

## The Paradoxical Leadership in the Context of Arabs Schools: Perspectives of Teachers and Principals

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### Abstract:

This article contributes to building the conceptual framework of Paradoxical leadership by addressing the question: What is the extent of using Paradoxical leadership in schools? It targets Arab culture in tow main countries representing the Arab majority: Egypt and Saudi Arabia. To bypass these, quantitative data were collected using the paradoxical leadership scale from (387) teachers and (15) interviews were conducted with principals of schools in both Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Data analysis reveals the existence of an "ambivalent Arab leadership context" it is consistent with the non-Arab cultures included in the scale used and involves a cultural rearrangement centered on religion and heritage and adds educational responsibilities to school principals. For the study outputs.

**Key word:** paradoxical leadership, school principals, schools

### Introduction:

The educational system has been solid throughout history, works continuously to meet changes, and always seeks to overcome difficulties, solve problems, and searches for alternatives. In addition, the school leadership seeks to keep pace with developments and overcome the difficulties it faces; the organizational environments of schools also characterized by the increasing complexity that surrounds the various spheres of life. This calls for the intervention of school leaders to deal with these changes with Paradoxical and ambiguous strategies, often an inevitable consequence of changes in the school environment, in order to encourage staff to accept these contradictions. Leadership is one of the topics that has preoccupied the world since the beginning and is still of great interest among researchers and scientific institutions in order to reach the most influential patterns. Educational leadership is one of the topics that have been studied and researched because of its effective role in achieving goals and guiding institutions. The role of educational leadership highlighted through the interaction of the leader with individuals, where the extent of the institution's success and efficiency judged through the interaction between the leader and individuals (Al Hur, 2017). Implicit leadership theory asserts that people's underlying assumptions, stereotypes, beliefs, and schemas influence how well they perceive themselves as a good person. Across cultures, people tend to have many implicit beliefs, schemas, and stereotypes. As a result, it is normal for their core beliefs to vary, leading to cultural differences in what constitutes a good leader. (Jividen et al, 2006). In this context, the current study examines the understanding of Paradoxical leadership in light of Arab culture in three different countries, through educational institutions according to various educational systems. On the other hand, the concept of educational leadership is still different in many countries, in addition to the fact that some education systems are not completely clear. Practices related to this concept do not fall at the heart of the responsibilities assigned to school leaders (Hattie, 2018). In light of the important role school leaders' play in improving the teaching and learning process and in light of developments in many Arab countries, best practices of school leadership applied in those countries. A study conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2018) indicates that education leaders in Saudi Arabia have limited experience and fewer opportunities for preparation, training and professional development compared to other countries; Staffing and development systems, policies, and organizational structures are among the other factors that influence the effectiveness and role of school leadership ( OECD, 2018). In addition, educational reforms require that school leaders take the lead in the process of change. Therefore, it is necessary to build the capacities of current and

future school leaders in the Kingdom and arm them with the education goals stipulated in Vision 2030 with the knowledge and skills to lead the change processes necessary to achieve (Government of Saudi Arabia 2016).

In Egypt, the state has dedicated significant efforts to enhancing human capital and improving the quality of life for its citizens. Recognizing that education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals, Egypt's Strategy 2030 places great emphasis on the development of the education system, fostering knowledge, promoting innovation, and supporting scientific research to achieve sustainable development goals (Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, 2021). To establish a comprehensive framework for educational advancement, the government adopted a strategic plan for the development of pre-university education from 2014 to 2030. This plan serves as a roadmap to guide educational reforms and improvements over the specified timeframe. Additionally, in 2018, Egypt initiated the National Project for Education, which took three years of preparation. This project primarily focuses on public schools, which constitute most of the educational community in Egypt. The objective is to enhance the quality and accessibility of education across the country, ensuring that students in public schools receive a well-rounded and inclusive education.

These initiatives underline Egypt's commitment to nurturing its human capital, empowering individuals through education, and equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to contribute to the nation's sustainable development.

By emphasizing the principle of inclusivity, the strategic vision seeks to provide equal educational opportunities to every segment of society, regardless of their background or circumstances. This means ensuring that individuals from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds have access to quality education. (United Nations, "Transforming Our Year: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015) (Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, 2021). The Egyptian Ministry of Education realizes in order to achieve its mission to advance the educational process in all its axes; foremost among which is the school administration. It pays great attention commensurate with the role assigned to it, believing that it is the first to undertake the implementation of educational policy within its school, and that it has an important role in changing and developing society. This requires redevelopment Leaders according to the latest leadership styles, in order to achieve the vision of Egypt 2030 (Soliman, 2015).

### **Paradoxical leadership**

The term incongruity refers to the presence of two elements on opposite sides of each other and unreasonable when they are compatible (Smit and Lewis, 2011). Contrasting leadership depends on the organization's ability to meet the organization's competitive needs and adopting a managerial style to address them (Peng, 2018). It may also expect employees to perform well at work, putting pressure on them and making them think they need to show the organization (Zhang, et al, 2015). The leadership literature on paradoxical leadership indicates that it represents a strategy to integrate paradoxes and build long-term creativity (Zheng et al, 2015). It is a strategy for sustainability in organizations (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Maintaining control over achievements (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009).

The results of (Jia, J. et al., 2018) confirm that ambivalence in ambivalent leadership can have dependency effects on follow-up behaviors, and that ambivalence in leadership leads to better follower behavior when hierarchical, and better motivates follower behavior when the perceived strength of the HRM system is high. According to Paradoxical theories, the leader seeks to manage contradictions according to the principle of (both), where the contradictions are simultaneously simultaneous and interdependent (Peng, 2018). Paradoxical leadership involves giving the leader the feeling of not following the need to perform tasks and behaviors that are Paradoxical, yet interrelated (Backhouse et al., 2021). It also includes giving opportunities to workers to produce Paradoxical behaviors (Bashir & Ishaq, 2021). In addition, Zhang emphasized that it involves the leader applying both strategies in order to achieve behavioral equilibrium for workers and to coordinate their conflicting interests (Zhang, 2015).

Paradoxical leadership is of paramount importance as it maintains the continuity of organizations amid the increasing competitiveness of institutions and their pursuit of quality (Smith and Lewis, 2011), and it motivates workers to exclude or reduce the complexity and tendency to reduce perspectives (Cunha and Punam, 2019). The study (Zhang et al, 2015) confirmed that the dimensions of paradoxical leadership represent the behaviors of the leader. In addition, many studies, including the study of (Allam, 2022), the study of (Chen et al, 2021), and the study of (Bashir & Ishaq, 2021), agreed that these dimensions represented in five dimensions: He shares his decisions with them, and the second of these dimensions is maintaining a distance from subordinates while drawing close to them. The third dimension is to deal with subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization. The fourth dimension is the leader's control over decisions while allowing a degree of independence and authorization in decision-making, and the fifth and final dimension is the application of specific work standards, while allowing a degree of flexibility in implementation, so that subordinates adhere to the standards of the work scheduled with the importance of giving them flexibility in work.

Paradoxical leadership seeks to achieve competitiveness and quality, as Smith & Lewis (2011) reported. This leadership stimulates the motive of homogeneity and consistency, which appears when representatives are not aware of the interdependent and continuous nature of contradictions in their environments. Paradoxical leadership has been the field of many studies. Al-Asadi's study (2022) showed that paradoxical leadership has a positive impact on organizational creativity through the role of knowledge sharing as a mediator in this effect. Backhaus, et al (2022) also showed a positive relationship between paradoxical leadership and work engagement, while emphasizing that paradoxical leadership is not positively associated with perceived performance. Shaked (2020) found that the paradoxical approach allowed principals to simultaneously hold conflicting views on educational leadership. Thus, it reduced the effect of perceptual inhibitors of instructional leadership, allowing principals to delay the decision between the expectation of fulfilling the role of instructional leader and their disagreement with it. Allam's study (2022) concluded that the elements of paradoxical leadership are available in the institution under study in varying degrees, and there is a significant relationship between the five dimensions of paradoxical leadership and each dimension of functional engagement (mental, emotional, and behavioral). Chen and others (2021) concluded that paradoxical leadership is positively associated with the performance of job tasks for leaders, and that professional flexibility positively mitigated the relationship between paradoxical leadership and job formulation, and had an indirect effect on task performance through job formulation.

As for the study of Franken, et.al, (2020) found that paradoxical leadership might help employees to act flexibly. Paradoxical leadership also precedes flexibility. In addition, that the dimensions of organized leadership affect through organizations that are organized. The study of Al-Atwi and Al-Anazi (2012) showed that there is an acceptable level of ability to deal with ambiguity, stress and complexity among the study sample. In addition, the educational leaders showed a high ability to use information and multiple perspectives to interpret the problems. One of the main tasks of leadership is to consciously mediate when there is conflict and turn differences into opportunities (Gerzon, 2006) According to Mark Gerzon, leadership through conflict means believing in the possibility of what does not yet exist, Accordingly, it is advised to strive towards stimulating interpersonal contacts (Gerzon, 2006). The main task of leaders is to foster an environment where everyone knows how to contribute to the shared vision (Hamm, 2006). In summary, leadership is a very complex process that can never fully grasped, and contradiction in leadership can be a reason for success, making leaders, and self-development. Leadership also includes cooperation between leaders and followers, and it differs in its cultural context from one society to another as well as between individuals and systems that constantly adapt to challenges.

### **Study Problem:**

Studies have been done on leadership and the patterns that different leaders use in their companies to help their employees do a better job. Although several theories and psychological theories exist regarding leadership, few are more widely known than others are. Leadership in educational organizations is the prime mover of its work because of its great importance in ensuring continuity of work through its main functions known as planning, organizing, directing, monitoring and evaluation. It is also the beating heart of the administrative work; as the organization, functions revolve around it. The efficiency of the principal depends in the exercise of his

administrative functions on the successful decision that he takes regarding the different situations. Because the prevailing relationships in the school require targeted treatments according to a perspective capable of absorbing future developments. The Arab educational sector is one of the most important tributaries driving national economies, and it is witnessing rapid development and continuous change, which necessitates a reconsideration of the prevailing traditional leadership patterns and replacing them with modern leadership patterns such as Paradoxical leadership to help in effective decision-making.

Despite the importance of paradoxical leadership in achieving the visions of organizations and its impact on decision-making (Soltwisch, 2015), however, Arab studies that dealt with this style of leadership are very rare - according to the knowledge of researchers - and dealing with this style of leadership in the comparative cultural context is very rare. Hence, the problem of the study represented by answering the following main question: What is the reality of using the paradoxical leadership style in Arab schools as perceived by the teachers at those schools. The following questions arise from it:

### Questions

1. What is the structure of Paradoxical leadership for school principal is scale in Arab region?
2. How do teachers perceive the level of principal's practices for paradoxical leadership?
3. Do principal's practices for paradoxical leadership vary based on gender, country, and experience?

### Study Objectives:

- Identifying the extent to which principals working in schools adopt the paradoxical leadership style.
- Studying the effect of variables: gender, country, and experience on the degree of adoption of the paradoxical leadership style by principals working in schools.
- Identifying the demographic characteristics of principals working in Arab schools

### Study importance:

- The nature of the subject of the study if it deals with the concept of paradoxical leadership, which is one of the important topics that are of great interest to researchers as a modern leadership style, especially when studying in a cultural context.
- An attempt to draw the attention of school leaders and an attempt to highlight the importance of Paradoxical leadership in the principal's performance of his work and its impact on decision-making.
- Draw the attention of officials in the educational sector to the need to reconsider the old leadership methods used and work to choose methods that are compatible with the complexities of life and progress in educational systems.

### Study limits:

- **Spatial boundaries:** Spatial boundaries represented in public schools in the specified countries.
- **Time limits:** The period of time in which this study conducted, which is the academic year 2022/2023.
- **Human boundaries:** It represented by teachers working in government schools and the principals of those schools.
- **Objective boundaries:** It represented by the concept of paradoxical leadership and its dimensions according to what was defined by (Zhang, et al, 2015).

### Methodology:

The study relied on the mixed approach, with the aim of collecting quantitative and qualitative data from the study sample. This approach helps in understanding the study problem in a deeper way, and helps to highlight the strengths in both quantitative and qualitative data. The explanatory design was used. In the first stage of this design. The collection of quantitative data and the collection of qualitative data came in the second stage to help

interpret, explain and deepen the quantitative results, because the quantitative data and its results give a general picture of the study problem, which justifies the collection of more qualitative data to interpret, elaborate and explain the general picture (Ceswell, 2015).

### **Procedures:**

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from Ministry of Education in Egypt and Data collected in the spring semester of the academic year 2022/ 2023. A letter of invitation, consent form, and the survey package were hand delivered or sent by email to teachers in schools. Participants received a set of instructions indicating that their responses were anonymous and that they could either mail the survey to the authors or email it if they received an electronic copy of the survey. Online survey link sent to school principals. The principals in each school explained about the study objectives through e-mail and they asked to send the link to their teachers. This main survey taken from November to December in 2022. Two separate surveys administered for 1 month to reduce the influence of homologous error. In order to fulfill the study ethics on human rights, each respondent informed of the confidentiality of the survey, and whenever they felt like discontinuing the survey, they could withdraw it at any time. A total number of 713 responses had been collected out of 900 cases requested. Further, after the cases with missing values subsequently dropped from the collected data, the number of 707 cases has been analyzed.

### **Ethical Statement**

Before starting data collection, ethical approval applied and approved by the Academic Committee of the University. Not all procedures performed in studies involving human participants violated any legal regulations or common ethical guidelines. In order to ensure that ethical principles followed in this study, the purpose of this research introduced, and informed consent obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Moreover, all participants assured that they could reject any questions or withdraw from the survey at any time. Lastly, individual participants' anonymity and confidentiality.

### **Analytical strategy**

AMOS-22 was used to perform all analyzes with maximum likelihood estimates. By calculating descriptive statistics and zero correlations between variables. Confirmative factor analysis (CFA) used to test the structural validity of the PL measure.

### **Population and sample:**

The population of this study is teachers from Egypt and Kingdom Saudi Arabia schools; we use governmental schools rather than public schools to refer to schools providing free education to all school-age children. The public education system in Egypt consists of 3 stages: the basic education stage from the age of 4-14 years: kindergarten for two years, then 6 years of primary stage, and after those 3 years of preparatory stage. This followed by the secondary stage for a period of 3 years from the age of 15-17 years, then the higher education stage. Education is compulsory for period of (9) academic years from (6) to (14) years, in addition to education at all levels in schools run by the government (OECD, 2015, 35). Data also collected according to the primary and secondary school stages in the schools of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, so that all stages represented in a balanced way.

Convenience sampling used for main survey, which includes 707 teachers. 38.3% of teachers were male and 61.7% were female. 47.1% of the teachers were from Egypt, and 52.9% from Saudi. Almost half of them (49.6%) have less than five years of work experience; (20.5%) have between 5 and 10 years, and 29.8% have more than 10 years of work experience. We also examined the Gender of Principal, with the sample distributed as follows: 45.3% are male and 54.7% are female. (See Table 1)

Table 1. Demographic information for the respondents.

Characteristic	Measure	Frequency	%	Total
<b>Gender of Teacher</b>	Male	271	38.3%	<b>707</b>
	Female	436	61.7%	
<b>Country</b>	Egypt	333	47.1%	<b>707</b>
	SAUDIA	374	52.9%	
<b>Experience (In Years) in the Present School</b>	< 5	351	49.6%	<b>707</b>
	5-10	145	20.5%	
	> 10	211	29.8%	
<b>Gender of Principal</b>	Male	320	45.3%	<b>707</b>
	Female	387	54.7%	

#### Instruments :

Examining the examined variables as constructs at the individual level. Teachers evaluated all fittings. Previous research has shown that teachers are the preferred data source in studies using the Master Education Management Evaluation Scale (Hallinger and Wang, 2015). Moreover, teachers also represent the best source of data regarding leadership styles for their principal to ensure objectivity in data collection.

Respondents completed the measures using a five-point Likert scale (ie 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The reverse translation method used to translate scales from English into Arabic (Brislin, 1980). Specifically, a bilingual speaker translated all the elements into Arabic, and retranslated them back into English, to resolve the discrepancies.

#### Paradoxical leadership Scale (PLS)

To measure paradoxical leadership, 22 items were developed and validated by Zhang et al. (2015) which can be divided into the following five dimensions: (1) treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization (UI), (2) combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness (SO), (3) maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy (CA), (4) enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility (RF), and (5) maintaining both distance and closeness (DC). The first two dimensions measured using five items each, and the last three dimensions measured using four items each. Sample items “[your leader] uses a fair approach to treat all subordinates uniformly, but also treats them as individuals, shows a desire to lead, but allows others to share the leadership role, controls important work issues, but allows subordinates to handle details, stresses conformity in task performance, but allows for exceptions, and recognizes the distinction between supervisors and subordinates, but does not act superior in the leadership role.” Respondents were asked to rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from Strongly Agree =5 to Strongly Disagree=1. Zhang et al. (2015) conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on a sample of (N= 204), which resulted in five factors: (1) treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization (UI), (2) combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness (SO), (3) maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy (CA), (4) enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility (RF), and (5) maintaining both distance and closeness (DC). They indicated that the internal consistency of the scale was good

In a recent study Zhang et al. (2021) conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on a sample of full-time employees (N = 235), which resulted in five factors: (1) treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization (UI), (2) combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness (SO), (3) maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy (CA), (4) enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility (RF), and (5) maintaining both distance and closeness (DC). They indicated that the internal consistency of the scale was good, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.832 to 0.892 for the five-scale factor scores and the scale total score.

Several principles guided the PL scale translation and adaptation process in Arab region. These include: (1) the use of terminology commonly understood in the country, (2) inspection of the cultural appropriateness of each item, and (3) consideration of both literal and implied meanings of the items. A committee of three professionals (i.e., authors whose native language is Arabic and who have good command of both Arabic and English), one faculty member with a background in leadership as well as good command of Arabic and English and an applied linguist who has good command of both Arabic and English translated the TEIP scale from English into Arabic. This method, called a parallel approach (Merenda, 2006; Schoua-Glusberg, 1992), involves several translators working independently. The prior professional experiences of this team are consistent with Van de Vijver and Hambleton's (1996) recommendation for committee diversity. The three resulting translations compared, and the final version of every item decided on by consensus when possible. When consensus was not possible, decisions made as to the best way to reconcile discrepancies. This draft translation was back-translated from Arabic into English. The back-translation analyzed during two review meetings between the committee members. This process led to the final translation of the Arabic version of the PL scale that then used to collect the data for the study.

### Result of validity and reliability

Scale reliability established through Cronbach's alpha coefficient values, which are above 0.79 for all dimensions. The scales were considered to be equivalent in Arabian culture, because Yang et al. (2019) cited the scale and confirmed its reliability and validity with Chinese samples ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ). In our study, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of this scale was 0.96 (for the five dimensions it was 0.95, 0.88, 0.88, 0.79, and 0.82, respectively). (See Table 2) and, thus, fulfills cutoff; this value is adequate at  $\geq 0.60$  (Lee, 2006). If construct reliability reaches above 0.7, convergent validity or internal consistency is secured (Kim, 2007).

Data collected using Google forms from a sample of 707 teachers. The process of data collection took about three months. The sample of 707 surpassed the threshold limit suggested by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). It noted that the threshold limit for data collection, as proposed by Krejcie and Mortan (1979), is 384. The respondents were of varying demographic profile, details of which presented in Table 2. The table shows that the study's sample has wide diversity and is hence representative in nature.

**Table2:** internal consistency reliability.

Dimensions	Item	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha
UI	1-5	0.82- 0.91	0.945
SO	6-10	0.70-0.84	0.879
CA	11-14	0.78- 0.85	0.883
RF	15-18	0.74- 0.73	0.793
DC	19-22	0.53- 0.85	0.817
<b>One Factor Solution</b>	1- 22	0.53- 0.91	0.956

### Data analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the Arabic version of paradoxical leadership scale was conducted to test the five-factor model from previous studies namely combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness; maintaining both distance and closeness; treating subordinates uniformly, while allowing individualization; enforcing work requirements, while allowing flexibility; and maintaining decision control. We used the maximum likelihood estimation on the covariance matrix. Additionally, we used several fit indices including Chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio ( $\chi^2/df$ ), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Normative Fit Index (NFI), Tacker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). CFI, NFI, TLI > 0.90 and RMSEA < 0.08 indicated a good fit (Byrne, 2010; Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1999) Reliability measured with Cronbach's alpha test of internal consistency. The analysis included a quantitative and a qualitative analysis. Content analysis sought by classifying and tabulating the data to describe the apparent and explicit content of the material under analysis. It was not limited to the substantive aspects, but also to the formal ones (Creswell& Creswell, 2017).

The purpose of this study was to identify Arabian teachers' perceptions of paradoxical leadership and the impact of demographic differences on these perceptions. Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics, and Pearson's correlations for the PLS. The mean for PLS dimensions ranged from 3.63 to 3.93 on a 5-point scale and standard deviations of the composite factors ranged from 0.791 to 0.964 (see Table 3). The highest mean score was for "Treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization (UI)" and the lowest for Enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility (RF). The results suggest that teachers in schools of Arab region see their school principals exhibiting high levels of paradoxical leadership.

### Measurement properties of the scale

Table 3 shows the means, standard deviation, standard error, and correlation coefficients for the study variables. The inter-correlation between the different dimensions of Paradoxical leadership ranged from  $r = 0.745$  between SO and CA to  $r = 0.562$  between UI and RF. The results indicate that none of the five subscales were overlapped (all correlations were between 0.56 and 0.75). In the study by Kim (2021), their raters were similar to our teachers because the latter are rating their school principals. For Kim (2021), the strongest correlation for their raters is between CA and SO and the lowest between DC and SO.

This classical psychometric information about the scale items, coupled with the Cronbach's alpha coefficients reported in Table 2, provide evidence of high internal consistency of the measures for the Arabic version of the PL scale as well as for each of the five factors (UI, SO, CA, RE, and DC). As shown in Table 2, the results suggest that there are five factors describing the construct of PL, which have significant moderate intercorrelations, indicating their dependence on each other. The correlations among the five factors were above the threshold of 0.30, as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), reflecting the associations among the factors. The factor loadings of the items were higher than 0.50 and consistent within each factor.

**Table 3** : Descriptive statistics, reliability and correlations of the constructs

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
UI	1	0.744**	0.736**	0.562**	0.636**	0.869**
SO	0.744**	1	0.745**	0.625**	0.710**	0.890**
CA	0.736**	0.745**	1	0.623**	0.671**	0.879**
RF	0.562**	0.625**	0.623**	1	0.659**	0.891**
DC	0.636**	0.710**	0.671**	0.659**	1	0.852**
PL	0.869**	0.890**	0.879**	0.801**	0.852**	1



UI: treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization; SO: combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness; CA: maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy; RF: enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility; DC: maintaining both distance and closeness; PL: paradoxical leadership; SE: standard error; SD: standard deviation; \*\*statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

**Study Result:**

- **Study related to question1** : What is the Paradoxical leadership structure according to school principals in the Arab context?

A two-step process for confirmatory factor analysis was conducted (CFA), with every indicator loading only on one factor, and no correlations between measurement errors. First, we ran CFA analysis for each of the five paradoxical leadership dimensions. We then conducted a second-order factor analysis for paradoxical leadership, to prove measurement validity, meaning that all the dimensions make a latent variable of paradoxical leadership. In all the CAFs, not all the chi-square values were significant, indicating a good model fit. The model fit supported by other goodness of fit indices shown in Table 4. First, CFA conducted with the original 22 items (the five-factor model) of the **PL** scale. The initial CFA results ( $\chi^2/df = 4.249$ , CFI = 0.944, NFI = 0.928, TLI = 0.935, and RMSEA = 0.068) for testing the structural validity of the PL scale indicate a good fit to the data and confirmed the five-factor solution found in other studies (Malinen et al., 2012; Savolainen et al., 2012; Sharma et al., 2012). In assessing model fit, the following indices should be fulfilled (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008): GFI (Goodness-of-fit index–desirable at  $\geq 0.90$ ), NFI (Normed fit index–desirable at  $\geq 0.90$ ), CFI (Comparative fit index – desirable at  $\geq 0.90$ ),  $2\chi$  (chi-square–desirable at  $< 0.05$ ), TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index–desirable at  $\geq 0.90$ ), RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation – very desirable at  $\leq 0.05$  or moderately desirable at  $< 0.08$ ).

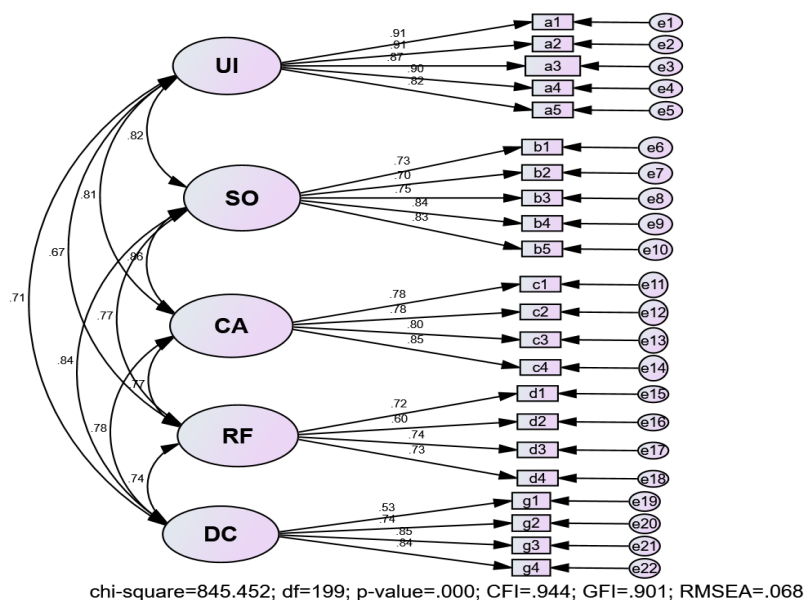


Figure 1. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the five-factor model of the paradoxical leadership for principals (**PL**) scale.

As shown in Figure 1, all factor loadings are statistically significant and substantial in magnitude, with a range from 0.53 to 0.91. As the five factors in model 1 were highly correlated, a hierarchical model including a second-order factor, measured by the five primary factors, was tested (model 2, see Figure 2). Model (2) had an equally good fit ( $\chi^2/df = 4.272$ , CFI = 0.942, NFI = 0.925, TLI = 0.934, and RMSEA = 0.068). Table 3 summarizes all fit indices for first-order and second-order models and nested model comparisons.

Chi-square difference test applied to nested models (first- and second-order CFA). As shown in Table 3, the value of  $\chi^2$  difference was not statistically significant, indicating that the general second-order factor could explain the

common variances among the first-order factors. Figure 2 shows strong coefficients for the regression paths to each endogenous factor ( $r = .86, .95, .92, .82, .86$ ) for the five-factor model consolidated evidence for strong ties to a general PL factor within the hierarchical model underlying the PL.

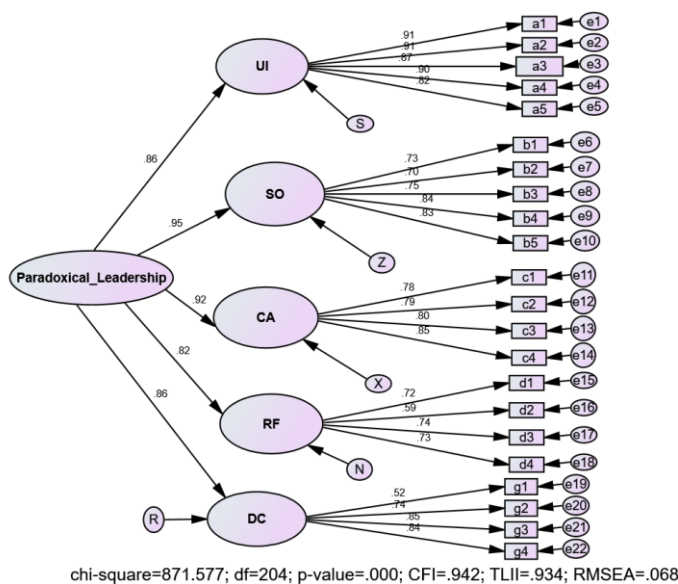


Figure 2. General factor structure of paradoxical leadership scale.

Table 4. Results for fit indices of the CFA models (n =707).

Model fit indices	$X^2$	$X^2/df$	df	$\Delta x^2$	CFI	NFI	TLI	RMSEA
First-order model	845.452	4.249	199	-	0.944	0.928	0.935	0.068
Second-order model	871.577	4.272	204	26.125	0.942	0.925	0.934	0.068

**2- Study result related to question2 : How do teachers perceive the level of principal’s practices for paradoxical leadership?** Basic descriptive statistics for the respondents’ scores on individual items of the PL scale are provided in Table 4. Each item scored on a five-point Likert scale. As shown in Tables 3, teachers’ responses on the PL scale indicate that teachers perceived their principals as paradoxical leaders in all five dimensions (i.e.  $M= 3.84$ , in the ‘high’ range). The variability of the PL ratings by teachers was high, suggesting that most of them have PL in the range high ( $SD= 0.716$ ).

**Table 4 :** teachers’ responses on the PL scale indicate that teachers perceived their principals as paradoxical leaders in all five dimensions

Dimension	Mean	SD	SE
UI	3.93	0.964	0.036
SO	3.91	0.804	0.030
CA	3.91	0.807	0.030
RF	3.63	0.791	0.029
DC	3.81	0.802	0.030
PL	3.84	0.716	0.027

UI: treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization; SO: combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness; CA: maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy; RF: enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility; DC: maintaining both distance and closeness; PL: paradoxical leadership; SE: standard error; SD: standard deviation; \*\*statistically significant at 0.01 level.

The findings presented in Table 4 reveal that according to the surveyed sample of teachers, school principals in both Saudi Arabia and Egypt exhibit paradoxical leadership practices. The study indicates that these contradictions are evident across various dimensions of the leadership scale, and the degree of practice aligns to a large extent. To validate and further explore the results obtained from the field study, the researchers aimed for richness and depth of information rather than representativeness. They sought to develop a comprehensive and grounded conceptual framework that encompasses diverse and inclusive perspectives. To achieve this, a maximum variance sampling technique was employed to select participants for one-on-one interviews. This technique ensured that participants represented a wide range of demographic variables. These variables include gender, nationality, sector (public and private), qualifications, and years of experience in school management. By employing such a sampling technique, the researchers aimed to capture a broad spectrum of viewpoints and experiences, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of paradoxical leadership practices in the context of Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

The open interview, which included (11) principals according to the previous standards), sought to deepen the understanding of the paradoxical leadership practice framework in schools in both Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The data analyzed thematically, broken down into marks and micro-, meso-, and macro-visions. This inductive process also entails a deductive approach, as the emerging visions are fed back into the data collection progression. All the authors worked together to collect the data. Initially, they collaborated on the data analysis as well, but this joint participation proved to be unconstructive, underlining the Arab proverb that ‘too many captains sink the ship’. Thereafter, the second author entrusted with the task of analyzing the data alone using a ‘codebook’ (McAlister et al., 2017).

**Table 5.** Data Analysis of Systematic Reviewing to Characteristics of Paradoxical leadership

Mark	Micro-Vision	Meso-Vision	Macro-Vision
Religiosity (religiosity appears in school administrative dealings).	Honoring the Past (Stick to the point of view)	alongside Others	Paradoxical leadership
Traditionalism (the past is dropped into the present in administrative transactions)			
Traditionalism (the past is a source of pride in school leadership)			
Familialism (relatives support each other, which changes the course of administrative operations)	Honoring the Present		
Flattery (shows loyalty to important individuals in a way that affects administrative performance)			
Conflict (due to mistrust)	Offending others	Leader’s v. Others	
collectivism (one criticizes the unacceptable actions of others with paradoxical standards)	Criticizing Others		
Collectivism (one intervenes in others’ affairs)			
Collectivism (one directs others)			
Prejudice (prejudice and discrimination are prevalent)	Conflicting with Others		
Visibility (to increase influence)	Leaders and Self-marketing	Leader’s own desires	

Visibility (to increase the attention of others)			
Narcissism (one exaggerates one's achievements)	Leaders and Self-fabrication		
Narcissism (the leader praises himself)			
Narcissism (the leader praises himself and loves titles)			
Manoeuvring (one falsifies knowledgeability)			
Self-pity (Self-compassion (social empathy is created through social and administrative practices)	Self-pity		

The interviews showed that there is an undisclosed practice of paradoxical leadership among school principals in both Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and that this practice often comes without the awareness of school principals, in addition to their lack of knowledge of the scientific basis for it. One of the principals of the schools made a comment in which he said, in Arabic (*sadad waqarib*) “*We try to be with everyone*”. This means that the principal works for the benefit of the work and the interest of the teachers at the same time, and when another principal was asked about the concept of paradoxical leadership, he replied that he was not aware of that, but all the practices he performed came under this concept.

### 3- Study result related to question 3 : Do principal's practices for paradoxical leadership vary based on teacher's gender, Principals gender, country, and experience.

#### Gender differences of teachers on PL

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of male and female teachers on the five dimensions of the PL (Paradoxical Leadership) scale. Male teachers (M = 4.04, SD = 0.969, N = 271) exhibited higher PL scores related to UI (Unpredictability and Inconsistency) compared to female teachers (M = 3.86, SD = 0.955, N = 436) (t = 2.417, df = 705, p < .05). Similarly, male teachers (M = 4.03, SD = 0.777, N = 271) reported higher PL scores related to SO (Self-Others Integration) than female teachers (M = 3.84, SD = 0.812, N = 436) (t = 3.106, df = 705, p < .001). Furthermore, male teachers (M = 3.98, SD = 0.787, N = 271) exhibited higher PL scores related to CA (Complexity and Ambiguity) compared to female teachers (M = 3.86, SD = 0.816, N = 436) (t = 2.003, df = 705, p < .001). In terms of PL scores related to RF (Relationship Flexibility), male teachers (M = 3.70, SD = 0.811, N = 271) reported higher scores compared to female teachers (M = 3.58, SD = 0.775, N = 436) (t = 1.987, df = 705, p < .001).

However, there was no significant difference between male (M = 3.88, SD = 0.803, N = 271) and female (M = 3.77, SD = 0.799, N = 436) teachers on DC (Dilemma of Control) (t = 1.800, df = 705, p < .05). Regarding the overall PL factor, male teachers (M = 3.93, SD = 0.704, N = 271) reported higher general PL beliefs compared to female teachers (M = 3.78, SD = 0.718, N = 436) (t = 2.644, df = 705, p < .001). (See Table 6).

**Table 6.** Results of t-test and descriptive statistics for PL by teacher's gender.

Dimension	Gender	n	Mean	SD	T-value	df	P
UI	Male	271	4.04	0.969	2.417	705	0.016*
	Female	436	3.86	0.955			
SO	Male	271	4.03	0.777	3.106	705	0.002**
	Female	436	3.84	0.812			
CA	Male	271	3.98	0.787	2.003	705	0.046*
	Female	436	3.86	0.816			
RF	Male	271	3.70	0.811	1.987	705	0.047*
	Female	436	3.58	0.775			
DC	Male	271	3.88	0.803	1.800	705	0.072
	Female	436	3.77	0.799			
Total	Male	271	3.93	0.704	2.644	705	0.008**
	Female	436	3.78	0.718			

UI: treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization; SO: combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness; CA: maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy; RF: enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility; DC: maintaining both distance and closeness; SD: standard deviation; \*\*Statistically significant at the 0.01 level; \*Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

### Gender differences of Principals on PL

An independent samples t-test performed comparing the mean scores of male and female principals on the five dimensions of the PL scale. There are no significant differences between the general factor of PL among respondents and in all dimensions according to gender of principals. (See Table 7).

**Table 7.** Results of t-test and descriptive statistics for PL by Principals gender.

Dimension	Gender	n	Mean	SD	T-value	df	P
UI	Male	320	3.899	1.026	-0.672	705	0.502
	Female	387	3.948	0.910			
SO	Male	320	3.943	0.835	0.850	705	0.395
	Female	387	3.892	0.778			
CA	Male	320	3.899	0.821	-0.191	705	0.849
	Female	387	3.911	0.796			
RF	Male	320	3.634	0.842	0.162	705	0.871
	Female	387	3.625	0.747			
DC	Male	320	3.834	0.827	0.644	705	0.520
	Female	387	3.795	0.782			
Total	Male	320	3.842	0.744	0.147	705	0.883
	Female	387	3.834	0.693			

UI: treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization; SO: combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness; CA: maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy; RF: enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility; DC: maintaining both distance and closeness; SD: standard deviation; \*\*Statistically significant at the 0.01 level; \*Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

### The effect of Country on PL

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of Egyptian and Saudi teachers on the five dimensions of the PL (Paradoxical Leadership) scale. Saudi teachers ( $M = 4.149$ ,  $SD = 0.921$ ,  $N = 374$ ) demonstrated higher PL scores related to UI (Unpredictability and Inconsistency) compared to Egyptian teachers ( $M = 3.675$ ,  $SD = 0.950$ ,  $N = 333$ ) ( $t = -6.739$ ,  $df = 705$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Similarly, Saudi teachers ( $M = 4.035$ ,  $SD = 0.796$ ,  $N = 374$ ) reported higher PL scores related to SO (Self-Others Integration) than Egyptian teachers ( $M = 3.780$ ,  $SD = 0.792$ ,  $N = 333$ ) ( $t = -4.254$ ,  $df = 705$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Furthermore, Saudi teachers ( $M = 4.078$ ,  $SD = 0.814$ ,  $N = 374$ ) exhibited higher PL scores related to CA (Complexity and Ambiguity) compared to Egyptian teachers ( $M = 3.712$ ,  $SD = 0.753$ ,  $N = 333$ ) ( $t = -6.188$ ,  $df = 705$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In terms of PL scores related to RF (Relationship Flexibility), Saudi teachers ( $M = 3.739$ ,  $SD = 0.815$ ,  $N = 374$ ) reported higher scores compared to Egyptian teachers ( $M = 3.506$ ,  $SD = 0.745$ ,  $N = 333$ ) ( $t = -3.944$ ,  $df = 705$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Moreover, Saudi teachers ( $M = 3.882$ ,  $SD = 0.817$ ,  $N = 374$ ) exhibited higher PL scores related to DC (Dilemma of Control) compared to Egyptian teachers ( $M = 3.734$ ,  $SD = 0.779$ ,  $N = 333$ ) ( $t = -2.448$ ,  $df = 705$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Regarding the overall PL factor, Saudi teachers ( $M = 3.977$ ,  $SD = 0.711$ ,  $N = 374$ ) reported higher general PL beliefs compared to Egyptian teachers ( $M = 3.682$ ,  $SD = 0.689$ ,  $N = 333$ ) ( $t = -5.589$ ,  $df = 705$ ,  $p < .001$ ).. (see Table 7).

**Table 8.** Results of t-test and descriptive statistics for PL by Country

Dimension	Country	n	Mean	SD	T-value	df	P
UI	Egypt	333	3.675	0.950	-6.739	705	0.00
	Saudi	374	4.149	0.921			
SO	Egypt	333	3.780	0.792	-4.254	705	0.00
	Saudi	374	4.035	0.796			
CA	Egypt	333	3.712	0.753	-6.188	705	0.00
	Saudi	374	4.078	0.814			
RF	Egypt	333	3.506	0.745	-3.944	705	0.00
	Saudi	374	3.739	0.815			
DC	Egypt	333	3.734	0.779	-2.448	705	0.015
	Saudi	374	3.882	0.817			
Total	Egypt	333	3.682	0.689	-5.589	705	0.00
	Saudi	374	3.977	0.711			

UI: treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization; SO: combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness; CA: maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy; RF: enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility; DC: maintaining both distance and closeness; SD: standard deviation; \*\*statistically significant at the 0.01 level; \*statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

#### Effect of teacher experience on PL

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a significant main effect of teacher experience on one dimension of the PL (Paradoxical Leadership) scale, specifically RF (Relationship Flexibility) ( $F(2, 704) = 4.757, p = .009$ ). Post hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD (Honestly Significant Difference) test indicated that PL scores in RF were higher for teachers with low experience compared to those with moderate experience, and for teachers with moderate experience compared to those with high experience. However, there were no significant differences in PL scores related to UI (Unpredictability and Inconsistency), SO (Self-Others Integration), CA (Complexity and Ambiguity), DC (Dilemma of Control), and the general factor of PL among teachers with low, moderate, and high teaching experiences ( $p = 0.240, 0.083, 0.099, 0.305, 0.072$ , respectively). (see Table 8)

**Table 8.** Means, standard deviation, and one-way ANOVA for PL scale by teacher experience

Dimension	Level of experience	n	Mean	Standard deviation	F-value	df	P
UI	< 5	351	3.965	0.951	1.428	2	0.240
	5-10	145	3.807	1.031		704	
	> 10	211	3.944	0.935			
SO	< 5	351	3.969	0.779	2.502	2	0.083
	5-10	145	3.792	0.858		704	
	> 10	211	3.910	0.799			
CA	< 5	351	3.963	0.787	2.325	2	0.099
	5-10	145	3.795	0.855		704	
	> 10	211	3.886	0.799			
RF	< 5	351	3.669	0.826	4.757	2	0.009
	5-10	145	3.450	0.720		704	
	> 10	211	3.686	0.763			
DC	< 5	351	3.806	0.827	1.190	2	0.305
	5-10	145	3.739	0.772		704	
	> 10	211	3.872	0.779			
Total	< 5	351	3.874	0.717	2.645	2	0.072
	5-10	145	3.717	0.731		704	
	> 10	211	3.859	0.698			

The dimensions of the PL (Paradoxical Leadership) scale, along with their respective definitions and abbreviations, are as follows: UI (Unpredictability and Inconsistency): Treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization. SO (Self-Others Integration): Combining self-centeredness with other centeredness. CA (Complexity and Ambiguity): Maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy. RF (Relationship Flexibility): Enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility. DC (Dilemma of Control): Maintaining both distance and closeness. Note\*\* :Statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

\*Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

### **Discussion:**

#### **- Results related to the first question:**

The study showed that the paradoxical leadership pattern in the Arab context is consistent with the global pattern according to the study's outputs, with the existence of a specificity for Arab culture, which is affected by the cultural and religious heritage, as the specific contents of the Arab paradoxical study were identified, represented by: Honoring the Past , Self-pity , Leaders and Self-fabrication , Leaders and Self-marketing , Conflicting with Others, Criticizing Others , Honoring the Present. It is in line with the roles of the Arab school leader in both Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Where most of the pre-university educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, with their diversity and different circumstances, are characterized by an organizational structure that does not help in launching, planning, and implementing change, as it does not give space to the educational practitioner to practice his professionalism, and to be an actor in change (Halabi et al, 2017). Also, (Beckham, 2009) believes that enabling the members of the educational institution to achieve its goals depends on influencing them intentionally and on an equal footing to motivate all employees by influencing a common ground. These results are in harmony with what the field study came out of the interdependence of the dimensions of the paradoxical study based on the global cultural dimension contained in (Zhang et al. (2021)) and represented in: treat teachers uniformly while allowing for individualization (UI); combined self-centeredness and other-centeredness (SO); Maintain decision control while allowing for autonomy (CA); Imposing work requirements with flexibility (RF); maintain distance and proximity (DC). This confirms the impact of training and modern trends on the thinking of school principals (Abunaser,2019).

#### **- Results related to the second question:**

The field results showed that there are high estimates by the study sample of teachers about the practice of school principals of the dimensions of paradoxical leadership, and to a large extent this result shows aspects of the personality of the Arab principal in both Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The mean values for different dimensions ranged between (3.81-3.93), The general mean of the scale was (3.84), and these values indicate a high degree of practice.

This result may be due to the desire of school principals to facilitate the various administrative work in a way that serves the interest of the work on the one hand and the employees of the school on the other hand, and this is common in the Arab culture. To the availability of the elements of paradoxical leadership among the directors of departments in Egypt, school administrations, Where the study of Allam (2022) indicated the availability of the elements of paradoxical leadership among the directors of departments in Egypt, the school administrations were greatly affected. In addition, Mustafa's study (2021) showed that school principals are affected by training, the environment, and the prevailing culture in the educational community, which justifies these results. To deepen the understanding of the pattern of practicing c paradoxical leadership among school principals, the interviews showed that there is an unannounced practice of paradoxical leadership among school principals in both Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and that this practice comes without the awareness of school principals in most cases, in addition to their poor knowledge of the scientific basis for it. School principals commented, "*We pay, and we approach.*" This means that the principal works for the interest of the work and the interest of the teachers at the same time. When another principal was asked about the concept of paradoxical leadership, he answered that he did not know it, but all the practices he performed fell under this concept.

- **Results related to the third question:**

The results showed that there is a total of the estimates of both male and female teachers (according to gender) towards the practice of paradoxical leadership by school principals, and these estimates tend in favor of teachers, which makes school principals more representative of paradoxical leadership practices than female teachers, and this may be due in general to the social status of the Arab man who Shows more liberating practices than women, whether in the social context or the functional context, and makes his functional practices linked to other social practices. Despite this, the female teachers' estimates came in the field of (CA), the female teachers' estimates came more. It is the area of maintaining decision-making control while allowing for independence, which indicates the commitment of female principals more clearly than male managers according to the study sample do, and this is expected as female principals are affected by the societal field in the Arab context. To a lesser degree than managers, and therefore there is a greater chance of applying regulations and instructions more professionally than managers. They also have a full desire to implement the system to ensure the health of everyone, the stability of the school, and avoid exposure to any difficulties. This also applies to the field of: (SO) combining self-centeredness and centering on the other. This has been confirmed by studies Where paradoxical leaders can effectively deal with contradictions and synergies between them and tensions in the school, and deal with the integration of organizational paradoxes with a more open and inclusive attitude (Yang, Y., Li, Z., Liang, L. et al. 2021).

The results also showed that there were no differences between the estimates of both male and female teachers (according to the gender of the principal) towards the practice of paradoxical leadership by school principals. uniformly but with exclusivity allowed; the combination of self-centeredness and the other while maintaining independence; imposing work requirements with some flexibility; And maintain communication in an appropriate manner. This is expected given that male and female managers are subject to the same standards upon appointment, as well as undergoing the same training programs and given their presence in the same organizational environment. In addition to the unified social context for all male and female managers, which makes the mechanism for their implementation of leadership practices of a unified nature, and this was confirmed by a study (Qandil, and Al-Shadi, 2018).

The results also showed that there are statistically significant differences in the responses of teachers in both the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Egypt due to the paradoxical leadership practices of school principals according to the country, and that these differences tend in favor of the responses of teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, whether at the level of sub-dimensions or in the general average of the tool, and this is expected in In light of the training programs that school principals receive in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the educational renewal in the Saudi education system in accordance with its vision 2030, where training takes place on modern administrative practices, including paradoxical leadership, as this may be due to the fact that school leadership in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is more affected by the system of human relations and the educational system together Which makes many practices paradoxical practices (Abunaser, 2019).

- **Closing Remark**

The paradoxical behaviors of school principals are among the issues that determine the success of school leadership, which is reflected during the educational process in the school learning community. However, it is also attributed to an Arab heritage and culture based on the culture of Arab schools, the pattern of training and qualification in these systems, and the nature of relations in the Arab social perspective. The study also showed that there are many demographic variables that can contribute to the difference in these contradictions, including gender and the state.

**Recommendations:**

Based on the findings of this study, it recommends the following:

- Benefiting from the study's outputs in developing training programs to improve the paradoxical leadership style to train school principals on concepts and practices that improve their skills and school leadership.
- The necessity of updating and reconsidering programs for qualifying and selecting school leaders in line with global educational and professional changes.



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