture
Glaser, Zamanou, and Hacker (1987) provided four operational measures of organizational culture grounded in both management and communication research: teamwork, climate-morale, involvement, and management-supervision. These four indicators constitute the first latent factor in our model “organizational culture.” To examine the relationship of organizational culture to participation, we used a list of questions from the operational measures of organizational culture and climate (Glaser, Zamanou, and Hacker 1987). Employee responses were solicited using a Likert five-point scale (strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree) to items such as “most decisions and work policies are made by management after consulting employees” and “most decisions and work policies are made by management with some prior detailed information” (Involvement Scale); “there is strong interest among employees in this organization to function as team,” “people are open and share their ideas with each other,” and “everyone in the group knows what the other people do” (Team Scale); “people in this organization are provided with clear vision about the future,” “there is emphasis on studying and solving employees’ problems and needs,” and “people receive regular performance appraisal on how they perform” (Management-supervision Scale); and “all work members have an equal treatment” (Morale Scale).

Although these measures of organizational culture have been tested for reliability and validity in previous literature, a factor analysis was performed on the four measures, which resulted in satisfactory factor loadings: involvement (.78), teamwork (.70), management/supervision (.93), and morale (.61) (table 1).

The study chose the measures of organizational culture for their relevance to the concept and measurement of organizational decision making and communication, rather than using the broad measures of national culture such as Hofstede’s power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism/individualism dimensions. First, previous research on Arab culture using broad national culture dimensions seems consistent in reporting a common pattern of high power distance and low individualism (Bjerke and Al-Meer 1993; Hofstede 2001). This combination is widely believed to be related to participation in decision making (Dedoussis 2004; Hofstede 1980; Sagie and Aycan 2003). Second, national culture measures use “nation” as the unit of analysis, which may not have enabled us to fully capture organizational and personal variations and influences of individual contextual factors related to differences among subordinates (such as ability, demographic profile, and willingness to participate) and in characteristics and orientations of leadership.

For instance, to illustrate this problem, Tayeb (1994) carefully and systematically examined the cultural coherence in three collectivist societies—Japan, Iran, and India. These societies were characterized by strong loyalty to the group or community, and workers were expected to exhibit collectivist values in their workplace in the form of
Table 1
Maximum Likelihood Estimates of Factor Loadings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unstandardized Loadings</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Standard Loadings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived work-related outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>1a</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision quality</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information sharing</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of authorized decisions</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>1a</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management/supervision</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morale</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Not tested for statistical significance; p < .05 for all other unstandardized estimates.

a high degree of commitment, dedication, and emotional attachment to the work organization. However, after examining societal culture, employee attitudes and values, and the management structure, Tayeb (440) concluded, "it is only in Japan where the collectivism of Japanese culture has been carried over into its companies. The Iranian and Indian employees are as detached from their work organizations and have as individualistic a relationship with their work places as any individualistic nation. Viewing culture as complex and multidimensional, Myers and Tan (2002) proposed the adoption of a more dynamic view of culture—one that sees cultural values and norms as contested, temporal, and emergent. Therefore, levels of analysis should include not only national levels but also regional, business, organizational, and departmental ones.

Outcomes
Part of the survey was designed to elicit respondents’ perceptions of various WRO: CU, job satisfaction, quality of decisions, information-knowledge sharing, and predictability and acceptability of new decisions and policies. An important, neglected factor in public management and organization development studies is CU. CU is measured using a comprehensive CU scale consisting of 18 items that refer to a number of human capacities or skills identified in management and human resources literature. The Cronbach’s alpha test for the CU index was highly reliable (.947). The index assesses the extent to which the relevant capacities and experiences of the competent persons or groups had been recognized and utilized in their work. Employee responses were solicited using a five-point scale (1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = almost invariably, 5 = all the time-always) to 18 items such as:

Initiative (ability to initiate changes or recommendations about work design, policies, and procedures),

Verbal ability to freely articulate ideas and opinions

Being decisive,

Ability to organize and conduct work on one's own in the way they think best,
Capacity to look ahead,
Being creative and innovative at work and in problem solving,
Capacity to develop new ideas and skills,
“Being adaptable, and
Cooperativeness and interaction with others.

To measure workers’ perceptions of other WRO (indicators), such as job satisfaction, motivation, decision quality, information sharing, predictability, and acceptability of authorized decision by workers, I use seven-point scales soliciting workers’ attitudes toward these effects (Al-Yahya 2004; Heller et al. 1988). In the model, these five indicators constitute the second latent factor: “perceived WRO.” Again, the confirmatory factor analysis for the five indicators and the results indicated that all loadings are statistically significant at $p < .05$ (table 1).

RESULTS

Decision Making in Arab Organizations

In our review of decision and management styles in the Arab world, this article highlighted the duality of traditional forms of directive management and the increased frequency of consultative-participative management. To examine decision behaviors in the Saudi context, I distinguish between the actual practice and the preferred decision-making styles as perceived by the Saudi managers. This helps demonstrate any gap between these two approaches to decision making. It also helps assess the comparable awareness (or lack thereof) and the degree to which participatory practices remain personal and official and/or internalized and shared in actual practice (Kanungo and Mendonca 1997). For example, previous research on Polish organizations showed a significant difference between managers’ perceived belief in participation and smaller power distance and what was actually being practiced (Szabo et al. 1997).

As stated earlier, previous research acknowledged the frequency of hierarchal and highly centralized decision-making behavior in the Arab world (Alshalan 1991; Badawy 1980; Muna 1980), in which researchers concluded that participative management practices may be irrelevant and inadequate in the setting of an Arab country and thus are unlikely to be adopted by Arab administrators and leaders. However, in light of recent change activities, I reexamined these assumptions made more than 20 years ago.

The analysis of average IPC scores show that the prevalent “actual” decision-making style is in fact consultative with frequent use of joint decision making (participative) in certain organizational decisions (actual IPC average score is 3.1). The results, however, are inconsistent with those of previous research with regards to “preferred” decision-making style. Muna (1980) and Alshalan (1991) concluded that there is wide support for consultation, rather than participation (joint decision making), as an ideal decision behavior. In the present study, respondents show overwhelming support for the “participative” decision method rather than consultative or authoritative ones, even if participative decision making has not been fully institutionalized across all levels within the Saudi administrative system (the preferred IPC average score was 4.0). Over 60% of respondents indicate their preference for participative decision making. This may indicate a change in attitudes toward new, more participative leadership and management styles over the years, and it most
Table 2
Summary of Differences in the Actual and Preferred Decision Making (IPC) According to Demographic and Organizational Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Test of Difference</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual IPC</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.990</td>
<td>4.225</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred IPC</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.687</td>
<td>1.025</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual IPC</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.996</td>
<td>2.986</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred IPC</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td>7.274</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rank</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual IPC</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.996</td>
<td>26.950</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred IPC</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td>4.202</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual IPC</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.987</td>
<td>3.993</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred IPC</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.685</td>
<td>5.208</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group size</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual IPC</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.989</td>
<td>13.570</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred IPC</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.700</td>
<td>8.035</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience/longevity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual IPC</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.985</td>
<td>1.953</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>.184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred IPC</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.691</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional responsibility</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual IPC</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.988</td>
<td>5.785</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>-.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred IPC</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.687</td>
<td>2.561</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-.050</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NS = no significance.
*Significant at the 0.01 level; **significant at the 0.05 level.

likely indicates changes in training content and strategies and an increased tendency to converge with international management values. Additional longitudinal studies are, however, needed to confirm these trends.

Although the actual decision making generally appeared to be consultative, there were differences in the degree of power and influence sharing related to demographic and organizational variables including managerial level/rank, sex, education, managerial training, group size, years of working experience, and functional responsibility as suggested in our hypothesis (H6) (results in table 2). By looking at employees’ perceptions of decision making based on their managerial position (rank), it is clear that participation increases with the level of hierarchy. This relationship also holds when we look at the number of subordinates reporting to the respondent. With regard to experience and longevity on the job, bureaucrats with many years of experience within the system perceive decision making to be less centralized/authoritative than do those with fewer years on the job.

There was also a significant difference based on the administrator’s job content or functional responsibility. Whereas some authors suggested that different functional responsibilities of managers (e.g., accounting, general management, personnel, legal affairs managers) influence decision behavior (Hofstede 1980), others found no support for this
Table 3
Differences in the Participation Scores According to Decision Type/Function

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision Task/Function</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Test of Difference (t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizing (four items)</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.937</td>
<td>3.94*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating (three items)</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel (five items)</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>-5.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning (three items)</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical environment and support (three items)</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>-4.76*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at the 0.05 level.

proposition (Heller and Wilpert 1981). In this study, functions such as personnel and accounting scored the lowest whereas general management, legal, and technical functions scored the highest. Finally, by looking at the results on actual participation for men and women, no statistically significant differences between men and women were found. On the other hand, when we examined perceptions of preferred decision making, women tended to prefer consultative and collective decision making over other styles whereas men leaned toward greater delegation. This difference could be related to a broader societal tendency in Saudi Arabia of women socialized to accept playing a consultative role rather than exercising the greater formal autonomy associated with full participation and involvement in decision making. Some caution is necessary here because the sample of women is small.

Finally, findings on decision type indicate that participation is highest in organizing functions, followed by coordinating functions, and then planning functions. The decision-making method tends to be more centralized (authoritative) in decisions related to personnel/HR issues and physical environment and equipment purchase (table 3). The high centralization in personnel functions (such as promotion, hiring, and transfer) can be explained by the fact that these decisions are often specified in and governed by the civil service codes in the public sector. Public managers tend to have less influence over them. It also can result from the system’s general tendency to emphasize formalism, standardization, and centralization in public bureaucracies.

Structural Equation Model Results

The previous section examined the patterns of decision making in Saudi public organizations. In this section, I test a set of factors related to decision making: WRO, dimensions of organizational culture, and organizational and personal characteristics. First, the means, standard deviations, and correlations between the various factors are provided (table 4).

The second step in the analysis involves testing the theoretical network of relations between the different variables by using a Structural Equation Model with Latent Variables (SEM) (results in figure 2). SEM is a generalization of both regression and factor analysis that allows analysts to estimate multiple, related equations simultaneously. A SEM model consists of a measurement model, made up with factors or latent variables, and a structural component, linking the key factors to each other assuming a causal flow. This is useful because the survey instrument employed in this study includes different sets of questions that are related to some unobserved, underlying phenomena such as organizational culture and perceived WRO. SEM is particularly appropriate because it allows estimation of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CU</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.534*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OC—involvement</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>.267**</td>
<td>.237**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OC—team</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.238**</td>
<td>.171*</td>
<td>.422**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OC—management-supervision</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>.339**</td>
<td>.290**</td>
<td>.615**</td>
<td>.648**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OC—morale</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>.263**</td>
<td>.235**</td>
<td>.372**</td>
<td>.436**</td>
<td>.560**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LF 1: WRO¹</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>.336**</td>
<td>.305**</td>
<td>.348**</td>
<td>.341**</td>
<td>.343**</td>
<td>.285**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>.189**</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.163**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.158*</td>
<td>.148*</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>.174**</td>
<td>.161**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.158**</td>
<td>.136**</td>
<td>.170**</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.311**</td>
<td>.512**</td>
<td>.192**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.188**</td>
<td>.148**</td>
<td>.247**</td>
<td>.357**</td>
<td>.309**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group size</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>.251**</td>
<td>.481**</td>
<td>.189**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.159**</td>
<td>.128*</td>
<td>.191**</td>
<td>.300**</td>
<td>.292**</td>
<td>.745**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.150**</td>
<td>.172**</td>
<td>.155**</td>
<td>.150**</td>
<td>−.99</td>
<td>−.013</td>
<td>−.030</td>
<td>−.118*</td>
<td>.336**</td>
<td>.310**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LF 2: OC²</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>.335**</td>
<td>.285**</td>
<td>.816**</td>
<td>.687**</td>
<td>.736**</td>
<td>.473**</td>
<td>.444**</td>
<td>.125*</td>
<td>.269**</td>
<td>.167**</td>
<td>.190**</td>
<td>.170**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All two-tailed tests.

¹Latent Factor 1: WRO (composed of six indicators).
²Latent Factor 2: Organizational culture (composed of four indicators).
*Significant at p < .10 level; **significant at p < .05 level.
multiple associations, incorporates observed and latent constructs in these associations, and accounts for the biasing effects of random measurement error in the latent construct (Medsker, Williams, and Holahan 1994).

Recall that the two latent variables or factors in the model are perceived WRO, measured by five variables—job satisfaction, decision quality, information sharing, motivation, and predictability and acceptability of authorized decision by workers—and organizational culture, measured by four indicators—involvement, teamwork, management-supervision, and morale. Factor loadings for the two latent variables are presented in Table 1. All loadings are statistically significant at $p < .05$. IPC, CUCU, age, group size, rank, experience, and education are specified as observed indicator factors.

To evaluate the model's overall fit, I examined multiple fit indexes. The use of multiple fit indexes is recommended since there is no agreement on the suitability of any one fit index. Jaccard and Wan (1996) recommend the use of at least three fit tests and preferably the ones that are less sensitive to sample size. The model fit indexes reported here are the “root mean square error of approximation” (RMSEA), the “Comparative Fit Index” (CFI), and “Tucker-Lewis Index” (TLI). The RMSEA is a statistic that attempts to minimize the impact of sample size and compensate for the effect of model complexity (Hu and Bentler 1999) and is the appropriate index when ordinal scales are used. RMSEA distribution is linked to the noncentral chi-square distribution, a distribution that arises when a model is only approximately correct (Rigdon 1998). A RMSEA between 0 and .05 implies a good approximate overall fit, although Hu and Bentler (1995, 27) suggested that values close to .06 also seem to result in low Type II error rates. The RMSEA for the model is .056, with a 90% confidence interval ranging from .046 to .065. Since the RMSEA is close to the suggested .05 values, it is deemed that the overall fit of the model as adequate. The other two indexes also indicate adequate fit (CFI = .939,
TLI = .919). By convention, CFI and TLI should be equal to or greater than .90 to accept the model, indicating that 90% of the covariation in the data can be reproduced by the given model. Because the values are greater than the acceptability threshold of .90, the model is again considered to yield a good fit.

After examining the reliability of the model, I now report results on the hypothesized associations among the identified variables and constructs. Figure 2 is a graphical display of the results on relationships between the key variables. The figure shows structural standardized coefficients (similar to beta weights in regression), which represent the causal connection among factors and observed variables. The results indicate that the relationship between IPC and WRO (job satisfaction, decision quality, information sharing, motivation, and predictability and acceptability of authorized decision) is not significant, therefore disconfirming our initial hypothesis of a direct impact of IPC on these outcomes (H$_{1a}$, H$_{1b}$, H$_{1c}$, H$_{1d}$) ($\beta = .10$, $p > .001$).

A significant finding in the present study concerns the role of human capital resource utilization. The results presented in figure 2 uncover a strong, widely ignored, connection between participation (IPC) and CU; an increase in IPC leads to higher CU as suggested in hypothesis 2 ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$). Another important finding is the role of competence activation and utilization in participation-outcomes relationships. The results lend support to the alternative three-path model (IPC $\rightarrow$ CU $\rightarrow$ WRO) ($\beta = .25$, $p < .001$) and thus confirming hypothesis 3. As stated before, this significant role of CU in participation-outcomes relationships has not been adequately studied and confirmed by previous research.

With regard to the influence of organizational culture (measured by four indicators—involvement, teamwork, management-supervision, and morale), the results show that organizational culture has a strong, positive impact on perceived WRO ($\beta = .42$, $p < .001$) as proposed in hypothesis 5. I found also that organizational culture is a key driver of participation in decision making ($\beta = .23$, $p < .001$), confirming hypothesis 4.

Other strong connections include the relationships between IPC and hierarchal level ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$), indicating that those with a higher managerial rank are more likely to have a larger role in decision making. Education seems a problematic factor. It is positively correlated with rank but negatively correlated with experience ($- .35$). This may indicate that educational levels are higher within younger and newly hired administrators. Older employees who have many years of experience may have been hired with fewer qualifications due to the shortage of highly educated manpower in the past.

**DISCUSSION**

The aim of this article was to identify and examine the interrelations of participation in decision making, organizational culture, and organizational outcomes in public sector organizations. Little research has been done on the nature and extent of these multiple relationships particularly in public sector settings. In part, this scarcity of research is a result of a lack of adequate theory and reliable measures and data sources. This research was an attempt to address some of these issues by taking a multivariate, integrative approach in modeling the factors that shape the extent and effectiveness of participation in decision making.

Furthermore, studying participation by considering organizational culture has not been adequately and systematically studied within the more complex public sector settings
in the Arab world. The view of organizational culture emphasized its relation with both power-influence sharing and impact on a variety of organizational outcomes, including effective utilization of competence in organizational matters, job satisfaction, the acceptance of new ideas and perspectives, predictability and acceptability of new decisions, and hence, overall organizational effectiveness and governance. Although moving toward participatory management can be achieved fairly quickly through changing and streamlining work structures and processes, organizational culture change is a difficult and lengthy process and thus may affect the adoption and effectiveness of the participatory process.

Another important contribution of the study was unraveling the centrality of CU in organizational life. Participation was found to be a major predictor of effective utilization of competences and maximization of the value of the employees as intellectual assets. The level of utilization, in return, affects the desired effects of IPC on WRO. The implication of this finding emphasizes that individual learning may no longer be adequate. Without effective utilization schemes, investments in human resource development programs will do little to improve organizational performance and increase the legitimacy of the governance system.

In the context of Arab organizations, the findings provided strong evidence of both shortcomings and some improvements in management practices in the Arab world. It confirms a relative reliance on close supervision and direction combined with frequent consultation in decision making. Public sector professionals reported a general tendency of centralization of authority and decision making, especially in decisions related to personnel and coordination. A relevant outcome of such tendency is the inability of organizations to effectively utilize the capabilities of their human capital resources in the public sector.

The top level’s resistance toward formal power-influence sharing practices is partially understood since institutionalization of these schemes leads to further distribution and equalization of power among organizational members and ultimately may result in a reduction of the influence of existing power holders (Al-Yahya and Vengroff 2004). In some cases, the political and official leadership context does not allow more power unless loyalty and commitment to the existing system is assured. In other cases, public officials may be suspicious of employees who show great interest in additional power and responsibility because this may be an indication of a desire to exercise power for personal gain or to be a recipient of _wasta_ (connection and patronage), a pervasive phenomenon in many developing countries (Palmer, El Sayeed, and Leila 1985). In contrast to these notions, employees whose leaders provided them with an opportunity to influence work decisions may actually build self-efficacy and self-determination (psychological empowerment) to excel and take greater effort to avoid failure and reciprocate the trust bestowed on them by management (Abedl-Halim 1983; Spreitzer 1995).

At the same time, the findings demonstrate that some forms of participation and representation in decision making are not an alien concept to the culture of the Arab world, a region that is often subject to inevitable generalizations. The majority of public managers prefer more participative practices than the commonly employed system of consultation provides. Compared to findings of earlier studies conducted 15–20 years ago, the current results may signal a new pattern in managerial values and attitudes toward participatory culture and institutions. Government managers seemed aware of the challenges facing their organizations as society becomes more and more integrated in the global network and that
certain concepts or practices from outside the border may become more the norm rather than the exception.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research
This study raises important theoretical and methodological questions for future research. The review of existing literature reveals the complexity, ambiguity, and paradox of the theories and practices which fall under the umbrella of participation and decision making, particularly when discussed in the context of public sector administration. This study is no exception in its exposure to such conceptual difficulties. The varied and often confused meanings and applications of decentralized forms of public administration (like autonomy and delegation) have led to limiting their appeal, and thus adoption, on the basis that they may be incompatible with other principle values of public administration such as accountability and control (Bozeman 1987; Nutt 2006; Perry and Rainy 1988).

One factor that limits the centrality of the concept of participation within the field of public administration is the segmentation in the treatment of topics at different levels of analysis and in different orientations of schools of thought, whether economic, political, psychological, or organizational. The reinventing government movement sought to remedy such problems by borrowing from other fields and suggesting several themes, such as decentralization of administrative authority, professional, and bureaucratic responsibility, increased managerial flexibility, and increased reliance on market-based approaches to government work. However, much research is needed to examine the extent of their implementation and effectiveness in public institutions.

With respect to operational measurements, the survey was based mostly on respondents’ perceptions and attitudes toward issues being raised. There are many reservations regarding the use of self-report measures because of the concern that respondents may give socially expected answers or because people can adapt to or tolerate certain unfavorable situations (O’Brien 1980; Taylor and Wright 2004). As such, the data are susceptible to the biases associated with common method variance that is problematic in examining relationships among psychological or attitudinal data.

Finally, the study findings suggest a possible shift in the managerial practices and values in Saudi Arabia in particular and other Arab countries in general. Additional longitudinal studies are needed to confirm the claim of an emerging trend leading to a greater convergence of some governance practices and values as is often suggested by “convergence” hypotheses. To make the findings more generalizable and reliable, a replication of this study’s model in other countries would be of great importance. This goal can also be further achieved by including both public and private sector organizations in the study and increasing the sample size to improve the case-to-variable ratio for statistical analysis.

REFERENCES


