# Servant Leadership, CSR Perceptions, Moral Meaningfulness and Organizational Identification: Evidence from the Middle East

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**Abstract**

This article explores a novel process linking servant leadership (SL) to organizational identification (OI). In doing so, the study examines SL as an antecedent of internal corporate social responsibility (CSR) perceptions of employees and assesses moral meaningfulness as a moderator in the relationship between SL and OI through internal CSR perceptions. It also explores how the SL-OI relationship varies across the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia. Two-wave and three-wave survey data are collected from employees working for international SMEs in the three countries. Findings show that the link between SL and OI can be explained by the proposed moderated mediation model and that the SL-OI relationship varies across the nations. Implications of these findings are discussed.

**Keywords:** Servant leadership; Internal CSR perceptions; Organizational identification; Moral meaningfulness; Middle East

**Introduction**

Servant leadership (SL) is one of the emergent theories succeeding prior academic emphasis on other leadership styles such as transformational and transactional leadership (e.g., Eisenbeiss et al., 2008; Pieterse et al., 2010). Servant leaders are both servants and leaders at the same time, and view serving others and being attentive to their needs as their main priority (Greenleaf, 1977). Although the roots of SL theory can easily be traced back to previous centuries, this leadership style is considered an enthralling topic to study for researchers and is portrayed as a theory with substantial potential (Serrat, 2017). In spite of mounting interest from scholars, critics still mark the absence of rigorous processes, theories, contexts, and different methodological techniques within the SL literature (Eva et al., 2019). The importance of leadership styles is demonstrated by studying different leadership constructs in all business fields, including International Business (e.g., Fey et al., 2001; Yaprak et al., 2018). Although SL shares similar characteristics with other leadership theories, it still holds a unique position. It distinctively stipulates a combination of the motivation to be a leader and the need to serve others. It is also the most overt leadership style that accentuates the significance of followers' growth and development without essentially being directly associated with organizational outcomes, such as making profit (Walumbwa et al., 2010). International Business scholars have highlighted the need to understand micro-level aspects, such as managers' routines and actions, which ultimately add up and contribute to the explanation of macro-level phenomena (e.g., Al-Atwi et al., 2019; Del Giudice et al., 2017). A recent meta-analysis in Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS) explores the relationship between supervisor transformational leadership and employee innovation (Watts et al., 2020).

This study seeks to contribute to the literature by exploring a novel underlying process that links SL to organizational identification (OI). OI refers to the extent to which an individual defines himself/herself in terms of an organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). It has been associated with a wide range of desirable outcomes such as organizational commitment,

organizational citizenship behavior, and job satisfaction (e.g., Turker, 2009; Lee et al., 2015). It has also been linked to performance which determines the survival of an organization (Carmeli et al., 2007). For this reason, examining different processes that lead to OI is salient. This study intends to accomplish this by proposing that SL leads to OI through eliciting positive internal corporate social responsibility (CSR) perceptions that, in turn, lead to OI, moderated by moral meaningfulness. This is explored in three countries with different demographics.

Research shows that there is a palpable incessant interest in the link between leadership and CSR. As a popular concept, encouraged by the United Nations (through their sustainable development goals), by nation states, and by industries and organizations, both Multinational Enterprises and international Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) (see explanation of international SMEs by European Commission, 2010, p 5; details explained under method section below), CSR remains a foremost strategy and goal of companies that are constantly pressured to express social concern in an increasingly socially mindful market (Tourky et al., 2019). Studies that have associated leadership with CSR so far have chiefly focused on transformational, transactional, ethical, and participative leadership (e.g., Lythreatis et al., 2019; Tian et al., 2015), either looking at CSR as a broad concept or at one specific type of this concept, such as internal CSR. Internal CSR refers to the social responsibility activities that are directed toward internal stakeholders and are related to how the firm operates internally (Basil & Erlandson, 2008). Internal stakeholders are the most influential bodies in an international business enterprise (Zhao et al., 2018). It would be intriguing to see whether SL enriches the perspective on internal CSR and if it could possibly add power to the search for antecedents of CSR perceptions (Christensen et al., 2014). According to a recent review on CSR research in international business journals, Zhao et al. (2018) state that "CSR's impact on stakeholder (employee) perceptions may be much more important than the actual CSR activities, as these perceptions are the foundation on which stakeholders base their decisions and attitudes." (p.7).

These perceptions have been linked to several desirable employee attitudes and behaviors, such as organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior as well as to performance (e.g., Lee et al., 2013; Turker, 2009). Determining what leads to positive employee CSR perceptions, therefore, is essential. Despite this, surprisingly, there has been a relative neglect of the study of antecedents of CSR perceptions (Gond et al., 2017) as there are only a few studies that have been dedicated to ascertaining such antecedents (e.g., Panagopoulos et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2015). As a result, there have been calls to determine more drivers of perceived CSR (e.g., Lee et al., 2013; Tian et al., 2015). Drawing on social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), one of the objectives of this study is to address these calls by examining SL as an antecedent of internal CSR perceptions.

In addition, several studies have looked at the link between internal CSR perceptions and OI (e.g., De Roeck et al., 2014; Lythreatis et al., 2019). Different boundary conditions have been considered in this association, such as local orientation, individualism, and calling orientation (Farooq et al., 2017; Hameed et al., 2016). However, considering the significance of both constructs in generating outcomes, scholars emphasize the importance of determining further possible moderators in the relationship between CSR perceptions and OI, especially conditions related to individual differences (Gond et al., 2017). In particular, researchers have proposed investigating meaningfulness in terms of the CSR literature (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019). Drawing on deontic justice theory (Folger, 2001), this study answers these research calls by examining the moderating role of an individual's moral meaningfulness, which refers to the extent to which an individual obtains meaning from behaving in an ethical way at work (May et al., 2014), on the relationship between internal CSR perceptions and OI. It also examines how other individual differences, such as the demographic variables, impact the indirect relationship between SL and OI through internal CSR perceptions. The impact of CSR on employees as a unit of analysis has received limited attention in international business (Zhao

et al., 2018). Nevertheless, Liesch et al. (2011) found a progression from an extended emphasis on macro issues to a focus on micro-level subjects when they investigated the international business field across the lens of JIBS.

This study's moderated mediation model is tested in the "Greater Middle East" region, which also includes the North African countries, where the concept of CSR remains underdeveloped compared to other regions of the world and where empirical knowledge on CSR in international SMEs is almost non-existent, although particular CSR efforts have been demonstrated by certain countries in the region, such as the emerging market of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This region has amassed increased interest in the international management literature. The three countries selected for this study are the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia as they embody a subset that reflects the real diversity of the region. According to Ralston et al. (2012), the heterogeneity in countries is explained by both past and present-day influences that shape the business environment, and countries cannot be considered similar if they reflect different socioeconomic and political realities. They believe that there is a need to commit efforts to better appreciate within-region distinctions as country differences challenge generalized observations at the regional level. Additionally, Al-Khatib et al. (2005) explain how research has cautioned against grouping the Arab nations into a single cluster. The differences among the selected countries will be highlighted throughout the study. In addition to international demands, enterprises in each nation are exposed to unique requirements at the national level (Mazboudi et al., 2020). Since organizational practices are not universal, but based on cultural, institutional, social, and historical national features (Barmeyer et al., 2019), the study takes a closer look at how the SL-OI relationship varies among the three countries and how the demographics of the sample from each country influence the relationship, drawing on institutional theory.

Overall, this study makes several contributions to the literature. First, it contributes to both the leadership and OI literatures by exploring a novel underlying process linking SL to OI. It also contributes to the development of SL in international business as other leadership styles such as participative leadership, transformational leadership, and paternalistic leadership have already been covered in the international field (Aycan et al., 2013; Huang et al., 2011). The study also makes a valuable empirical contribution to the cross-cultural applicability of SL (Van Dierendonck et al., 2017) and shows how the relationship between SL and OI varies across three nations. Second, this study contributes to the CSR literature by proposing that SL is an antecedent of internal CSR perceptions, and thus expands prior micro-CSR research that has mainly focused on CSR and its consequences and fairly ignored the antecedent aspect (Gond et al., 2017). It also contributes to the recent interest and research calls in CSR in emerging markets in international business (Tashman et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2018). Additionally, it contributes to comparative CSR research in non-developed economies (Demirbag et al., 2017). Third, by testing moral meaningfulness, which is a relatively new construct that has been overlooked to date, as a moderator of the CSR-OI relationship, this study contributes to the CSR-OI literature stream (De Roeck et al., 2014). It also contributes to international business by studying micro level aspects which scholars in the field have referred to as important causes of macro level actions by organizations and societies, thus investigating internal drivers of international performance (Ralston et al., 2018). Finally, the study also contributes contextually by being sited at the intersection of the fairly neglected aspect of CSR research, focusing on CSR in international SMEs in Middle Eastern countries that are understudied in international business.

**Theoretical Framework**

*SL, CSR Perceptions, and OI*

The theory of SL states that the main goal of leadership ought to be serving the needs of others and that being viewed as a servant is a possible explanation to a leader's greatness. A leader chooses to serve with the intent that those being served can grow as individuals and reach their highest potential. The goals of an organization will be achieved in the long-term through the development and well-being of the followers who will mimic the leader's behavior and prioritize the needs of others above their own (Greenleaf, 1997). One popular classification of SL is that of Liden et al. (2008) who proclaim that SL has seven dimensions: emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, and behaving ethically. These dimensions distinguish SL from other leadership theories. For instance, even though this leadership style shares some characteristics with participative leadership such as communication, listening, and delegation, other characteristics of SL are not necessarily present in participative leadership, such as service and integrity (McMahon, 1976).

According to Mittal & Dorfman (2012), nations differ in endorsing SL and, therefore, it is important to study this construct in different countries. A lot of its philosophy dates back to religious scriptures, especially since the concept of service is taught by all major religions (Sendjaya et al., 2008). This makes the Middle East, which is known for being religious, a good place to explore this leadership style. Additionally, Sarayrah (2004) observed the Arabs in the light of SL characteristics and claimed that they, in general, display SL behavior as they believe they are servants of God and the people.

Studying how SL and internal CSR are related suggests noteworthy potential to advance research in leadership and CSR (Christensen et al., 2014). A dominant classification of CSR in

the literature divides the concept into external and internal CSR (Basil & Erlandson, 2008; Hameed et al., 2016). External CSR incorporates activities directed toward external stakeholders, such as participating in environmental programs. Internal CSR pertains to activities directed toward employees and the internal operations of the firm, such as having non-discrimination work policies and strategies that support work-life balance. Internal CSR also represents compliance with all laws in hiring and giving employees benefits and the existence of programs that encourage diversity. Another aspect of an enterprise's internal CSR strategy would include encouraging employees to join civic organizations that support the community (Lythreatis et al., 2019). Thus, CSR starts with internal social responsibility and companies first tackle poverty, education, discrimination, and gender inequality through demonstrating well-developed internal CSR strategies that are aligned with the social aspect of national and supranational CSR strategies. The United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), for example, encourages enterprises to embed sustainability internally rather than treating it as simple philanthropy (Al Yammahi et al., 2019). An overlap between internal CSR activities and human resource management (HRM) practices exists as important elements of internal CSR include HRM practices related to staff training, working hours, equal opportunities, justice, wage distribution, and education (Kochar & Bisht, 2014).

Zhao et al. (2018) believe that companies make great investments in CSR, not only in environmental matters, but also in human capital. Several international business scholars argue that enterprises have to invest in HRM to achieve superior performance (Collins & Clark, 2003; Prange & Pinho, 2017). Yaprak et al. (2018) state that firm factors such as HRM as well as country-specific factors need to be considered as drivers of firms abroad, and that although enterprises in emerging markets have had significant effects on international business and the world economy, little is known of what advantages they possess. There have been special issues in international business journals that examine HRM in the Middle East as there has been a

shift in many Middle Eastern countries toward HRM advancement with significant investments in training and education that have helped the nations become stronger (Al-Atwi et al., 2019; Budhwar & Mellahi, 2007). This is one of the reasons why this study focuses solely on internal CSR. Another reason is that the study looks at employee perceptions of CSR, and employees are believed to develop more elaborate perceptions from organizational actions directed toward them than from actions directed toward other social groups (De Roeck et al., 2014; Gond et al., 2010).

The theoretical rationale used to link SL to internal CSR perceptions is based on social information processing (SIP) theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). The theory postulates that individuals obtain information cues from their social environment and use these cues to develop perceptions. The development of perceptions goes beyond individual personalities and is not fixed but rather prompted by the network of social and informational relationships in which the individual is embedded. If people are exposed to positive cues, they are more likely to construct positive perceptions (Zalesny & Ford, 1990). The information collected can derive from any source that emphasizes certain aspects of a situation. Individuals are customarily subjected to sources based on their affiliations, and people with power or high status tend to serve as crucial sources of social information (Boekhorst, 2015). In an employment context, employees obtain information cues from their work environment which help them form their work perceptions (Zafar, 2013). Leaders are considered a primary and relevant information source when employees develop perceptions of organizational activities because they are seen as paramount characteristics of the work context and serve as the most prominent representatives of organizational actions (Ostroff et al., 2003).

Two cardinal steps in information processing are encoding and retrieving information. When a person encodes information, it is streamlined and transmitted from the short-term memory to

the long-term memory. The person subsequently retrieves information from his/her long-term memory and makes a judgment (Lord & Maher, 2002). Upon interacting with the leader, employees encode and interpret specific social information cues which direct the employees' perceptions of the leader and his/her intentions and behaviors that, in turn, affect their perceptions of organizational practices, including internal CSR (Boekhorst, 2015).

Servant leaders are viewed as reliable and authentic sources of information and are believed to elicit positive energy among followers (Greenleaf, 1977). They tend to create feelings of internal trust and fairness in the work environment where employees consequently acquire positive emotions (Liden et al., 2014). Servant leaders also demonstrate empathy toward followers, which makes them more likely to experience positive emotional states (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Emotions are considered to be particularly significant in processing information (Dodge, 1991). By attaining positive emotions from an SL style, employees would process the information positively, and therefore form positive perceptions of the organizational practices, including internal CSR practices. Additionally, according to the SL theory, leaders exist to serve people's needs, such as their need for personal growth. SL builds a sense of community within the organization that highlights the sharing of power, information, and recognition (Liden et al., 2014). Since servant leaders display characteristics that demonstrate putting employees' needs first and allow a sharing of power in decision-making, employees feel that their interests are being manifested in the firm's actions and are therefore more likely to develop positive perceptions concerning the enterprise's internal activities (Sendjaya et al., 2008). Thus, based on all the above, the following hypothesis is developed:

*Hypothesis 1: SL is positively related to internal CSR perceptions of employees.*

The relationship between employee internal CSR perceptions and OI is substantiated by social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). SIT posits that individuals acquire their social identity from their membership in different groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Membership in an organization is the most significant factor of an employee's social identity (Hogg & Terry, 2001). According to Ashforth & Mael (1989), OI is an explicit form of social identification where employees define themselves in terms of their membership of a specific organization. SIT forms the roots of OI by explaining that an individual has two motives for identifying with a certain group. The primary motive is the need for self-categorization and the second motive is the need for self-enhancement (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). The former represents a reduction in uncertainty that the identification collectively offers, and the latter pertains to the enhancement of the sense of self-esteem. Employees assess their self-esteem through the social status of their organization and this may explain why they would identify with an organization that has an identity which boosts their self-worth and meets their need for self-enhancement (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). To satisfy their psychological needs for self-worth and form positive self-concepts and social identities, individuals tend to identify themselves with an attractive and distinctive group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2001). The organization's distinctiveness can be attested through its internal CSR activities. Employees assess how much they are valued through internal actions of the organization such as activities that show concern for their well-being, health, and safety (Hameed et al., 2016). Fuller et al. (2006) found that HRM practices such as training opportunities and organizational justice predict perceived internal status. These internal CSR activities will relate to the employee's reputational self and satisfy the need of maintaining a positive social identity (Tyler & Blader, 2002). Employees can feel that their company is distinctive in comparison with other companies through its enhancement of their reputational selves and will therefore identify with it (Hameed et al., 2016). This distinctiveness that stems from favorable intergroup comparisons is contended to

be among the most significant antecedents of OI (Farooq et al., 2017). Turker (2009) asserts that when employees perceive that the organization applies ethical and social standards, their identification with the company will increase because they will value their organizational membership more. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*Hypothesis 2: Internal CSR perceptions are positively related to OI.*

*Hypothesis 3: The relationship between SL and OI is mediated by internal CSR perceptions.*

According to Mazboudi et al. (2020), differences between countries' institutions have the potential to shed light on the way that enterprises approach and understand their societal roles. Aguilera et al. (2007) argued that because companies are embedded in different national systems, they experience different levels of pressure regarding CSR. Institutional variation may explain the differences in CSR across national contexts as CSR activities are framed through the social context (Ioannou & Serafeim, 2012). The basic notion within the institutional perspective is that enterprises are under social influence and pressure to adopt practices that are perceived as appropriate by their context (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Björkman et al., 2007). According to institutional theory, national culture, which represents a fundamental facet of societal context surrounding companies, may improve or hinder organizational practices such as management practices and HRM (Björkman et al., 2007). Other than cross-country variation in CSR, there is also cross-country variation in leadership. For example, Huang et al. (2011) found that there were varying perspectives toward participative leadership across national cultures, where national culture was referred to as cultural influences outside the company but within the country. Countries may differ in terms of several factors such as political system, regulatory framework, role of the state, resource profiles, wealth, colonial heritages, Western socio-cultural influences, GDP per capita, labor force, major ethnicities, and religion (Ralston et al., 2012). The countries considered for this study- the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia- differ in all these factors.

The UAE is a federation of emirates, with a federal constitutional monarchy, while Lebanon and Tunisia are republics. The UAE is one of the oil-rich Gulf countries, with high tax-free salaries. Its rich resources have created substantially different economic structures than the other two countries. Lebanon is located next to Israel and Syria. It is currently in enormous debt, with a rising unemployment rate due to its financial crisis. Tunisia is one of the Maghreb countries and is considered resource-poor. The main Western influences in the UAE have come from Britain, while Lebanon and Tunisia operated under the French rule historically (Ralston et al., 2012). The workforce in the UAE is distinctively dominated by expatriates (89.65%; Singh et al., 2019). Lebanon and Tunisia have abundant labor force, and Lebanon's labor market was hugely shifted when the country took in over a million Syrian refugees. Unlike Lebanon, the UAE and Tunisia are Islamic nations that follow Islamic rules. Lebanon is religiously diverse, and its president must be a Christian. Additionally, the political environment in the UAE is very stable. Lebanon, however, is composed of diverse political parties and witnesses frequent political uprisings. It also faces ongoing challenges with its neighbors (Ralston et al., 2012). Tunisia was one of the main countries of the 2011 Arab Spring revolution and has progressed politically since. Therefore, grouping Arab countries into one cluster may not be appropriate as differences among the countries exist (Al-Khatib et al., 2005). Thus, the following hypothesis is developed:

*Hypothesis 4: The mediated positive relationship between SL and OI will vary across the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia.*

### *Moral Meaningfulness as a Moderator*

Employees have different views about their work. Some view it solely as a way to make money, others view it as a path of career progression, while others view it as a way to bring meaning to their lives (Hameed et al., 2016). Moral meaningfulness is the extent to which one gains meaning from ethical behavior at work (May et al., 2014). The components in moral

meaningfulness push it closer to a moral perspective. How moral meaningfulness relates to internal CSR perceptions can be looked upon from a moral perspective through the deontic justice theory (Folger, 2001). This theory, which has previously been used in the context of internal CSR (Hameed et al., 2016), states that people care about doing the right thing and about the existence of justice since unfair treatment does not comply with moral and ethical norms (Folger, 2001). The company has duties toward its employees who often have moral principles, referred to as 'justice rules', which direct the moral treatment of others (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Lamprakis et al. (2018) reflect on organizational justice as part of HRM. The moral perspective postulates that individuals respond to how they and their coworkers are treated within an organization. Employees' positive perceptions of internal CSR activities suggest that the organization is executing ethical and moral norms toward its internal stakeholders. The perceived internal CSR illustrates to employees that their company has a deontic perspective as it is making an effort to meet these norms (Hameed et al., 2016).

Rupp et al. (2013) argue that employees are more likely to view the positive impacts of CSR activities if social responsibility and ethics are things that they already value. Employees with higher moral meaningfulness are therefore believed to place greater importance on CSR. For these employees, membership of an organization with a deontic perspective of justice gives them meaning. Employees who are high in moral meaningfulness are anticipated to care more about the company's CSR efforts and will subsequently be affected more by their perceptions of internal CSR (Rosso et al., 2010). Internal CSR activities enhance the image of the organization more for employees who place high value on ethics in the workplace as they would view the organization as distinctive and hence would be more likely to construct a stronger positive identity for themselves (Raub & Blunschi, 2014). An organization that displays ethical standards is very likely to be identified with, especially if these standards are in line with those of the employees' (Gond et al., 2010). Accordingly, for employees high in

moral meaningfulness, internal CSR perceptions will have a stronger relationship with OI. After all, moral meaningfulness drives people to seek self-unity and oneness (Babbitt, 2002). Oneness is at the core of the OI's definition since it is defined as the vision of a person's oneness and belongingness to an organization so that the membership to that organization transforms into a significant part of the individual's self-definition (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Thus, the mediating relationship proposed in this study is conditional, and the strength of the relationship between internal CSR perceptions and OI depends on moral meaningfulness. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*Hypothesis 5: Moral meaningfulness will moderate the indirect relationship between SL and OI through internal CSR perceptions, such that the mediated relationship will be stronger under high moral meaningfulness.*

In addition to moral meaningfulness, other conditions related to individual differences are important to be investigated (Gond et al., 2017). Individual differences, as manifested in salient demographic variables, affect identification (Sass & Canary, 1991). Organizational tenure and age have been found to be related to OI (Riketta, 2005). Education and gender have also been found to relate to OI (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Because the workforce in each of the considered nations is distinguished by some unique factors previously stated, and since differences in the mediated relationship between SL and OI across the countries are expected, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*Hypothesis 6: The overall effect of SL on OI will vary under the different demographic factors of the workforce in each country.*

**Method**

*Sample and Procedure*

A survey was conducted to collect data from employees in international SMEs in the private sector of the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia. Many studies look at SMEs in International Business, especially that a growing number of SMEs from emerging economies have committed themselves to international markets (Yan et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2016). SMEs in the Middle East constitute 75% of the private sector, employing 70% of the labor force (Jamali, 2017). They are considered a substantial foundation for a prosperous growth in the economy, and thus it is particularly vital to consider these enterprises. Access to 8 companies in the UAE, 10 companies in Lebanon, and 7 companies in Tunisia operating in the trading and service industries was gained through personal contacts. The majority of the companies have offices in more than one country. These international SMEs engage in international business, mainly by performing international trading services, as they are involved in worldwide exports. The term 'internationalization' refers to all activities that put "SMEs into a meaningful business relationship with a foreign partner: exports, imports, foreign direct investment (FDI-relocation or outsourcing), international subcontracting and international technical cooperation" (European Commission, 2010: p 5). Internationalization (or undertaking international business activity) for these SMEs took place at cross-border level, at transnational level inside the Middle East or at international level beyond the Middle East region.

In terms of data collection, for some enterprises, employees were approached through internal mail whilst in other cases the researchers assigned a person to collect the survey that was distributed to employees by hand. With the aim of limiting the risk of common method bias, obtaining a more robust design of the study, and adding credence in the obtained findings, a temporal separation technique was applied (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Data was collected at two separate points in time from employees in the UAE and Tunisia, and at three separate points in

time from employees in Lebanon, with one month between consecutive waves. Additionally, according to a review on SL, Eva et al. (2019) recommend researchers to aim at collecting data at multiple points in time and use temporal separation to aid in assessing processes that explain relationships in which SL is involved.

In the UAE, in the first wave of the survey (Time 1), 352 out of the 604 questionnaires that were sent to employees by email were usable, yielding a response rate of 58.28%. In the second wave (Time 2), 217 responses out of the 352 completed questionnaires were matched, with a response rate of 61.65%. Of the 217 respondents, 52.53% were males. Most of the participants were between the ages of 31 and 40 years old (29.49%) and reported a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education (69.12%). The majority of the respondents stated a tenure between 5 and 10 years (34.10%).

In Lebanon, at Time 1, 469 out of the 692 questionnaires distributed to employees by hand were usable with a 67.77% response rate. At Time 2, 333 out of the 469 completed questionnaires were matched, yielding a response rate of 71%. In the third wave of the survey (Time 3), 229 out of the 333 employees who completed the questionnaire were matched with a response rate of 68.77%. In the final sample, 58.52% were males. Most of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 30 years old (38.43%) and reported a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education (61.57%). Most participants reported a tenure of less than 5 years (49.78%).

In Tunisia, at Time 1, a total of 380 usable questionnaires out of the 572 distributed by hand were returned for a 66.43% response rate. At Time 2, 202 out of the 380 completed questionnaires were matched with a response rate of 53.16%. Of the 202 participants, 68.81% were males. Most of the participants were between the ages of 31 and 40 years old (32.67%)

and reported that their highest level of education was a bachelor's degree (77.72%). The majority of the respondents stated a tenure between 5 and 10 years (35.15%).

*Instrument*

The survey consisted of 7-point Likert Scale items, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, for the main four constructs (SL, internal CSR, OI, and moral meaningfulness), as well as four demographic questions. The questionnaire was presented in English for employees working in the UAE and Lebanon, with the English language commonly spoken in these countries (Diab, 2006; Randall & Samimi, 2010). Nevertheless, abiding by Brislin's (1980) suggestions on back-translation, the questionnaire was translated into French prior to being circulated in Tunisia as French is one of the two main languages spoken in the country (Daoud, 2001). The initial translation was completed by a professional translator. The translated questionnaire was consequently back-translated into English by a bilingual scholar. When the two English versions of the questionnaire were compared, only slight differences were detected.

*SL:* A 28-item scale developed by Liden et al. (2008) that measures the seven dimensions of SL was used at Time 1. Sample items include 'My supervisor cares about my personal well-being' and 'My supervisor gives me the responsibility to make important decisions about my job'. The respondents were requested to refer to their immediate supervisor. The scale alpha reliabilities for the 4-item scales of each of the seven dimensions for the samples from the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia, respectively, are as follows: emotional healing ($\alpha$=0.95, $\alpha$=0.92, $\alpha$=0.89); creating value for the community ($\alpha$=0.87, $\alpha$=0.88, $\alpha$=0.86); conceptual skills ($\alpha$=0.93, $\alpha$=0.90; $\alpha$=0.80); empowering ($\alpha$=0.92, $\alpha$=0.85, $\alpha$=0.84); helping subordinates grow and succeed ($\alpha$=0.91, $\alpha$=0.84; $\alpha$=0.83); putting subordinates first ($\alpha$=0.91, $\alpha$=0.88, $\alpha$=0.85); and behaving ethically ($\alpha$=0.92; $\alpha$=0.92, $\alpha$=0.83).

*Internal CSR perceptions:* An 8-item scale chosen from Maignan & Ferrell's (2001) CSR scale was used to measure internal CSR perceptions at Time 2. This measure has been used in prior research in the Middle East, and the items comply with the social aspect of national and supranational CSR activities, specifically the UNGC's human rights and labor principles (Lythreatis et al., 2019). Sample items are 'My company supports employees who want to acquire additional education' and 'My company has flexible policies which enable employees to better coordinate work and personal life'. The scale alpha reliabilities for the samples from the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia are 0.94, 0.93, and 0.92, respectively.

*OI:* A 6-item scale created by Mael & Ashforth (1992) was used to measure OI. OI was measured at Time 2 for the samples from the UAE and Tunisia, and at Time 3 for the sample from Lebanon. Sample items are 'When someone criticizes this company, it feels like a personal insult' and 'This company's success is my success'. The scale alpha reliabilities for the samples from the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia are 0.96, 0.92, and 0.92, respectively.

*Moral meaningfulness:* A 4-item scale developed by May et al. (2014) was used to measure moral meaningfulness at Time 2. Sample items include 'Maintaining high morals/ethics brings me meaning at work' and 'Doing the right thing at work is personally meaningful for me'. The scale alpha reliabilities for the samples from the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia are 0.88, 0.84, and 0.86, respectively.

*Demographic/control variables:* The study controlled for gender, age, education, and organizational tenure.

### *Statistical Analysis*

The validity and reliability of the study's constructs were assessed through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in Stata. The study used PROCESS macro that relies on principles of OLS regression to test the different hypotheses. The choice to adopt this method comes from its

strong ability and ease to deal with both mediation and moderation as well as moderated mediation models. This method has begun to replace more traditional approaches to mediation such as Baron & Kenny's (1986) mediation test and is able to deliver many capabilities of the SOBEL test in a single command (Deery et al., 2014). In an article exploring PROCESS macro versus structural equation modeling (SEM), Hayes et al. (2017) found that results obtained through both are greatly identical. However, SEM requires an increased effort and programming skills to compute relevant statistics that PROCESS performs quickly.

Three different models were analyzed for each of the three countries. The first model is the mediation model with a bootstrapping approach that addresses Hypotheses 1 to 4. The second model integrates the proposed moderator and is a moderated mediation model that addresses Hypothesis 5 and provides the conditional indirect effect at different levels of the moderator. Both a moderated mediation model and a moderation model was used to address Hypothesis 6.

**Results**

*Validity Analysis*

CFA was conducted to test how well the observed variables portray their respective construct. To achieve an improved subject-parameter-ratio, item parceling was applied (Matsunaga, 2008). The seven parcels of the SL construct were formed by averaging the items measuring each of the seven dimensions. Nonetheless, for each of the internal CSR perceptions, moral meaningfulness, and OI constructs, the items with the highest and lowest factor loadings were averaged and subsequently taken as indicators of their corresponding construct (Little et al. 2002). Internal CSR was composed of four parcels, moral meaningfulness was formed of two parcels, and OI ended up with three parcels. To assess the goodness of fit of the model to data in each of the three countries, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI),

the Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR), and the Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA) were applied. A CFI>0.90, a TLI>0.80, a SRMR<0.08 and a RMSEA<0.10 have been insinuated in the literature as indicators of a good model fit (Byrne, 2010; MacCallum et al., 1996). The CFA results, displayed in Table 1, reveal a good fit of the model to data from the three countries.

Table 1: Model fit to data

| Country | $\chi^2/df$ | CFI | TLI | SRMR | RMSEA |
|---------|-------------|------|------|------|-------|
| UAE | 2.82 | 0.93 | 0.91 | 0.03 | 0.09 |
| Lebanon | 2.52 | 0.94 | 0.92 | 0.03 | 0.08 |
| Tunisia | 2.84 | 0.91 | 0.89 | 0.04 | 0.09 |

*Note.* $\chi^2/df$ = Chi-Square/degrees of freedom; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker Lewis Index; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error Approximation

The CFA results also show that the composite reliability values for the variables in each country range between 0.87 and 0.96, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The average variance extracted (AVE) for the variables range between 0.67 and 0.89, exceeding 0.5 as recommended by Fornell & Larcker (1981). Hence, convergent validity is achieved. Additionally, the correlation matrices of the three samples are shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4. Discriminant validity is reached if the square root of the AVE of a construct is bigger than the correlations between this construct and the other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This is the case in each matrix. Thus, discriminant validity is supported.

Table 2: Correlations of the variables in the UAE sample

| | Mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1.Gender | 0.47 | 0.50 | | | | | | | | |
| 2.Age | 2.46 | 1.14 | -0.14* | | | | | | | |
| 3.Education | 2.25 | 0.55 | 0.08 | -0.16* | | | | | | |
| 4.Tenure | 2.23 | 1.02 | -0.09 | 0.79** | -0.25** | | | | | |
| 5.SL | 4.76 | 1.10 | 0.05 | -0.01 | 0.10 | -0.01 | **0.87**,(0.96) | | | |
| 6.CSR | 4.77 | 1.13 | -0.01 | -0.11 | -0.00 | -0.16* | 0.26** | **0.90**,(0.95) | | |
| 7.MM | 4.53 | 1.16 | -0.06 | -0.03 | 0.13 | -0.06 | 0.37** | 0.33** | **0.90**,(0.89) | |
| 8.OI | 5.12 | 1.22 | -0.00 | -0.12 | 0.07 | -0.17* | 0.29** | 0.69** | 0.10 | **0.94**,(0.96) |

*Note.* *n*=217. **p*<.05. ***p*<.01. The number in bold is the square root of the AVE. The number in brackets is the composite reliability. *SL*=servant leadership; *CSR*=corporate social responsibility; *MM*=moral meaningfulness; *OI*=organizational identification

Table 3: Correlations of the variables in the Lebanese sample

|  | Mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.Gender | 0.41 | 0.50 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.Age | 2.05 | 1.02 | 0.00 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3.Education | 2.30 | 0.55 | 0.17** | -0.20** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4.Tenure | 1.69 | 0.80 | -0.07 | 0.54** | -0.39** |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5.SL | 4.89 | 0.95 | 0.10 | -0.07 | 0.21** | -0.09 | **0.88**,(0.96) |  |  |  |
| 6.CSR | 4.77 | 1.03 | 0.13 | -0.03 | 0.15* | -0.10 | 0.49** | **0.87**,(0.93) |  |  |
| 7.MM | 4.70 | 0.99 | 0.03 | -0.02 | 0.21** | -0.06 | 0.55** | 0.43** | **0.88**,(0.87) |  |
| 8.OI | 4.78 | 1.11 | 0.14* | -0.04 | 0.08 | -0.06 | 0.56** | 0.68** | 0.39** | **0.91**,(0.93) |

*Note. n=229. *p<.05. **p<.01. The number in bold is the square root of the AVE. The number in brackets is the composite reliability. SL=servant leadership; CSR=corporate social responsibility; MM=moral meaningfulness; OI=organizational identification*

Table 4: Correlations of the variables in the Tunisian sample

|  | Mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.Gender | 0.31 | 0.46 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.Age | 2.43 | 1.12 | -0.13 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3.Education | 2.17 | 0.46 | 0.01 | -0.17* |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4.Tenure | 2.13 | 0.97 | -0.09 | 0.76** | -0.24** |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5.SL | 4.77 | 0.96 | 0.03 | 0.24** | 0.07 | 0.14* | **0.82**,(0.94) |  |  |  |
| 6.CSR | 4.63 | 1.28 | -0.02 | 0.04 | 0.00 | 0.05 | 0.28** | **0.90**,(0.94) |  |  |
| 7.MM | 4.44 | 1.28 | -0.03 | 0.02 | -0.01 | 0.09 | 0.27** | 0.71** | **0.88**,(0.88) |  |
| 8.OI | 4.86 | 1.22 | 0.06 | 0.04 | -0.11 | 0.03 | 0.38** | 0.64** | 0.50** | **0.89**,(0.92) |

*Note. n=202. *p<.05. **p<.01. The number in bold is the square root of the AVE. The number in brackets is the composite reliability. SL=servant leadership; CSR=corporate social responsibility; MM=moral meaningfulness; OI=organizational identification*

***Common Method Bias***

To deal with the common method bias (CMB) problem, several remedies suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003) were applied. As mentioned before, data was collected at more than one point for each of the three countries. During the data collection phase, confidentiality and anonymity of responses were guaranteed to participants in an effort to minimize social desirability and evaluation apprehension. The suggestions by Conway & Lance (2010) were also followed to tackle the problem of CMB. One way suggested to eliminate the considerable method effects was through demonstrating construct validity of the measures used in the section above. Another way was to ensure that no conceptual overlap in items used to measure different constructs exists as this can bias relationships.

Additionally, the possible influence of CMB was statistically examined using the unmeasured latent methods factor approach, which consists of creating a latent common methods variance factor and examining the significance of the different parameters of the model both with and

without this factor in the model. The various items load on their own theoretical constructs as well as on the latent common methods variance factor. If the parameters of the indicators that loaded on a latent methods factor do not change considerably compared to the analysis preceding the addition of the latent factor, then controlling for the unmeasured latent method factor had a very small effect, implying that the likelihood for CMB in the data is low (Johnson et al., 2011). The loadings of the different indicators on their corresponding constructs only marginally changed when the latent factor was added for the models of the three countries. The difference in loadings with and without the latent method factor did not exceed 0.05, which means that CMB is not a problem in this study.

### *Hypotheses Testing*

The results of the path analyses among the different variables for the three countries are shown in Table 5. As illustrated in the table, the paths from SL to internal CSR perceptions are positive and significant for the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia. These results provide support for Hypothesis 1 which posits that SL is positively related to internal CSR perceptions of employees. Likewise, the paths from internal CSR perceptions to OI are positively significant for the models of the three countries. This provides evidence to support Hypothesis 2 which states that internal CSR perceptions are positively related to OI.

Table 5: Results of path coefficients

| Country | $\beta_{SL \to CSR}$ (SE) | $\beta_{CSR \to OI}$ (SE) | $\beta_{SL \to OI}$ (SE) |
|---------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| UAE | 0.27 (0.07)** | 0.65 (0.06)** | 0.16 (0.06)** |
| Lebanon | 0.48 (0.06)** | 0.53 (0.06)** | 0.38 (0.06)** |
| Tunisia | 0.37 (0.09)** | 0.53 (0.05)** | 0.29 (0.07)** |

*Note.* Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported (Hayes, 2017); standard errors in parentheses; **$p<.01$. $\beta$=path coefficient; SL=servant leadership; CSR=corporate social responsibility; OI=organizational identification. Results remained significant when tested without the controls

The results of the mediation model for the three countries are displayed in Table 6. The indirect effects of SL on OI through internal CSR perceptions were examined based on bootstrapped

confidence intervals. The 95% confidence intervals of the indirect effects were obtained with 5,000 bootstrap samples. The indirect effect is significant at the 95% level of significance if its confidence interval does not cross zero (Hayes, 2017). As is shown in Table 6, the indirect effect of SL on OI through internal CSR perceptions is positive and significant as the lower and upper levels of the confidence interval for this effect do not include zero for the models of the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia. These results provide evidence to support Hypothesis 3, which suggests that the relationship between SL and OI is mediated by internal CSR perceptions. Nevertheless, since the direct effects of SL on OI are also significant (as illustrated in Table 5), the existing mediation is expectedly partial in the three countries.

Table 6: Bootstrap indirect effects of SL on OI

| Country | Total effect of SL on OI | Indirect effect of SL on OI | LL 95% CI | UL 95% CI |
|---------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| UAE | 0.34 (0.07)** | 0.18 (0.07)* | 0.056 | 0.344 |
| Lebanon | 0.63 (0.07)** | 0.25 (0.07)* | 0.125 | 0.412 |
| Tunisia | 0.49 (0.09)** | 0.20 (0.07)* | 0.073 | 0.343 |

*Note.* Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported (Hayes, 2017); standard errors in parentheses; $*p<.05$, $**p<.01$. SL=servant leadership; OI=organizational identification; LL=lower limit; UL=upper limit; CI=confidence interval; Bootstrap sample size=5000. Results remained significant when tested without the controls

In addition to this, as is shown in Table 6, the magnitude of the effect of SL on OI varies among the three countries, with Lebanon having the highest effect, followed by Tunisia and then the UAE, providing support for Hypothesis 4 which states that the relationship between SL and OI varies across the three countries. To probe into the variation, each of the four dimensions of SL was considered separately. All the effects of the dimensions of SL on OI were positive and significant for the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia, ranging between 0.20 and 0.60, $p<.01$. Lebanon obtained the highest effects for all the dimensions. Table 7 shows the highest and lowest effects of the SL dimensions on OI for each country. As is illustrated, Lebanon's lowest effect of a dimension of SL on OI still surpasses the highest effect of a dimension of SL on OI for the UAE and is almost equivalent to that for Tunisia. Each country scored the highest effect for a

different dimension of SL. However, they obtained the lowest effect for the same dimension of SL (putting subordinates first).

Table 7: Effects of dimensions of SL on OI

| Country | Highest effect of an SL dimension on OI | Lowest effect of an SL dimension on OI |
|---|---|---|
| UAE | Creating value for community: 0.34(0.07)** | Putting subordinates first: 0.20(0.06)** |
| Lebanon | Conceptual Skills: 0.60(0.07)** | Putting subordinates first: 0.41(0.06)** |
| Tunisia | Empowering: 0.42(0.07)** | Putting subordinates first: 0.25(0.07)** |

*Note.* standard errors in parentheses; **p<.01.  SL=servant leadership; OI=organizational identification

To test Hypothesis 5, the moderated mediation model was run. The interaction effect of moral meaningfulness and internal CSR perceptions on OI is positive and significant for the three countries ($\beta$ =0.13, *p* <.01 for the UAE; $\beta$ =0.09, *p* <.05 for Lebanon; and $\beta$ =0.18, *p* <.01 for Tunisia). The mediation of SL's effect on OI through CSR perceptions is moderated by moral meaningfulness only if this indirect effect differs as a function of moral meaningfulness. The results of the moderated mediation model in terms of the conditional indirect effects for the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia are presented in Table 8.

The table shows the relationship between SL and OI through internal CSR perceptions at three levels of moral meaningfulness: the mean, one standard deviation above the mean, and one standard deviation below the mean (Hayes, 2017). As is shown, this indirect relationship is positive and significant when moral meaningfulness is low, when it is equal to its mean, and when it is high for the three countries. The greatest effect is displayed at the high moral meaningfulness level. Thus, among people relatively low in moral meaningfulness, the conditional indirect effect of SL on OI through internal CSR perceptions is the lowest. Among those moderate in moral meaningfulness, this effect is greater, and for those relatively high in moral meaningfulness, it is the greatest. This means that the conditional indirect effect of SL

on OI through internal CSR perceptions is positively significant and differs as a function of moral meaningfulness in the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia. This provides evidence to support Hypothesis 5 which postulates that moral meaningfulness moderates the indirect relationship between SL and OI through internal CSR perceptions, such that the mediated relationship is stronger under high moral meaningfulness.

Table 8: Construction of the conditional indirect effects of SL on OI through CSR perceptions at three different levels of moral meaningfulness

| Country | Moral meaningfulness | $a$: Effect of SL on CSR | $b_1 + b_3\ W$: Conditional effect of CSR on OI (SE) | $a_i\ (\ b_{1i} + b_{3i}\ W)$: **Conditional indirect effect of SL on OI through CSR (SE)** | LL 95% CI | UL 95% CI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UAE | -1.1579 (-1 SD) | 0.28** | 0.63(0.06)** | 0.17 (0.07)* | 0.054 | 0.344 |
| | 0.0000 (M) | 0.28** | 0.78(0.06)** | 0.21 (0.07)* | 0.076 | 0.362 |
| | 1.1579 (+1 SD) | 0.28** | 0.93(0.09)** | 0.26 (0.08)* | 0.097 | 0.403 |
| Lebanon | -0.9892 (-1 SD) | 0.48** | 0.43(0.07)** | 0.20 (0.07)* | 0.087 | 0.380 |
| | 0.0000 (M) | 0.48** | 0.52(0.06)** | 0.25 (0.07)* | 0.122 | 0.411 |
| | 0.9892 (+1 SD) | 0.48** | 0.61(0.07)** | 0.29 (0.09)* | 0.129 | 0.479 |
| Tunisia | -1.2839 (-1 SD) | 0.37** | 0.36(0.07)** | 0.13 (0.06)* | 0.031 | 0.274 |
| | 0.0000 (M) | 0.37** | 0.59(0.07)** | 0.22 (0.08)* | 0.077 | 0.416 |
| | 1.2839 (+1 SD) | 0.37** | 0.82(0.09)** | 0.30 (0.12)* | 0.111 | 0.572 |

*Note.* Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported (Hayes, 2017); standard errors in parentheses; *p<.05, **p<.01. SL=servant leadership; CSR=corporate social responsibility; OI=organizational identification; LL=lower limit; UL=upper limit; CI=confidence interval; SD=standard deviation; M=mean; Bootstrap sample size =5000. Results remained significant when tested without the controls

To test Hypothesis 6, first the moderated mediation model was run with every demographic variable for each country. There were no significant effects regarding gender, age, and tenure. However, there is variation in the results pertaining to the level of education. For the UAE, the interaction of education and internal CSR perceptions on OI is negative and significant ($\beta$= -0.19, $p<.05$). However, this interaction is positive and significant for Lebanon and Tunisia ($\beta$=0.21 and $\beta$=0.24, $p<.05$, respectively). The results are presented in Table 9. As is shown, the conditional indirect effect of SL on OI through CSR perceptions decreases for individuals with a higher level of education in the UAE, whereas this conditional indirect effect is the greatest among people with a higher level of education in Lebanon and Tunisia.

Table 9: Conditional indirect effects of SL on OI through CSR perceptions
at three different levels of education

| Country | Level of education | Conditional effect of CSR on OI (SE) | Conditional indirect effect of SL on OI through CSR (SE) | LL 95% CI | UL 95% CI |
|---------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| UAE | -0.5488 (-1 SD) | 0.77(0.08)** | 0.20 (0.08)* | 0.054 | 0.393 |
| | 0.0000 (M) | 0.66(0.06)** | 0.18 (0.07)* | 0.047 | 0.343 |
| | 0.5488 (+1 SD) | 0.56(0.08)** | 0.15 (0.07)* | 0.032 | 0.320 |
| Lebanon | -0.5549 (-1 SD) | 0.39(0.09)** | 0.20 (0.09)* | 0.051 | 0.433 |
| | 0.0000 (M) | 0.51(0.06)** | 0.26 (0.08)* | 0.130 | 0.425 |
| | 0.5549 (+1 SD) | 0.63(0.07)** | 0.31 (0.08)* | 0.152 | 0.466 |
| Tunisia | -0.4586 (-1 SD) | 0.43(0.07)** | 0.15 (0.06)* | 0.046 | 0.294 |
| | 0.0000 (M) | 0.54(0.05)** | 0.19 (0.07)* | 0.067 | 0.325 |
| | 0.4586 (+1 SD) | 0.65(0.08)** | 0.23 (0.08)* | 0.078 | 0.393 |

*Note.* Standard errors in parentheses; *p<.05, **p<.01. SL=servant leadership; CSR=corporate social responsibility; OI=organizational identification; LL=lower limit; UL=upper limit; CI=confidence interval; SD=standard deviation; M=mean; Bootstrap sample size =5000

Moreover, the CSR construct was removed from the equation to see whether the effects of the demographic variables on the SL-OI relationship would change, and the moderation model was run for every demographic variable for each country. Three significant moderating effects were obtained. For the UAE, the interaction of age and SL on OI is significant and positive ($\beta=0.14$, $p<.05$) and so is the interaction of tenure and SL on OI ($\beta=0.14$, $p<.05$). This indicates that as employees' age increases or as their organizational tenure increases, the positive association of SL with OI increases. Additionally, for Tunisia, gender was negatively related to OI ($\beta= -0.39$, $p<.05$), suggesting that men were less likely to identify with the enterprise than women. These results, together with the findings from Table 9, provide evidence to support Hypothesis 6 which states that the effect of SL on OI will vary under the different demographic factors of the workforce in each country.

**Discussion**

The aim of the study was to explore a novel process linking SL to OI. Through the process, the study intended to examine SL as an antecedent of internal CSR perceptions as well as determine moral meaningfulness as a moderator in the relationship between SL and OI through CSR

perceptions. The study also aimed at showing variations in the SL-OI link across three nations-the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia.

Results supported the hypothesis that SL is positively related to employee internal CSR perceptions. This finding provides support for the SIP theory as it is consistent with the idea that employees form their perceptions of internal organizational practices based on information cues collected from their work environment, and that the leader constitutes a prominent source of social information (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). The finding also contributes to the theory by empirically applying it in the connection of two new constructs. It adds value to the increasing curiosity regarding the leadership-CSR link and to the limited research exploring antecedents of CSR perceptions.

Results also supported the hypothesis that internal CSR perceptions are positively related to OI. This finding is consistent with the conception that identification is formed by employees' perceptions of the company and its practices, thus offering additional support for SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The path regression coefficients between internal CSR perceptions and OI are especially high in the three samples, ranging between 0.53 to 0.65. This is consistent with most of the studies that found that these two variables are positively related and, therefore, researchers can now fully concentrate on what strengthens or weakens this relationship rather than test that it exists. Furthermore, results provided evidence to support the hypothesis that internal CSR perceptions mediate the relationship between SL and OI. This illustrates that SL encourages internal CSR which in turn generates a positive impact for the company.

The findings also support the hypothesis that the mediated relationship between SL and OI vary across the UAE, Lebanon, and Tunisia. This outcome provides support for the institutional perspective as it shows that institutional differences play a role in the magnitude of the SL-OI association whilst applying it to understudied countries in international business. Lebanon has

the highest SL-OI effect, followed by Tunisia, and then the UAE. At this difficult time in Lebanon, amid the financial crisis, where many people have been left unemployed, the people that not only still have jobs, but are also treated very well by their leader who shows that he/she cares for their needs and makes them feel safe, may develop greater positive perceptions of the internal organizational activities. This situation may also explain why the "conceptual skills" dimension of SL has the highest effect on OI for the sample from Lebanon. One of the items within this dimension is "the leader can solve problems with new and creative ideas" and by scoring high on this dimension, employees in Lebanon show that they have confidence that their leader will find solutions amid the crisis that will keep them employed (Mazzucotelli, 2020). Regarding Tunisia, its workplace has undergone major improvements in organizational practices since the Arab Spring which can explain the positive perceptions of internal CSR in the SL-OI relationship. However, UAE is dominated by expatriates that, no matter how positive their perceptions regarding their leader and internal CSR are, their OI increases less than the other nations as expatriate employees know that they may be there temporary or that the rich country offers many other opportunities that they can consider. Further, the three countries show the smallest effect of SL on OI when the "putting subordinates first" dimension of SL is considered alone in the construct. This shows that although a leader may demonstrate many aspects of SL, he/she may not necessarily care more about the success of his/her subordinates than his/her own (one of the items of this dimension- see Liden et al. (2008)).

Results also provided evidence to support the hypothesis that moral meaningfulness moderates the indirect relationship between SL and OI through internal CSR perceptions, such that the mediated relationship is stronger under high moral meaningfulness. This finding assists in further developing the deontic justice theory. It is consistent with the notion that employees who place high value on ethics in their work lives are expected to care more about the company's deontic perspective (Folger, 2001). It provides empirical evidence that support the

significance of the deontic justice perspective in understanding the psychology of CSR and adds value to studies that have looked for a connection between deontic justice and CSR perceptions (Hameed et al., 2016; Rupp et al., 2013). The application of deontic justice theory is new to the Middle East.  Additionally, this finding assists in linking meaningfulness to CSR (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019).

In addition to this, findings supported the hypothesis that the effect of SL on OI varies in terms of the demographics of the workforce in the three countries. In the UAE, Education negatively moderated the mediated relationship between SL and OI such that it became weaker for individuals with higher education. In UAE, employees with higher education are more aware of opportunities that they can attain and already open to move (since the workplace is dominated by expatriates) which may inhibit them from going after the kind of identification that would enhance their social identities. People with high degrees are already expecting to be treated very well within the enterprise. However, the overall SL-OI relationship becomes stronger for employees in UAE that are older or have been with the company longer. This may be because, as they become older, the expatriates may not be as open to seeking employment elsewhere and, with longer time spent at the job, their work becomes their priority as that is why they are in the country. Unlike UAE, education positively moderated the mediated relationship between SL and OI through CSR such that it became stronger for individuals with higher education in Lebanon and Tunisia. Whilst expatriates in the UAE do not normally pursue education while working as their main reason for being in a foreign country is work, many employees in Lebanon and Tunisia attempt to pursue further education while employed and often associate attaining higher education to the flexible policies and support for education embedded in their organizational practices, which constitute two main items of internal CSR (see Lythreatis et al., 2019). Further, results also showed that men are less likely to identify with the company than women in Tunisia. Because women in Tunisia still do not feel as safe

as men and are still not given equal opportunities to men, when they are employed at an enterprise and treated well, they are more likely to feel secure and identify with the organization (Khalfallah, 2011). The descriptive statistics revealed that the enterprises in the UAE and Lebanon seem to promote gender balance more than those in Tunisia.

Further to this, the study has validated the cross-cultural applicability of SL (Van Dierendonck et al., 2017), and served to expand the essence of the CSR theory by determining a new antecedent of internal CSR perceptions, ascertaining a new boundary condition linked to CSR, and looking at the concept empirically in international SMEs in the Middle East.

**Practical Implications**

The findings of this study provide a good approach for managers to follow if they desire OI from their employees. Considering the benefits associated with identification, such as increased organizational performance, achieving higher OI is a way for the company to reach its goals (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). The results of the study help to realize the importance of a style like SL for the enhancement of positive outcomes and may hence encourage leaders to start adopting this specific style. Moreover, the findings of the study aid in recognizing and promoting the significance of having well-built and fair organizational practices. After acknowledging the benefits of positive internal CSR perceptions, managers may choose to make some adjustments to the HRM practices, such as provide policies that enable employees to better coordinate their work and personal lives or start supporting the employees who wish to obtain further education. Having well-developed HRM practices would augment employees' positive perceptions of internal CSR and would therefore benefit both the firm and the employees (Gond et al., 2010). Thus, improved internal organizational practices along with the right leadership style could further strengthen internal CSR perceptions. Additionally, considering the positive effect accompanied with high moral meaningfulness, a leader can

assay to increase employee's moral meaningfulness by setting a good example. Although the value placed on ethics at work can typically be considered something ingrained within the individual, employees who see their leader display high ethical standards are more likely to mimic his/her behavior themselves which may enhance their perceptions of meaning at work (Trevino & Brown, 2005). Managers will gain insights into how the demographics of their employees affect their OI. International managers may also find the results of this study intriguing and helpful in their dealings with associates in the Middle East.

**Limitations & Directions for Future Research**

This study did not control for competing constructs (Antonakis, 2017). It would be valuable to advance this research by collecting additional data and testing the effects of SL against alternative leadership styles. In addition, an extension of this research could be to include external CSR into the model, too. Although three countries, each with unique characteristics, were used in this study, another avenue for future research could be to include further countries to this research or explore this study's model in other geographical areas to see how results may vary. Also, although this study collected data for different variables at different points in time to minimize CMB and improve the design of the study, it can be followed up with a longitudinal design in which all data is collected at separate points with a longer time between consecutive waves to trace individual changes over time and induce causal inferences. Considering the importance of the SL-OI relationship, it would also be interesting to explore other mediators in the relationship.

Thus, there are opportunities to build on the current study which offers interesting insights that enhance knowledge of the process linking SL to OI in three Middle Eastern countries.

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