



More Human, Not Less: Global Relevance of Values-Based Leadership

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Abstract

As societal demands to become more human, not less, are growing globally, the case to understand the relevance of humanistic leadership approaches such as values-based leadership (VBL) becomes urgent. While multiple leadership theories offer useful perspectives to inform VBL practice, empirical works - especially those focusing on studying its relevance from a cross-national perspective are significantly lacking. Additionally, little is known about the application of VBL in different work domains. This international study addresses these gaps by reporting on survey research from four different countries and six work domains. Specifically, this paper discusses a multi-country study about the relevance of VBL to the political, non-profit, public, private, religious, and community work domains. In general, our findings suggest that VBL is seen as relevant to highly relevant across the focal countries and six work domains. We also discuss some of the key similarities and differences in how respondents rated the relevance of VBL in different contexts. We conclude that VBL potentially offers a timely and robust vehicle to address some of the urgent aspirations that employees and practitioners are expressing globally.

Keywords Values-based leadership · Cross-cultural leadership · Humanistic leadership · Values-driven leadership · Cross-sector leadership

In a recent interview, when asked about her leadership approach, the New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Arden observed, “I would like to think that we can see a new range of leadership traits being modelled where kindness isn’t seen as weakness, where empathy is actually how we understand our decisions impact on our people. And when we start to

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model those, I hope then that within the public, they see a little bit more of themselves." (Vaswani 2022).

Bain and Company recently organized a global survey of twenty thousand employees across 10 diverse countries to understand the emerging expectations and aspirations around the future of work. The title of their report sums up the key message, "The Working Future: More Human, Not Less." (Schwedel et al. 2022). In other words, the key leadership challenge is how do we rehumanize work as the fundamental expectations around the meaning and place of work in our lives are changing. VBL's humanistic focus is closely aligned with the expectations of the globally emerging psychological contract and makes a strong case to study its relevance and application across cultures.

In this introductory section, we provide a broad overview of major values-anchored leadership conceptualizations, identify gaps characterizing the field of VBL studies, and share the overall purpose of the current study. According to Mussig (2003) leadership as a relationship and as a behavior has values as a core dimension. These values are central to creating trust and credibility upon which relationships are built and maintained. Human interest and intrigue with VBL are as old as the history of humankind. Scholarship and practice offer important ideas and examples of this kind of leadership respectively.

In recent years, arguments are growing about the need and positive impact of VBL on organizational and other practice contexts. For instance, Frost (2014) demonstrated the positive impact of VBL on organizational outcomes in two large multinational settings. Several leadership theories seem to explicitly or implicitly affirm the importance of values driven work and they may be classified as VBL approaches. The VBL conceptualizations may be divided in two broad camps. The first category includes several popular theories which implicitly or somewhat explicitly include a values-based orientation. These leadership theories include transformational, servant, authentic, responsible, and spiritual leadership theories. The second category includes conceptualizations that deliberately label and position themselves as values-based theories (e.g., principled leadership). With a few exceptions, these works need to better capture and integrate some of the VBL thinking especially in relation to implications for practice. An extensive review and critique of all the VBL-oriented theories is beyond the scope of this article. However, we briefly comment on a few selected theories to provide a sense of the nature of these conceptualizations and some of the issues and gaps. Our primary focus here in this introductory section is on the theories listed in the first category above (e.g., authentic leadership, spiritual leadership). The theories that embrace values-based works more explicitly are covered in the following section titled Values-Based Leadership.

Spiritual leadership may be classified as a values-based leadership theory. Fry (2003) identifies the purpose of spiritual leadership as creating vision and value congruence across organizations. This was indeed an important work in terms of advancing spiritual leadership; however, its values focus was primarily confined to the notion of altruistic love. Other important values-driven leadership theories include authentic leadership (Avolio and Gardner 2005) and ethical leadership (Bedi et al. 2016). While some authentic leadership scholars have emphasized the importance of self-awareness, self-regulation and positive outlook, the moral and ethical dimensions are not presented as necessary conditions by most of these scholars. These theory streams offer enriching perspectives on VBL. However, a critical and stronger synthesis is needed across these theory streams to inform a clearer and more helpful anatomy of VBL and the challenges and opportunities they present.

Other emerging leadership theory efforts that are values-driven include responsible leadership (e.g., Tirmizi 2018), conscious leadership (e.g., Mackey et al. 2020), and sustainability leadership (e.g., Bendell and Little 2015). It is beyond the scope of this study to include these theoretical ideas in our review. Despite some important progress, the field of VBL studies suffers from several weaknesses. Eva et al.'s (2019) extensive review of servant leadership, a popular VBL theory, glaringly conveys some of these gaps and issues. It covered the period 1998 to 2018 and looked at over 270 articles and noted that there were only 12 cross-cultural comparative studies conducted during this period. The same review reported that most of these studies were conducted in the business context. Some attempts have been made in recent years to integrate and conceptualize VBL more clearly as a unique theory beyond the concepts outlined above (e.g., Hendrikz and Engelbrecht 2019), but clearly more efforts are needed in this regard. For the purposes of this study, we decided to focus on a humanistic centered conceptualization of VBL. We further elaborate on this choice and the nature of humanistic values in the VBL literature review below. In addition to its alignment with the emergent thinking in the field, this choice also allowed consistency and manageability.

In summary, this introduction has highlighted the following issues and gaps related to the VBL studies. First and foremost, there are limited works that explore the relevance of VBL in different cultural and national settings. Secondly, and equally importantly, there are few studies that offer cross-national comparisons of VBL. Thirdly, the VBL field of study suffers from a dearth of empirical works. Finally, majority of these works mostly focus on the business and private sector contexts. Moreover, there is fragmentation across different conceptualizations of VBL and the field lacks an agreement about the nature of values that are integral to values-based leadership. It is therefore important to explicitly focus on VBL theory and examine its relevance in different cultural and work/societal contexts (e.g., business, nonprofit, public sectors, community) across different national contexts. Similarly, more empirical works are needed for the advancement of the field with a humanistic orientation. Given these considerations, needs, and gaps, we conducted a four-country study to empirically examine the relevance of VBL to the political, public, private, non-profit, religious, and community settings. Specifically, the study addressed the following questions.

Q1: How relevant is Values-Based Leadership across different national cultures?

Q2: Are there differences in relevance of Values-Based Leadership across different work domains?

Issues and dynamics of gender have received ample attention in leadership studies with a focus on leaders over the last three decades. Works by Shen and Joseph (2021) and Kaiser and Wallace (2016) provide good examples of reviews and empirical works respectively in this regard. However, limited attention has been given to the role of gender in terms of perceptions of leadership from a followers and practitioners perspective, especially from a cross-cultural lens. Similarly considering the current generational differences among followers and practitioners, especially emerging expectations of the millennials, understanding the relevance of leadership perceptions based on tenure is becoming increasingly important. Consequently, recent leadership research has included attention to respondent's gender and experience as relevant factors when studying perceptions of leadership. For example, Girod et al. (2016), in their study of implicit bias and leadership reported differences between

men and women faculty and between older and younger faculty. Burder and Demir (2019) included gender, experience, and education background in their study that focused on perceptions of leadership virtues. Regarding generational differences in leadership perceptions, Maier et al. (2015) conducted a study to examine the perceptions of Millennials specifically in relations to values-centered leadership. Their findings demonstrated that Millennials consider value-centered leaders, as more important. Therefore, we included the following two questions below to reflect those considerations as well.

Q3: What role, if any, does the respondents' gender play in determining Values-Based Leadership relevance across cultures and different work domains?

Q4: What role, if any, does the respondents' work experience (length of tenure) play in determining Values-Based Leadership's relevance across cultures and different work domains?

Values-Based Leadership

In this section, we provide an overall background that led to calls for VBL, especially over the last three decades. Next, we focus on the centrality and nature of values that sit at the foundation of VBL. We conclude this section summarizing the overall integrated conceptualization for VBL.

Call for Values-Based Leadership

The vast ethical leadership failures at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, created a demand from practitioners, scholars, and constituents from various sectors for a more values-based approach to leadership (Copeland 2014; O'Toole, 1995). These demands were a direct reaction to numerous leadership failures in the political, business, and social sector arenas. Unethical leadership and management practices were seen as some of the underlying factors responsible for weakened economies and political instability which were directly connected to failure of political and organizational leaders across the globe (Gill 2011; Crosbie 2008). Apparently, this call for a different type of leadership was assuming that VBL approach would effectively curb the challenges that were responsible for leadership failures across organizations and governments, and this resulted in an emphasis being placed on ethics and morality in our leaders (George 2003; Brown & Trevino, 2006; Avolio and Gardner 2005).

Many of the leadership theories that emerged at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of twenty-first century, were attempts to curb unethical leadership behaviors (Copeland 2014), including those described in the preceding paragraphs. These theories included servant, stewardship, spiritual, authentic, and ethical leadership, which were considered to have values-based dimensions (Copeland 2014; Prilleltensky 2000). Calls for VBL demanded leaders who may restore "hope, confidence, integrity and honor to leaders and organizations" and who "possessed a strong set of values, morals and ethics" (Copeland, p.106). Thus, there is a need for leaders who could establish a vision that is "morally

superior” (O’Toole, 2008), and enact leadership practices that are anchored in humanistic values.

Defining Values in Values-Based Leadership

According to Kanungo and Mendonca (1996), a VBL approach should begin with the clarification of values, although we recognize that such an approach involves much more. Values are closely connected to leadership, and disregarding values makes it incredibly difficult to lead people in today’s environment (Tuulik et al. 2016). There is no clear consensus on the definition of values (Schwartz 2012; Woodward & Shaffakat, 2016), although we use some general definitions here to keep our conversation grounded. Values have been defined as principles that guide human behavior, towards desired end goals but also have intrinsic worth (Prilleltensky 2000). According to Mayton et al. (1994), values may be defined as “enduring prescriptive or proscriptive beliefs that a specific mode of conduct (instrumental value) or end state of existence (terminal value) is preferred to another mode of conduct or end state” (as cited in Prilleltensky 2000, p. 144). Values are seen as critically important mental inspirations that “guide, justify, and explain attitudes, norms, opinions, and actions” (Tuulik et al. 2016, p. 152). These authors go on to argue that values have “predictive and explanatory potential at the individual, organizational, and societal levels” (p. 152). Hendrikz and Engelbrecht (2019) offered an important guidance in how to anchor VBL. In order for our world to have rights-based and humanistic protections, especially for the vulnerable populations and constituencies, a universal understanding (and acceptance) of morality is necessary. These commonly held yardsticks then become a foundation for VBL. Citing extensive efforts by Kinnear et al. (2000) and Schwartz (2005) in researching and synthesizing such values, Hendrikz and Engelbrecht (2019, p.2) provided the following summary of universal moral values based on those earlier works:

1. commitment to something greater than oneself (a supreme being, transcendent purpose or meaning to one’s existence, truth or justice).
2. trustworthiness (including honesty, integrity, transparency, reliability, humility, and loyalty).
3. respect for self, human race, the environment, and other living beings.
4. responsibility (including accountability, excellence, and self-discipline).
5. fairness (including process, impartiality, and equity).
6. caring (including avoiding unnecessary harm, compassion, forgiveness, and tolerance).
7. citizenship (including notions of obeying laws and protecting the environment).

Towards Values-Based Leadership

Values play a critical role in leading a group of people, whether at the team, organizational, or societal level. As with any developing theory, there are a plethora of definitions of VBL, and several authors have offered some pertinent definitions (Copeland 2014). VBL is defined as leadership that is “rooted in ethical and moral foundations” (Copeland 2014, p. 106). Busch and Murdock see VBL as “...value-developing interaction, which is anchored in the organization’s values and high ethical standards” (Busch and Murdock 2014 as cited in Della Corte et al. 2017). Values form a critical component in VBL as explained in the pre-

ceding sections. Della Corte et al. (2017) state that values can be used to help guide decision making in intricate contexts including uncertain future situations. In that sense, they are not confined to the past and guide leadership as it navigates unfamiliar and complex contexts. A VBL approach in any leadership context can benefit all the actors involved including leaders and followers (O’Toole, 2008; Della Corte et al. 2017). In general, the conceptual and empirical works focused on VBL typically employed one of the theories listed above (e.g., servant, ethical, authentic). In recent years, attempts have been made to conceptualize an integrated VBL theory. An important effort in this direction came from Hendrikz and Engelbrecht (2019). Their work offered an important step forward in this regard where they integrated multiple VBL conceptualization into a single scale labelled as Principled Leadership Scale (PLS). Specifically, the scale comprised of the following dimensions:

- Trustworthiness (leadership actions are anchored in universally accepted values and principles).
- Self-Mastery (leadership seeks feedback and acts on it; it shows empathy and courage).
- Empowerment (leadership makes mentoring and development of others a priority).
- Accountability (leadership sees itself as stewardship and holds itself responsible for the wellbeing and sustainability of the social system and its constituents).

In summary, the role and potential of values-based leadership are widely recognized. For instance, Fernández and Hogan (2002) see values as vital because they “explain the focus and direction of people’s actions” (p. 25). For Prilleltensky (2000), values “guide the process of working toward a desired state of affairs” (p. 144). The focal values of VBL are articulated, championed, and manifested through leadership, systems, and culture of their respective social systems. In turn these values are steeped in the larger context and higher purpose with ethical foundations. As we move towards humanistic leadership approaches with universal relevance, it becomes vital that the work of values-based leadership is grounded in overall meta-values such as equality, justice, and fairness. Universal relevance here does not imply identical application of ideas across cultures without contextual sensitivity. Rather, it means adherence to and movement towards principles that are globally shared, and their manifestations may vary and evolve in different contexts. Given the scope and purposes of this study, we used an integrated conceptualization of VBL emphasizing humanistic anchoring to examine its relevance across cultural and work settings. In the next section, we provide an overview of our research methodology.

Methodology

The research methodology comprised descriptive survey design. The survey questions were anchored in the main study questions outlined above. It included a description of VBL that was based on key conceptualizations noted in the literature review above. The survey first introduced the study purpose. Following this introduction, the participants were asked to review VBL description and respond to a series of questions about its relevance. Specifically, the following description was provided to introduce the concept of values-based leadership:

A lot of work on leadership today is considered values driven. By values it is meant that that leader's work is grounded in overall meta-values such as equality, justice, and fairness. While this leadership emphasizes its message using one's/organization's values to guide decisions and processes, the values are implicitly or explicitly linked to larger context and higher purpose with a sense of morality.

The survey questions were divided in different sections to allow the participants to systematically reflect on and share their perceptions of VBL's relevance to various work domains namely political, public, private, nonprofit, religious, and community work contexts.

The survey introduction informed the participants that their participation in the survey was voluntary. To ensure that the respondents have reasonable experience, they were required to have a minimum of three years of work experience. The survey was designed and administered in English in collaboration with the in-country research assistants using the SurveyMonkey platform. Due to internet access issues, printed survey instruments were used in parts of the Caribbean region and Pakistan. The in-country research assistants uploaded the data to SurveyMonkey in those cases.

Sample and Data

The survey was distributed to over five hundred and fifty individuals in four countries namely Jordan, Pakistan, the United States, and the Caribbean region (Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tabago, described as a single 'country' for the purpose of brevity throughout this study). One of the reasons to choose these countries is that there is limited or no accessible empirical research on VBL available in these contexts except the U.S. In terms of historical background, all these countries were former British colonies or protectorates. English is an official language in all the countries except Jordan where it is widely spoken in the urban areas. At the same time, these countries offer differences in terms culture, governance systems, and faith orientations. Finally, these countries represent important regions and populations of the world from cross-cultural perspective. For instance, Jordan is in the Middle East and shares linguistic, cultural, and historical commonalities with several Arab countries in the region. Pakistan is in South Asia and similarly shares important historical and cultural connections with other countries in the region that are home to over 1.5 billion individuals. Similarly, the Caribbean Region comprising three countries with small populations was an important addition to the sample. Following He and van de Vijver (2012), given the goals of this exploratory study to understand both similarities and differences in relevance of values-based leadership across cultures, these countries provided an appropriate mix and variety of samples. Additionally, this selection was also influenced by the authors' ability to identify appropriate and dependable research collaborators.

The survey generated a total of 454 complete responses (Jordan N = 101, Pakistan N = 126, The Caribbean Region N = 102, United States N = 125). The survey participants worked in the public, private and non-profit sectors. The respondents age ranged from 20+ years to 60+ years. About 40% of the respondents were between the age of 30 and 40 years. The educational levels of respondents ranged from high school or its equivalent to graduate degrees. In terms of gender, about 48% individuals identified as females and 52% as males.

Table 1 Values Based Leadership Across Cultures

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8.414	3	2.805	6.232	0.000
Within Groups	202.509	450	0.45		
Total	210.923	453			

Analytical Procedures

The main analytical procedures included Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Tukey HSD Post Hoc, and Cross-Tabulations. ANOVA was performed to determine if differences existed across countries in perceptions of the relevance of VBL. To examine the nature of differences in VBL across the four focal countries, Tukey HSD was employed. And finally, cross-tabulations were used to examine the relevance of VBL within and between countries across all the relevant work contexts, which included private, political, public, nonprofit, religious and community settings. These procedures were employed to address the following study questions.

Q1: How relevant is Values-Based Leadership across different national cultures?

Q2: Are there differences in relevance of Values-Based Leadership across different work domains?

Finally, work experience was categorized as a) 1 to 5 years young practitioners, b) 6 to 10 years as mid-career practitioners, and c) over 10 years as senior practitioners. Gender information was coded as Female (1) and Male (2). This categorization with the analytical procedures outlined above were meant to address the following study questions.

Q3: What role, if any, does the respondents' gender play in determining Values-Based Leadership relevance across cultures and different work domains?

Q4: What role, if any, does the respondents' work experience (length of tenure) play in determining Values-Based Leadership's relevance across cultures and different work domains?

Results and Findings

The main analytical procedure entailed ANOVA and Tukey HSD test. Tables 1 and 2 respectively report results of these tests. Table 1 ANOVA result indicates that there are differences among respondents across four countries in how they perceive the relevance of VBL with $F(3, 450) = 6.2$ and $P < .001$.

Table 2 contains the results of post-hoc comparison based on Tukey's HSD test. The results in Table 2 show that the mean difference for the Caribbean and Pakistani respondents was significant at $p < .05$. The mean difference between the Jordan and the US scores is also significant at $p < .05$. Additionally, the mean difference between Pakistan and the U.S scores is also significant at $P < .01$. These differences indicate that relevance of VBL is perceived differently by respondents in these national contexts. On the other hand, no significant dif-

ferences were observed in the mean scores between the U.S. and the Caribbean region or Jordan and the Caribbean region.

Table 2 Tukey HSD Multiple Comparisons of VBL Across Cultures

(I) Country Rec Country	(J) Country Rec Country	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
3 Caribbean	4 Jordan	0.21111	0.09417	0.114
	7 Pakistan	0.24953	0.08935	0.028
	9 United States	-0.06323	0.08951	0.895
4 Jordan	3 Caribbean	-0.21111	0.09417	0.114
	7 Pakistan	0.03843	0.08959	0.974
	9 United States	-0.27434	0.08975	0.013
7 Pakistan	3 Caribbean	-0.24953	0.08935	0.028
	4 Jordan	-0.03843	0.08959	0.974
	9 United States	-0.31276	0.08469	0.001
9 United States	3 Caribbean	0.06323	0.08951	0.895
	4 Jordan	0.27434	0.08975	0.013
	7 Pakistan	0.31276	0.08469	0.001

To further understand the nature of how VBL is perceived across the four nations and six work domains of political, public, private, non-profit, religious, and community/informal, Table 3 presents the results of cross-tabulations in that regard. Tables 4 and 5 further examine differences related to gender and work experience respectively across national and work contexts.

Table 3 VBL Leadership Across Nations and Sectors

Leadership Within	The Caribbean Region (N=102)		Jordan (N=101)		Pakistan (N=126)		United States (N=125)	
	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %
Political	25.5	74.5	34.7	65.3	38.9	61.1	23.2	76.8
Public	28.5	71.6	33.7	66.3	37.3	62.7	25.6	74.4
Private	31.4	68.6	31.7	68.3	34.1	65.9	35.2	64.8
Nonprofit	19.6	80.4	23.8	76.2	33.3	66.7	4.8	95.2
Religious	8.8	91.2	35.6	64.4	21.4	78.6	6.4	93.6
Community	16.7	83.3	27.7	72.3	30.2	69.8	12.8	87.2

Table 3 contains response percentages for respondents across the four countries. The original survey scale ranged from 1 to 4 (1=not relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=relevant, 4=highly relevant). To facilitate more meaningful comparison across countries and work domains, the data was dichotomized into two categories: 1=not relevant, 2=somewhat were both classified as (a) less relevant, while 3=relevant and 4=highly were both classified into (b) more relevant categories. Therefore, the responses are categorized as less and more relevant.

Table 4 Relevance of Values Based Leadership and Gender

Leadership Within	The Caribbean Region (N=102)		Jordan (N=101)		Pakistan (N=126)		United States (N=125)	
	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %
Political Context								
Female	26.9	73.1	44	56.0	44.4	55.6	21.2	78.8
Male	24	76	25.5	74.5	22.9	77.1	25	75
Public Context								
Female	28.8	71.2	36	64	42.2	57.8	28.8	71.2
Male	28	72	31.4	68.6	22.9	77.1	23.6	76.4
Private Context								
Female	30.8	69.2	36	64	38.9	61.1	28.8	71.2
Male	32	68	27.5	72.5	20	80	40.3	59.7
Nonprofit Context								
Female	21.2	78.8	24	76	35.6	64.4	3.8	96.2
Male	18	82	23.5	76.5	25.7	74.3	5.6	94.4
Religious Context								
Female	9.6	90.4	36	64	22.2	77.8	7.7	92.3
Male	8	92	35.3	64.7	17.1	82.9	5.6	94.4
Community								
Female	17.3	82.7	30	70	31.1	68.9	15.4	84.6
Male	16	84	25.5	74.5	25.7	74.3	11.1	88.9

The left-hand side column indicates the work context (e.g., political, public, religious) followed by country scores in the adjacent columns for each of these contexts. For instance, 74.5% of the respondents from the Caribbean region reported VBL is more relevant in the political context. Overall, majority of individuals in all the focal countries see VBL as more relevant (relevant or highly relevant) to all the work contexts. However, there are some differences in the response percentage across countries. For instance, while over 75% respondents from the Caribbean and the U.S. saw VBL as more relevant to the political context, only 65.3% and 61.1% respondents from Jordan and Pakistan respectively saw it as more relevant. The percentage ratings show a similar pattern of similarities and differences for VBL's relevance in the public sector across the four nations. On the other hand, all the percentages for VBL relevance across four countries are in a similar range between 64.8 and 68.6 (more relevant) for the private sector. Regarding, the relevance of VBL in the religious domain, the percentages varied with US and the Caribbean participants rating at above 91%, Pakistan at 78.6% and Jordan only at 64.4%. There were differences in perceived relevance of VBL in the nonprofit/NGO sectors as well. Over 93% U.S. respondents saw it as more relevant, whereas only 66.7 Pakistani respondents rated it as more relevant to the nonprofit context. A comparable pattern emerged for responses related the relevance of VBL in the community/grassroots context. Table 4 includes the results of cross-tabulations to examine the relevance of VBL from the gender lens.

About 48% of the study respondents were female and that provided an important opportunity to examine the male and female perspectives. Table 4 provides some interesting similarities and differences. Female respondents in Jordan rated relevance of VBL in the

Table 5 Relevance of VBL by Professional Experience

	The Caribbean Region (N=102)		Jordan (N=101)		Pakistan (N=126)		United States (N=125)	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %
Political Context								
1–5 Years	34.8	65.2	18.2	81.8	33.3	66.7	25	75
6–10 Years	30.3	69.7	40	60	55.3	44.7	25	75
>10 Years	14.3	85.7	44.2	55.8	29.4	70.6	21.8	78.2
Public Context								
1–5 Years	47.8	52.2	21.2	78.8	27.8	72.2	25	75
6–10 Years	27.3	72.7	32	68	52.6	47.2	20.8	79.2
>10 Years	14.3	85.7	44.2	55.8	31.4	68.6	29.1	70.9
Private Context								
1–5 Years	65.2	34.8	18.2	81.8	38.9	61.1	45.5	54.5
6–10 Years	30.3	69.7	48	52	39.5	60.5	29.2	70.8
>10 Years	11.9	88.1	32.6	67.4	25.5	74.5	30.9	69.1
Nonprofit Context								
1–5 Years	39.1	60.9	21.2	78.8	36.1	63.9	2.3	97.7
6–10 Years	21.2	78.8	28	72	39.5	60.5	4.2	95.8
>10 Years	2.4	97.6	23.3	76.7	25.5	74.5	7.3	92.7
Religious Context								
1–5 Years	17.4	82.6	42.4	57.6	19.4	80.6	4.5	95.5
6–10 Years	12.1	87.9	32	68	23.7	76.3	12.5	87.5
>10 Years	2.4	97.6	32.6	67.4	19.6	80.4	5.5	94.5
Community/Grassroots								
1–5 Years	26.1	73.9	33.3	66.7	36.1	63.9	13.6	86.4
6–10 Years	21.2	78.8	20	80	28.9	71.1	16.7	83.3
>10 Years	9.5	90.5	27.9	72.1	25.5	74.5	10.9	89.1

political domain lower than their male counterparts at 56% and 74.5% respectively. About 65.4% female Pakistani respondents rated the relevance of VBL to the NGO/nonprofit sector as more relevant in comparison to 74.3% more relevant rating by their male counterparts. For the religious and community/grassroots sectors, the percentage ratings for the female and male respondents were fairly similar.

Regarding the VBL's relevance in the private sector, the female and male respondents from the Caribbean region rated it similarly with 69.2% and 68% rating it as more relevant respectively. The female and male scores were not very different from each other in Jordan. On the other hand, 80% of male respondents from Pakistan rated VBL as more relevant and on only 61.1% female respondents rated is more relevant.

Table 5 reports how respondents rated the relevance of VBL based on the length of their work experience. The respondent experience was divided in three categories: (a) young practitioners 1 to 5 years (b) mid-level practitioners 6 to 10 years, and (c) senior practitioners over 10 years experience. While about 60% and 70% young and mid-career practitioners see VBL as more relevant in The Caribbean region; that perception goes over 85%

for senior practitioners for the political work domain. There are variations in scores among the three Caribbean cohorts for the public and private sectors as well regarding other work domains.

While 72.7% of midlevel and 85.7% of senior practitioners rate VBL as more relevant to the public sector, only 52.2 of young practitioners rated it as more relevant to this sector. Even more noteworthy is that most young practitioners (65.5%) rated VBL as less relevant to the private sector. Majority of the senior practitioners (ranging between 85 and 97%) rated VBL as more relevant across all the work contexts.

Over 78% of young practitioners from Jordan rated VBL as more relevant to the political, public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Their more relevant ratings were lower for the religious (57.6) and community work (66.7%) domains. The two other cohorts mostly rated VBL as more relevant to all the sectors with a couple of exceptions. The mid-career practitioners rated VBL's relevance to the private sector as more relevant at only 52% and the political domain at 60%. The senior practitioners from Jordan ranked the VBL's relevance to the political and public sectors at 55.8% which means that they were somewhat split about its overall relevance.

In most cases the Pakistani respondents rated VBL as more relevant. But there are couple of exceptions. For instance, midlevel practitioners ranked it as less relevant to the political (55.3%) and public sectors (55.3%). Majority of the U.S. respondents, including all three cohorts, ranked VBL as more relevant across most of the work domains. Over 92% or more respondents rated VBL as more relevant for the nonprofit sector across all three experience groups. The only exception to these generally high rankings was from young practitioners' group in relation to the private sector domain. Only 54.5% respondents ranked VBL as more relevant to the private sector in the U.S.

Discussion

The results of this study revealed that a vast majority of the respondents perceive VBL to be relevant to highly relevant across the four national contexts and six work domains. First and foremost, this study contributes to the emerging field of VBL by highlighting nature of its relevance across selected national context and different work contexts. Specifically, to our knowledge, no single study offers a comprehensive and systematic examination of relevance of VBL in six different work domains. Additionally, the study also addressed the gap that exists in cross-national and cross-cultural studies of VBL.

Overall, the percentage of respondents who perceive VBL to be relevant to highly relevant ranged between 61.1 and 95.2%. In terms of cross-sectoral comparison, a very high percentage respondents saw VBL as more relevant to the NGO and religious sectors. This result is not surprising given the people- and service-oriented foci of these work domains. An interesting exception to this pattern was scores from Pakistan which ranked VBL's at 66.7% only. Likely explanation for this is that the NGO sector's reputation has deteriorated in the country over the last 15 years or so. Following Osama bin Laden's killing in the town of Abbottabad, a doctor was accused of running a fake vaccine campaign with CIA's help in that area in an attempt to track Bin Laden and his family¹. The investigating authorities suspected that this doctor had links with Save the Children – a well-known international NGO.

¹<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-19500103>.

While Save the Children denied hiring the doctor, the controversy left Pakistani authorities suspicious of the NGO sector and the subsequent national news adversely impacted the sector's image among general public as well.

Another interesting finding is that the U.S. respondents ranked VBL's as relevant or highly relevant across majority of the work domains. These rankings were moderately to significantly higher than all the other countries. This pattern also explained the nature of differences that were reported in the initial cross-national results based on ANOVA and Tukey tests reported above. One explanation of this may be that some of the leading VBL theories originated in the U.S. In fact, transformational leadership theory is the most widely studied theory over the last few decades. Among relatively newer theories, several empirical advancements have been made over the last few years (Eva et al. 2019). The advancement of these theories in the U.S. has also accompanied advances associated with leadership and organization development. Consequently, the higher US rankings may reflect the greater advances in the theory and practice of VBL in this national context.

Another somewhat intriguing finding are the relatively low scores for VBL's relevance in the private or for-profit sector across countries. It is surprising because numerous calls have been made over the last couple of decades for the private sector organizations to demonstrate more responsible leadership (Tirmizi 2018). In fact, a good deal of impetus behind a variety of VBL leadership theories (e.g., authentic leadership, servant leadership) resided in the need for private sector organizations to embrace more values-driven approaches so that they may more responsibly deliver on the so-called triple bottom agenda (people, planet, and profits). There may be two explanations for this finding. Firstly, while the scores may be relatively low in comparison to other work contexts (e.g., Religions and NGO work domains), majority of the individuals did see it as more relevant to the private sector where the scores ranged between 64.8 and 68.6%. Secondly, we may also treat it as progress in the right direction and expect VBL to gain a more solid anchoring in the private sector as the calls for more humanistic approaches continue to grow.

There are several potentially important research pathways that emerge from this study. While precision in the conceptualization of measurement of VBL was not in this study's scope, our research highlights the importance of advances in this arena given the demonstrated relevance of this leadership approach across cultural and multiple work domains. Viinamäki (2012) labelled VBL as a challenging and ambiguous construct. As noted above, Hendrikz and Engelbrecht (2019) offered an important step forward in this regard where they integrated multiple VBL conceptualization into a single scale. Their initial findings are promising, and more work is needed to advance the theory and practice of VBL. There were a few intriguing findings that need further investigation. For instance, the relatively lower percentage score about the relevance of VBL in the Jordanian religious work domain needs further investigation. The analysis based on cross-tabulations revealed a number of interesting insights and patterns. For instance, in relation to the relevance of VBL in The Caribbean Region, majority of the young practitioners saw it less relevant to the private sector and were somewhat evenly divided about its relevance to the public sector. It will be important for future research efforts in single and multiple country studies to better understand the similarities and differences around relevance of VBL and leadership more generally.

On the practice front, since most of the respondents see VBL as relevant to highly relevant to all the major practice contexts, the challenge becomes how do organizations and leaders embrace such approaches more widely. The literature is clear that VBL needs to be

action-oriented and not just a set of values that are espoused (Van Niekerk and Botha 2017; Copeland 2014). Four principles that can assist leaders in moving values from talk to action include:

1. Self-reflection (getting the bigger picture of the essence of the organization's values and why they are important).
2. Balance (allowing input about the organization's values from various stakeholder).
3. True Self-confidence (importance of leaders knowing and accepting selves, and acknowledging their strengths and areas of challenges).
4. Genuine humility (recognize and acknowledge past and how you progressed to position as leader (Kraemer 2011)).

There are some study limitations that are important to note here. As is the case with some other cross-cultural studies, we assumed national culture to be homogenous at the country level. This assumption was in turn driven by considerations of our purpose and limitations posed by resources and timeline. Given our focus was on examining cross-national similarities and differences about the relevance of VBL as perceived, using an etic design was appropriate while recognizing some of its disadvantages.

Respondents in two of the survey countries namely Jordan and Pakistan, grew up with Arabic and Urdu as their native language but they were functional to fluent in English. We mention that because the study survey questionnaire was administered in English and there may have been language nuances at play that should be recognized. We attempted to mitigate these potential issues through our own direct knowledge of the cultural settings and close engagement with the research associates to ensure that language use in the study questionnaire was clear and appropriate. Additionally, we recognize that our binary categorization of gender as male and female, does not fully capture the full gender spectrum and its implications and is a limitation of this study. Unfortunately, in multiple country sites for this study, gender is primarily recognized as a binary construct and based on the in-country feedback we worked with this categorization.

Our survey data collection was completed before the COVID-19 pandemic set in. We don't believe this has significantly impacted the overall study findings and insights related to the cross-country and cross-sector relevance of VBL. More specifically, our results indicated that in most cases VBL was seen as relevant to highly relevant across cultural and work contexts and it seems aligned with aspirations of employees and practitioners being expressed globally. For instance, The Harris Poll and The Milken Institute recently conducted a global survey called The Listening Project (2021) and it included 17,000 participants across 27 countries. Its final report titled The Post-Pandemic Leader offers important and timely observations about the current leadership needs. The summary findings included the following as most important leadership skills: honesty, resiliency, decisiveness, logic, visionary-thinking, innovation coupled with humility, empathy, listening, diplomacy, and collaboration. Among these, "honesty" was ranked as the single most important trait of post-pandemic leaders and ranked twice as high as the score of the next closest trait. These emerging global expectations about leadership skills and concepts sit at the foundation of humanistic and values-based leadership.

Conclusion

The findings of our current study provide much needed empirical insights related to the relevance of VBL across national and work context boundaries. As noted in the [discussion](#) section above, the study also revealed important similarities and differences in how VBL's relevance is perceived across countries and work domains and paves the way for more nuanced investigation to further explore the current findings. In summary, the findings also provide support for urgent use of broader humanistic approaches in all the major work domains.

Pirson (2016) observed, “Human beings therefore need to be considered as a certain absolute, endowed with dignity and called to flourish in their humanity not a mere instrument for economic purposes only” (p. 2). Recent global events, including the COVID-19 pandemic has raised important questions for us individually and collectively. One explanation for the great resignation during the pandemic is the individuals' desire to better take care of their wellbeing and seek meaningful employment engagements. VBL can play a crucial role in preserving human dignity and promoting practices that may help human beings realize their full potential. Therefore, it deserves more theoretical and practical attention in national and international settings.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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