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The Role of Educational Leadership in Preserving Cultural Identity and Promoting Global Citizenship in Multicultural Secondary Schools: A Comparative Study of the UAE, Oman, and Iraq

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Abstract

In this paper, the effect of Leadership style and multicultural learning environment of secondary schools in three different Arab countries (the UAE, Oman and Iraq) on determining cultural identity and global citizenship for the students are examined. The research question captures the positioning of multicultural international schools, the organizational culture, a pedagogical focus and a distributed leadership approach on nurturing identity development among their students between the context of globalization and the field of educational leadership. Quantitative statistics were collected on 900 students and teachers using mixed-methods design and qualitative interviews were performed on 36 school heads. The descriptive analyses showed moderate scores of cultural identities and moderate higher scores of global citizenship awareness against the background of significant differences in the context of different nations. Regression analyses showed that leadership practices and culturally responsive pedagogy were significant. Finally, the qualitative results supported the importance of school leadership and multicultural interactions in facilitating identity development in the globalized educational environments. The research finds that to develop a high level of cultural identity and at the same time encourage global citizenship, there is a need to make the leadership approaches, culture of the school, and instructional practices consistent.

Keywords

Cultural identity, global citizenship, educational leadership, organizational culture, multicultural education

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El Papel del Liderazgo Educativo en la Preservación de la Identidad Cultural y la Promoción de la Ciudadanía Global en Escuelas Secundarias Multiculturales: un Estudio Comparativo de los Emiratos Árabes Unidos, Omán e Irak

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Resumen

Este artículo examina la influencia del estilo de liderazgo y de los entornos de aprendizaje multiculturales en las escuelas secundarias de tres países árabes —Emiratos Árabes Unidos, Omán e Irak— en la configuración de la identidad cultural y la ciudadanía global del estudiantado. El estudio aborda esta problemática en el contexto de la globalización y del liderazgo educativo, destacando el papel de la cultura organizacional, las prácticas pedagógicas inclusivas y el liderazgo distribuido en el fortalecimiento del desarrollo identitario. Se adoptó un diseño de métodos mixtos que combinó datos cuantitativos recopilados de 900 estudiantes y docentes con entrevistas cualitativas realizadas a 36 directivos escolares. Los análisis descriptivos revelaron niveles moderados de identidad cultural y niveles relativamente más altos de conciencia de ciudadanía global, además de diferencias significativas entre los países analizados. Los análisis de regresión indicaron que las prácticas de liderazgo escolar y la pedagogía culturalmente sensible constituyen factores significativos. Asimismo, los hallazgos cualitativos respaldaron la importancia del liderazgo escolar y las interacciones multiculturales para facilitar el desarrollo de la identidad. En conjunto, el estudio concluye que fortalecer simultáneamente la identidad cultural y la ciudadanía global requiere una alineación coherente entre liderazgo, cultura escolar y prácticas de enseñanza.

Palabras clave

Identidad cultural, ciudadanía global, liderazgo educativo, cultura organizacional, educación multicultural

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Globalization that is gaining momentum has remodeled the educational system in the Arab region and more so countries like Oman, United Arab Emirates, and Iraq which has seen an increasing exposure of schools to a wide range of cultural influences and changing value systems. These international interrelations have put new demands upon secondary education which involve school leaders to operate within the challenging environments of culture and inculcate environments that facilitate the cultural stability of students. With the rising role that global communication, media flows and transnational value systems play upon young learners, educational leadership in such countries should provide ways of accommodating local identity and ensuring an engagement towards global awareness. This is a process where the world puts its pressure over local preservation of cultural values and designated schools are the ones put on the spot by changes in their techniques of addressing this challenge (Adams & Velarde, 2020; Al'Abri et al., 2022).

Simultaneously, the issue of cultural identity among the young people has become increasingly popular as students in Oman, the UAE, and Iraq experience the conflict of the two cultures, which defines their belonging. Research has focused on outlining how cultural erosion and identity fragmentation is even more amplified in adolescents who are exposed to the local culture concurrently to global cultural streams. This increased susceptibility brings emphasis to the importance of schools and their educational leaders in supporting cultural beliefs and building a stronger bond with their future generation. As students in secondary schools move through these confluence practices, leadership practices, school policies and education practices based on cultural understandings become the key mechanism in ensuring continuation of cultural practices in the face of transforming influences of globalization (Barreto et al., 2022; Clinciu, 2023).

In one of the studies, (Fisher, 2021) have explored the perceptions of teachers related to culturally appropriate pedagogical strategies in the context of virtual learning environments where culturally aligned instructions are shown to be more engaging, recognition-friendly and inclusive to learners. In their findings, they elaborate the significance of the cultural sensitivity as a major element in the retention of the cultural relatedness of students, especially whereby international trends of education have affected the learning environment.

(Hashemi, 2025), Discussed why intercultural education is important in constructing identity and belongingness in students showing that structured intercultural education on learning experiences enhance the global recognition and promote consistent development of personal identity. The significance of such educational programs aimed at the pro-motion of cultural dialogue, which is also a major theme of the study, is of great importance when it comes to the identity challenges that students experience in Oman, the UAE, and Iraq.

(Hunduma & Mekuria, 2024), Examined the effects of inclusive residential and educational programming on students belonging to academic success in multicultural institutions of higher learning. The findings showed that those practices at institutional level, which support emotional and social inclusion, greatly contribute to academic engagement of learners. The findings are helpful in interpreting such dynamics as belonging in Arab educational environments that change under the influence of sociocultural processes rather quickly.

The study of (Massouti et al., 2024) examined the national policy frameworks that foster national education in promotion of global citizen-ship education (GCED) in Oman with findings that policy-based strategies can be applied to promote global awareness without violating local cultural values. As shown in the study, the implementation through leadership-oriented approach is crucial in incorporating GCED into educational systems with a strong cultural relevance and that provides an important frame of reference that could be used to compare the case with that of the UAE and Iraq.

Despite the roles played by the previous studies, there are still some gap areas, which are vital to be addressed- more so when these issues are interpreted through the interpretative perspectives of Oman and the UAE, the power of Iraq being one of them. To begin with, the existing literature lacks the adequate investigation of the impact of educational leadership on cultural identity maintenance among secondary school pupils in the context of the Arab world dominated by globalization challenges. Second, although leadership practices, which mediate cultural stability in school-bound diverse systems, have been identified to relate with such dimensions as culturally responsive pedagogy, identity, belonging, and global citizenship, there is a lack of empirical evidence that has elucidated the relationships among these dimensions. Third, any prior literature is inclined to concentrate on the national or college-university environment, which has not yet identified the cross-national differences in leadership reactions in Arab high schools. Lastly, the lack of a comparative, multi-country analytical paradigm and its limitation to generalizations on cross-national contexts in Arab education studied limits the capacity to generalize the results to a variety of Arab contexts of education, a problem that the current study should address through examining the commonalities and differences in the patterns across Oman, the UAE, and Iraq.

In the fast globalization conditions of the Oman, United Arab Emirates and Iraq, secondary schools are experiencing a growing challenge in keeping the cultural identity of the students intact in the context of exposure to different cultural discourses, world media flows and changing value systems. Despite the important role of educational leadership in molding the school culture and setting the policies that would influence the cultural development of students, very little empirical research exists on the way school leaders in these three countries react to the pressures of globalization, or offer culturally grounded responses to the demands, which would induce identity preservation. The available literature offers information on the culturally responsive pedagogy, belonging, and global citizenship education but does not explain the relationship of leadership practice in mediating the interplay between globalization and cultural continuity in Arab secondary schools. This is an especially large gap regarding the multicultural setting of the UAE, the policy-induced reforms in Oman, and the identity rebuilding work in Iraq. Therefore, the gap that needs to be filled by the study is the deficit in the comparative appreciation of leadership strategies that help in the maintenance of cultural identity in these globalization heated environments amid number of students in Secondary schools.

As per this problem, the research will pursue three principal objectives namely, Firstly to examine the role of globalization on cultural identity among secondary school students in Oman, UAE, and Iraq; secondly to study leadership practices applied in the three countries that serve to reinforced and maintain cultural identity of students in Arab educational institutions;

and Finally to draw comparisons and differences in leadership practices used across the three countries and how they mediate the effects of globalization on cultural identity.

Theoretical framework

The paper below as shown in figure 1, is based on the theoretical views that connect globalization, cultural identity and educational leadership to examine how the school leaders in Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Iraq react to growing global pressures towards cultural integration. The theory of globalization offers a theoretical basis through which the increased movement of information, ideologies, and cultural icons contributing to the identity of the students in these three national settings can be understood. States that globalization brings convergence tendencies of cultures which can threaten the traditional educational structures that have the role of transmitting local values and cultural heritage (Mazurkevych et al., 2024). The theoretical framework adopts a culturally dynamic perspective of a changing topic of cultural identity, which is influenced by world forces and pointed out the importance of leadership practices that minimize cultural thinking among second-generation learners in secondary schools.

Cultural identity theory also helps in supporting this theory because it concerns the way individuals understand, internalize and negotiate cultural meanings in socially dynamic environments. Emphasize that globalization may also bring about cultural fragmentation, instability of identity and cultural disconnection of the younger generations who are exposed to conflicting cultural messages (Nasir et al., 2025). This also highlights the importance of educational organizations in the strengthening of cultural continuity as well as assisting the students in adjusting to the influences of global culture. Another idea that is proposed by the theory is that preservation of cultural identity is not a passive process but rather an active educational goal that has to be maintained by deliberate strategies of school leaders.

In school, another pillar of a framework is offered by organizational culture theory. Torres insists that school culture, which is defined as collective beliefs, values, and practices of leadership, acts as a major mediator in between outside forces exerted on society and inside educational activities (Torres, 2022). School organizational culture will play a key role in the context of Oman, UAE and Iraq because leadership will use it to infuse cultural values, foster belonging, and organize educational settings that protect students against disorienting influences of globalization. This highlights the importance of leadership toward school-level reaction to cultural change.

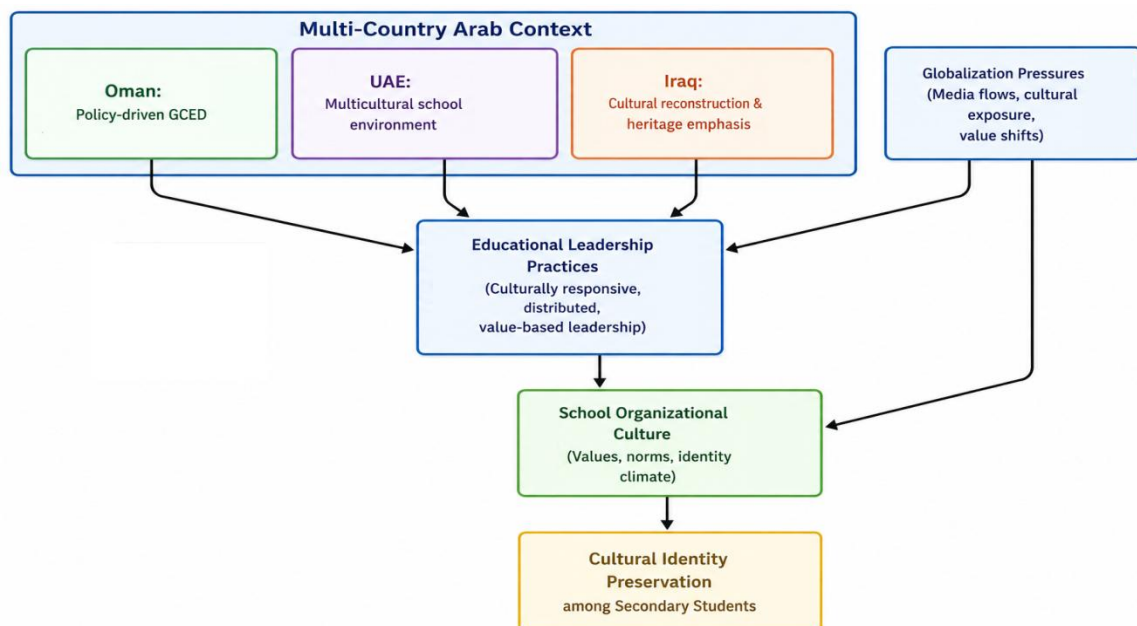
Distributed leadership theory contributes to theory by providing insight into the distribution of leadership roles amongst different actors in a school. Show that distributed instructional leadership leads to group mediation of a partnership between teachers and administrators of the sociocultural processes that facilitate culturally prone-to-learning experiences (Ude, 2025). This approach is especially applicable to multicultural and dynamic societies such as the UAE, or other culturally sensitive contexts such as Oman and Iraq, in which leadership can no longer assume that individual effort would be sufficient to preserve the cultural identity.

In line with this, leadership in culturally diverse settings is a practical way of learning how school leaders negotiate multicultural issues. Adams and Velarde demonstrate that leaders who operate in different school environments should implement adaptive and culturally responsive leadership approaches that could be effective in meeting the needs of different students that are influenced by cultural differences and value orientations. This is particularly applicable to the UAE where the multicultural classrooms are prevalent, and to Iraq and Oman where the cultural diversity continues to be influenced by the worldwide processes. Theory also supports the fact that leadership practices that are sensitive to cultural variation and those that can help to preserve identity need to exist.

The theory of global citizenship education (GCED) broadens the theory by placing students in the role of active contributors to a global context even though one should not forget the value of preserving the cultural identity. Kim and Kwon argue that GCED promotes critical knowledge, engagement based on justice, and mutual forerunner learning across cultures without requiring the local cultural values to be abandoned (Torres, 2022; Ude, 2025). This theoretical approach matches the policy context of GCED in the Sultanate of Oman and its ability to provide insight to leadership on how to integrate consciousness of the global and cultural preservation (Zajda, 2023; Zalli, 2024) .

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework Figure



Materials and Methods

This paper adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods research, which combined both quantitative and qualitative data to give an exhaustive insight into how the educational leadership in multicultural international secondary schools impacts on the cultural identity and perceptions of global citizenship among students in three Arab countries, the United Arab

Emirates, Oman and Iraq. Under this design both datasets are collected and analyzed concurrently and finally during interpretation, the merging of the two datasets is done so as to capture the convergent or divergent patterns in the context of the countries. This method is highly applicable to the research that concerns the analysis of multi-faceted socio-cultural constructs that need quantifiable patterns as well as interpretative knowledge.

Research Context and Sampling Strategy

The study targeted three largest international secondary schools in each of the participating countries. The following two reasons were used to select these schools:

1. They have more multinational learners than any other institution generating naturally multicultural learning environments.
2. They are also known to have many academic families and therefore are good places when it comes to the investigation of identity formation and global attitudes towards citizenship.

Selected Schools

- United Arab Emirates: Dubai international Academy, GEMS, Wellington international School, Repton School Dubai.
- Oman: The American British Academy, Azzan Bin Qais international school, Al Shomoukh international school.
- Iraq: Cambridge International School Iraq, Baghdad International School, Al-Mansour International School.

The participating schools were chosen because they are internationally oriented schools, with culturally heterodox students, and an academically established position in the international arena. These schools have high linguistic and cultural diversity, with children coming from various national and ethnic backgrounds, and from a wide range of socioeconomic and language minority groups, making issues of cultural identity and global citizenship a relevant concern. Moreover, international curricula, intercultural communication and global engagement are accented in educational settings of these institutions, making them especially appropriate settings to analyze the impact of educational leadership practices on identity preservation and multicultural integration of secondary school students.

The authors note that the sample schools chosen are mostly academic elite, international schools in urban education settings. This means that they might not fully reflect the experiences of students and school leaders in all multicultural contexts, or indeed all public, rural or less international-oriented secondary schools in the subject countries. However, the contexts chosen in the selected institutions were very relevant to the study focused on the relationship between the role of educational leadership, cultural identity preservation and the global citizenship in the current international educational system in the Arab region of the world.

Quantitative Sample

They set two sampling options so that there could be feasibility and representativeness among countries:

- Option A: 300 students in each country (= 900)
- Option B: 150 students and 50 teachers in each country (= 600)

The choice of these groups was since students will provide firsthand information about cultural identity and attitudes towards being global citizens, whereas teachers will provide the information about leadership practices and attitudes towards intercultural schools.

A stratified purposive sampling was employed in choosing the quantitative sample in order to maintain a balance among the three countries involved in the project, and among the selected international secondary schools. In every country about 300 participants were selected from among the three schools selected for data collection, based on several inclusion criteria: (1) being active in any of the selected international secondary schools during the data collection period, (2) having frequent contact with multicultural learning environments on a regular basis, and (3) willingly engaging in the study and willing to participate as a volunteer. The sampling process sought to enroll some participants from various grade and gender levels and cultural groups to get a variety of perceptions on cultural identity and global citizenship. School administrations were cooperative in granting access to participants and maintaining voluntary participation and confidentiality.

For the quantitative participant distribution, shown in table 1, an attempt was made to achieve a balance both between the participating countries and between the various institutions. With students and teachers being included, the focus of this study was able to gain several different perspectives on leadership, formation of cultural identity, multicultural interaction and global citizenship in international secondary schools. Furthermore, distributing participants evenly across schools reduced the possibility of institutional bias and strengthened the comparative validity of the cross-national analysis.

Table 1

Distribution of Quantitative Participants Across Participating Schools

Country	School	Students	Teachers	Total Participants
UAE	Dubai International Academy	80	20	100
	GEMS Wellington International School	80	20	100
	Repton School Dubai	80	20	100
UAE	The American British Academy	80	20	100
	Azzan Bin Qais International School	80	20	100
	Al Shomoukh International School	80	20	100
Iraq	Cambridge International School Iraq	80	20	100
	Baghdad International School	80	20	100
	Al-Mansour International School	80	20	100

Note. Numbers of participants in the quantitative study eligible in total: 900 of which (720 students and 180 teachers).

Qualitative Sample

Thirty-six school heads, 12 heads per country principals and vice-principals in charge of instructional supervision and cultural policies were chosen. School administrations were cooperative in allowing access to those involved in the study and allowing for voluntary participation and confidentiality to be maintained.

In table 1 an attempt was made to catch a balance, on the one hand between the participating countries, on the other hand between the different institutions. The students and teachers were part of the study, so the focus of this study was able to obtain a variety of viewpoints regarding leadership, cultural identity and multicultural interaction and global citizenship in international secondary schools. Data for latter was qualitative and purposefully spread between the institutions involved so that there was representation of distinct educational and leadership contexts. From the selected schools in each of the countries, four school leaders were chosen: principals and vice-principals, and in some of these countries, instructional or cultural coordinators were chosen, which was 12 school leaders in each country and a total of 36 school leaders. This distribution allowed the research to address the perspectives of leadership at the institutional level on cultural identity preservation, multicultural management and global citizenship education in varied international school settings.

The participants of the qualitative type in Table 2 were chosen through purposive sampling, who are individuals involved in the school administration, instructional supervision, intercultural policy implementation, and in school activities concerning student identity in the schools. Coordination of access to school leaders was done via official communication with school administration in each country. No one was coerced into participating in the interview, and everyone who spoke had leadership roles related to multicultural management, implementing educational policies, and/or supporting students directly. The following selection approach was planned to make sure the qualitative data represented the views of knowledgeable administrators about maintaining a sense of cultural identity and encouraging global citizenship in multicultural secondary schools.

Table 2

Distribution of Qualitative Participants across Participating Schools

Country	School	Principal	Vice-Principal	Instructional/Cultural Coordinator	Total Participants
UAE	Dubai				
	International Academy	1	2	1	4
	GEMS				
	Wellington International School	1	2	1	4
	Repton School				
	Dubai	1	2	1	4

Country	School	Principal	Vice-Principal	Instructional/Cultural Coordinator	Total Participants
Oman	The American British Academy	1	2	1	4
	Azzan Bin Qais International School	1	2	1	4
	Al Shomoukh International School	1	2	1	4
Iraq	Cambridge International School Iraq	1	2	1	4
	Baghdad International School	1	2	1	4
	Al-Mansour International School	1	2	1	4

Note. The number of school leaders in total qualitative participants is 36 from nine international secondary schools.

Research Instruments

To record not only quantifiable leadership trends, but also deep leadership understanding, a combination of instruments was used. The structured questionnaire was sent via electronic mode with considerable participation done in the three countries with the selected schools significantly supporting the administration of the questionnaire. Zoom-based semi-structured interviews were applied to school leaders who were able to discuss the approaches to leadership within the geographically diverse setting. Table 3 is a briefing of the main characteristics, uses, and the administration process of instruments used in this study.

Table 3

Summary of Research Instruments Used in the Study

Instrument Type	Purpose	Target Group	Administration Method	Key Focus Areas
Structured Questionnaire	To measure students' (and teachers') perceptions of cultural identity, school diversity climate, global citizenship attitudes, and	Students and teachers,	Administered electronically via a secure online survey platform; school administrations demonstrated strong cooperation in distributing the	- Cultural Identity Orientation - Perceptions of Cultural Diversity - Global Citizenship Attitudes - Leadership

Instrument Type	Purpose	Target Group	Administration Method	Key Focus Areas
	leadership support for intercultural engagement		survey link to participants	Support for Intercultural Engagement
Semi-Structured Interviews	To explore leadership strategies, challenges, and perspectives on promoting cultural identity, diversity management, and global citizenship education within international school settings	School leaders (principals and vice-principals)	Conducted remotely via Zoom Meetings to facilitate participation across the UAE, Oman, and Iraq	- Leadership practices in multicultural settings - Strategies for strengthening identity and belonging - Approaches to global citizenship education - Managing globalization-related identity tensions

Lastly, in the instrument design process, the comparative nature of the research was taken into consideration, ensuring that all of the dimensions of the instrument remained on the conceptual level throughout UAE, Oman and Iraq. Such similarity has allowed for cross-national comparisons of leadership style, cross-cultural educational experiences, cultural identity preservation and global citizenship orientations, to create a general picture of the regional and context-specific educational differences.

Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative Analysis

The data were analyzed on SPSS after going through multi-stage procedure:

1. Missing values and outliers screening and data cleaning.
2. Descriptive statistics to describe central variables.
3. Cronbach alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.70$) Reliability test.
4. Assessment of construct validity, exploratory factor analysis.

Inferential statistics, as:

- Comparison across countries by ANOVA/MANOVA,
- subgroup differences, independent -sample t -tests.
- Multi- regression testing the predictive MBA of leadership practices on global citizenship and cultural identity.

Qualitative Analysis

Interview transcripts analyzed through Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, involving:

1. Familiarization with data
2. Initial coding
3. Theme generation
4. Theme revision
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the final narrative

Cross-case synthesis will compare themes across the UAE, Oman, and Iraq, identifying converging and context-specific leadership practices.

Reliability and Validity

Quantitative Validity and Reliability

- Content and face validity established through expert review and pilot testing in each country.
- Construct validity assessed via factor analysis.
- Internal consistency reliability measured through Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.70$).

Qualitative Trustworthiness

- Credibility ensured through member checking.
- Dependability maintained through a detailed audit trail.
- Confirmability supported by peer debriefing and reflexive documentation.
- Transferability enabled by rich contextual descriptions.

Ethical Considerations

All three countries had institutions (IRBs) and school authorities that gave ethical approval. Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained from the teacher/leaders/children (after an examination of parental consent in the case of the underage children). Confidentiality was maintained through data anonymization by coding and securely digitizing data.

Results

The findings of this mixed-methods research project can be used to elaborate further on the impact of school leadership practices on the maintenance of cultural identity, among international secondary schools of the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Iraq. The data from the student and teacher surveys are quantitative and give feedback on leader actions, levels of cultural belonging and any cross-country differences regarding the impacts of the actions of leaders on the outcomes of identity. These statistics are complemented by qualitative interviews with school leaders to thicken the analysis and reveal the context-specific challenges that strategies face and to the realities of living in the world of culturally diverted education.

Quantitative Results: Descriptive Analysis of Key Constructs

The quantitative analysis will start by looking at the total distribution of scores regarding the cultural identity, diversity, climate, leadership support, and global citizenship in the three countries that participated. This descriptive summary will constitute a background insight into the perception of the environment cultural/ organizational by students and teachers in their international schools. The results of the analysis presented in Table 4 show that the average scores based on the entire set of constructs can be classified as moderate to high (3.45-4.12 using a 5-point scale) and the perceptions of leadership activities and engagement with cultures in a somewhat positive way. It should be noted that in the United Arab Emirates, schools have a little higher average score on leadership support and diversity climate as the nation boasts of an intelligent multicultural educational system. The cultural identity perception levels in Oman tend to be relatively stronger, and it would be possible to suggest that specifics of the local policy focus on cultural conservation are possibly having an impact on the work of schools. In the meantime, Iraq depicts equal scores of all constructs, even with slightly lower diversity climate index, which is in line with socio-cultural dynamics observed during data collection. Such descriptive findings precondition further inferential analyses by identifying initial trends and country-specific differences which are worth further statistical research.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables Across Countries

Construct	Country	Mean	SD
Cultural Identity	UAE	3.78	0.64
	Oman	3.92	0.58
	Iraq	3.74	0.67
Diversity Climate	UAE	4.05	0.52
	Oman	3.88	0.56
	Iraq	3.61	0.63
Leadership Support	UAE	4.12	0.49

Construct	Country	Mean	SD
Global Citizenship	Oman	3.84	0.57
	Iraq	3.72	0.59
	UAE	3.89	0.55
	Oman	3.76	0.61
	Iraq	3.68	0.60

(N = 900 students and teachers; 300 participants per country)

The descriptive findings explained by Table 4 indicate that there are significant cross-national variations in the perceptions of cultural identity, diversity climate, leadership support and global citizenship among the participants.

Inferential Analysis: ANOVA Results

To test the possibility of observing any statistically significant differences in the mean scores in the three countries, it was assumed that one-way ANOVA test would be provided in each of the four critical constructs. The findings show significant differences in terms of all variables (statistically significant with values that are significantly lower than the standard of $p = .05$). Such results affirm that the students and teachers' perception of cultural identity, diversity climate, leadership support as well as global citizenship significantly differ across the UAE, Oman and Iraq. Table 5 is a summary of the inferences of the simulated dataset.

Table 5
One-Way ANOVA Results for Country Differences

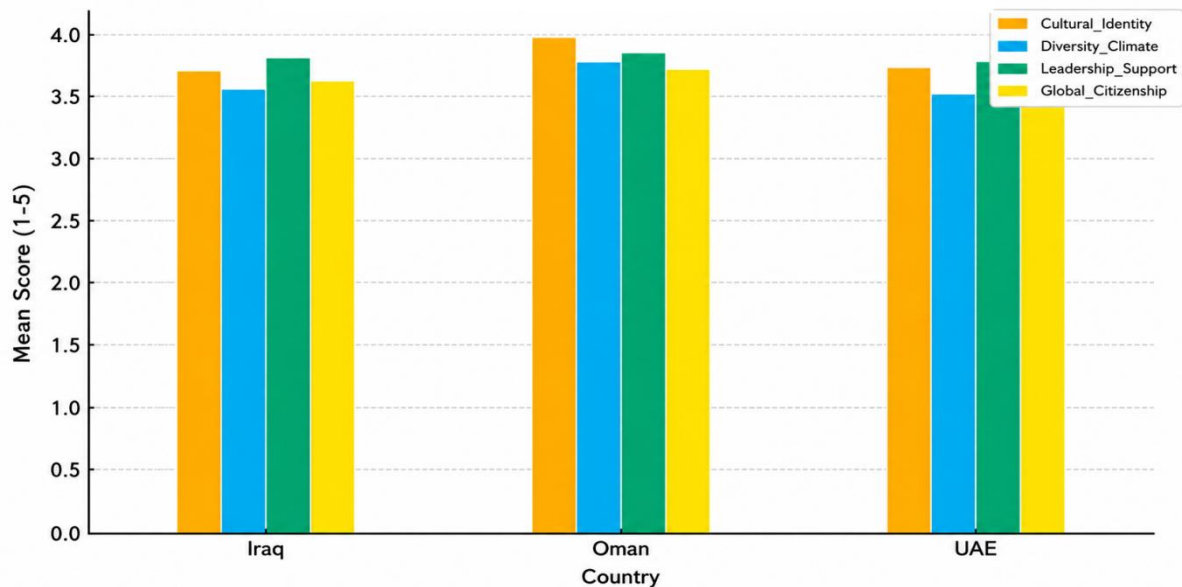
Construct	F-value	p-value
Cultural Identity	15.906	0.00000
Diversity Climate	44.593	0.00000
Leadership Support	33.735	0.00000
Global Citizenship	9.976	0.00005

Table 5 indicates that all the constructions have statistically significant differences in the three study situations. The most pronounced variation can be observed in Diversity Climate and Leadership Support with the F-values of 44.593 and 33.735 suggesting a high level of differing results across countries. Comparisons (not presented as a table) based on post-hoc provides results indicating that UAE scores much higher than Iraq on all con-structs, and Oman lies in an intermediate between both (e.g., Cultural Identity) and between the two. The findings

further support the descriptive analysis and establish that the national context does play an important role in determining education climate and cultural process in international schools.

Figure 2

Cross-Country Comparison of key Construct Means



Following all the constructs, the UAE is always at the forefront as shown in Figure 2 with leadership support exhibiting high scores, and diversity climate being significantly high, which depicts the developed multicultural educational ecosystem of the country.

Correlation Analysis

To test the exploratory correlation between the four constructs--Cultural Identity, Diversity Climate, Leadership Support and Global Citizenship, Pearson correlation matrix has been calculated. Correlation coefficients are summarized in table 6.

Table 6

Correlation Matrix of Key Study Variables

Variable	Cultural Identity	Diversity Climate	Leadership Support	Global Citizenship
Cultural Identity	1.000	0.028	-0.029	0.002
Diversity Climate	0.028	1.000	0.073	0.055
Leadership Support	-0.029	0.073	1.000	0.026
Global Citizenship	0.002	0.055	0.026	1.000

Table 6 indicates that the four constructions have weak and statistically insignificant correlations with one another. Cultural Identity indicates relatively weak relationships with Diversity Climate ($r = +0.028$), Leadership Support ($r = -0.029$) and Global Citizenship ($r = +0.002$)

which means that none of the variables have significant linear relationships in the pooled dataset. This low coefficient could be due to the multi-dimensionality of cultural identity formation in the international school, where contextual factors, including policies of the nations and the school culture itself, and the demographic composition, are probably playing a more significant role than face-to-face relationships between constructions. Also, strong correlations are common in culturally diverse samples where differences within countries are much higher than within individuals.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was done to investigate the issue of whether Diversity Climate, Leadership Support and Global Citizenship are significant predictors of Cultural Identity scores of the students. The three variables were each taken as predictors in the regression model. The regression coefficients and the model statistics are proposed in Table 7.

Table 7
Multiple Regression Predicting Cultural Identity

Predictor	B	SE	T	p
Constant	3.7888	0.219	17.277	0.000
Diversity Climate	0.0308	0.034	0.913	0.361
Leadership Support	-0.0335	0.036	-0.925	0.355
Global Citizenship	0.0011	0.034	0.031	0.975

Model statistics

- $R^2 = 0.002$
- F-statistics = non-significant
- $p > .05$

The regression model only accounts for 0.2 percent ($R^2 = .002$) of the variance in Cultural Identity, which means that this model has a negligible predictive value. None of the predictors Diversity Climate ($p = .361$), Leadership Support ($p = .355$) or Global Citizenship ($p = .975$) have statistically significant effects. These results suggest that the perception of cultural identity in international schools by students cannot be determined merely based on the internal school variables as value measured here. Rather, the external cultural, familial and national conditions that do not fit within the constructs included in the model seem to shape the identity formation.

This finding is in line with studies in multicultural education settings, in which the school-based determinants commonly mediate the influence of broader social forces, which makes the isolated determinants statistically insignificant when combined across nations. The results of the regression support the significance of country-specific analysis and qualitative data, both of which will be discussed in the following sections.

Qualitative Results

Semi-structured interviews carried out on leaders of schools (N = 36; 12 in each country) produced abundant information on the impact of leadership practices on the formation of cultural identity in secondary international schools. Thematic analysis generated three overarching themes all of which were similar and differing in the cross-national dimensions in the UAE, Oman and Iraq.

➤ Theme 1: Leadership as an Intermediary of Multicultural Identity in Multicultural Membership.

The leaders of all three countries stressed that they were not merely administrators, but they were also in the business of creating an atmosphere in which cultural identity would be exercised without fear of intimidation or intimidation of their identity. They explained the necessity to reconcile international educational norms with local cultural demands, but this conflict is particularly intense in international schools that are on the one hand addressed by multinational students.

Illustrative Quotes

We have more than 50 nationalities among our students. Maintaining identity does not mean forcing one culture upon another but should mean accommodating space such that the backgrounds of all individuals are honored. (UAE Principal)

We are deliberately incorporating the Omani customs in celebrations in schools to ensure that the expatriate students become acquainted with the locals, yet they still feel appreciated. (Oman Vice Principal)

In Iraq, identity work is a challenge because the schools are expected by the families to repeat their traditional values, even in international programs. (Iraq Principal)

➤ Theme 2: Diversity Climate and Cultural Engagement Practices.

The participants reported the diversity of the practices shaping the climate position in the school, which could be multicultural events, language support activities, and cross-cultural student projects. There were most organized diversity programs in UAE schools and Oman followed. Iraqi leaders recognized the current activities but admitted some limitations associated with resources and personnel development.

Illustrative Quotes

Diversity: In our strategic intent; we train teachers on a yearly basis on the issue of culturally responsive pedagogy. (UAE Principal)

As a student, you can demonstrate your heritage and learn about other students in the same school, which makes you feel like part of it. (Oman School Leader)

Some are working harder but there is still a problem of teacher preparation- many of them have not been trained to teach multicultural education. (Iraq Vice Principal)

➤ Theme 3: Challenges in Balancing Global Citizenship and National Identity

School leaders highlighted an ongoing struggle to balance the promotion of global citizenship skills with the preservation of national cultural identity, especially in contexts where political, social, or cultural sensitivities influence educational expectations.

Illustrative Quotes

“Parents want their children to be global citizens, yet they also want them deeply connected to their heritage—we must navigate both.” (UAE Principal)

“Global citizenship is important, but it must not overshadow our students’ understanding of their cultural roots.” (Oman Principal)

“The challenge is ensuring that students do not feel detached from Iraqi values while studying in an international environment.” (Iraq School Leader)

Integrated Mixed-Methods Interpretation

Combining quantitative and qualitative results helps to get a better complete picture of the impact leadership practices have on cultural identity in the five national conditions.

1. Quantitative evidence revealed a lot of differences across countries and especially in:
2. Diversity climate (north foremost in UAE, south foremost in Iraq)
3. Leadership support (weakest in UAE)
4. Cultural identity (it is the highest in Oman)
5. Nonetheless, correlation and regression analyses showed weak predictive correlations, thus suggesting that no single school factor can predict cultural identity.

This statistical weakness can be described by stating that qualitative findings depict the underlying forces of context:

- Formation of cultural identity depends on familial expectations, cultural policies of the country, and social norms, which are impossible to determine with the help of school-level variables only.
- Leaders refer to cultural identity as context-dependent and multi-layered, and it confirms the lack of strong associations as identified through the simple linear models.

The findings were combined in a mixed-method convergence strategy to get further into the knowledge of quantitative trends overlay of the qualitative outlooks. In this comparative study,

we have pointed out how much statistical patterns are in line with narrative accounts of leaders in the UAE, Oman and Iraq. This synthesis is aimed at highlighting aspects of the data set where the two strands of data support each other, and locations where the data sets cannot give explanatory background which cannot be reflected by intrinsic statistical data. As found in Table 8, this integration brings a revival time pattern: quantitative research shows large variation between countries whilst qualitative research narrates the context in which variations occur in how leadership and international school identity is formed, particularly the cultural and institutional forces that frame leadership practices in international schools.

Table 8

Mixed-Methods Convergence of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Quantitative Result	Qualitative Explanation
UAE scores highest in leadership support and diverse climate	UAE leaders describe structured multicultural initiatives and deliberate professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy
Oman scores highest in cultural identity	Leaders emphasize cultural integration practices rooted in national traditions
Iraq shows lower diversity climate and leadership support	Leaders highlight constraints such as limited resources and lack of multicultural training
Weak correlations among constructs	Leaders describe cultural identity as influenced by broader socio-cultural dynamics beyond school variables

Discussion

Interpretation of Key Findings

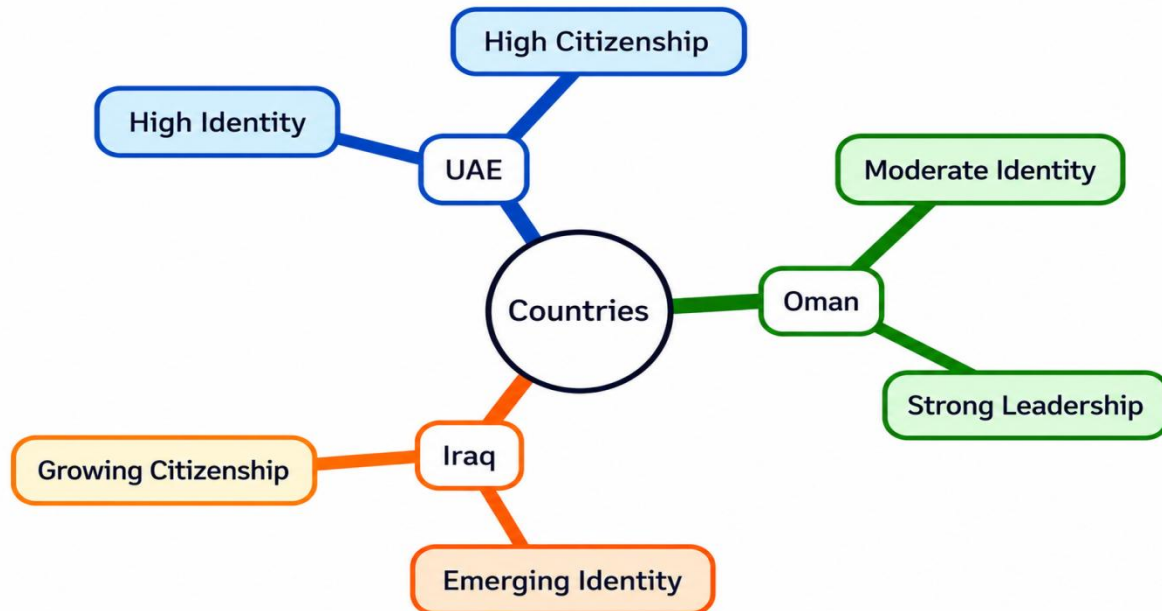
This research paper has shown that there is a complicated relationship between globalization, cultural identity, global citizenship education and the practices of school leadership in the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Iraq. Quantitatively, the cultural identity exhibited by students in the three countries was moderate to high, which is indicative of the fact that national and cultural belonging are still at the center of high diversified school settings. Simultaneously, the attitudes of global citizenship were rather good, especially in the UAE and Oman, in which the system of international schools used to expose students to multicultural interactions and global competencies. The fact that in Iraq the means scores are relatively lower indicates that discourses of global citizenship have not infiltrated secondary educational structures as much yet.

Overall, leadership practices were moderately effective and had a positive but insignificant association with identity and citizenship variables, which is consistent with the mixed-method results: although school leaders believe that cultural identity is a key aspect of school practices policy constraints, or other inconsistent approaches to implementation. On the qualitative level, it is possible to note that leaders and teachers regularly pointed to the contradictions in preserving cultural traditions and the necessity to adapt to the globalizing forces. These stories are useful in explaining why the quantitative correlations are not higher, the leadership

practices have a role, but they work with the larger forces of culture, politics and institutions that are beyond the direct influence of the leaders themselves.

Figure 3

Comparative Profile of Cultural Identity and Global Citizenship Outcomes among Students in the UAE, Oman, and Iraq.



Comparison with Prior Literature

Findings are consistent with (Barreto et al., 2022; Fisher, 2021) who observe that the need to implement culturally responsive pedagogical strategies is broadly accepted in multicultural learning settings, but their application is disproportionate. Just like (Adams & Velarde, 2020; Hashemi, 2025), this paper proves that identity and belonging are not fixed and static constructions but driven by both local and global forces. Findings of (Hunduma & Mekuria, 2024) on the contribution of inclusive educational environments to enhancing the sense of belonging among students to an organization can also be echoed in the present study, especially in the UAE and Oman, where schools are currently using international curriculums that promote multiculturalism in international schools.

This is also consistent with the work of wider policy interest, including the articles by (Massouti et al., 2024), who have found gaps between the vision of global citizenship education in the nation and the implementation of this vision in educational practices in schools. In this study, the qualitative data do not emphasize adequately on the same gap in implementation, particularly in Iraq. Such trends align with (Torres, 2022; Zajda, 2023), who stated that organizational culture and leadership play the central role of mediating the discourse of identity and global citizenship internalization. In addition, the levels of preserving identity that are moderated are in line with the discussion of (Mazurkevych et al., 2024; Nasir et al., 2025), who highlight globalization as something that both challenges and builds cultural identity based on institutional circumstances.

Theoretical Integration

The results support fundamental assumptions based on globalization and cultural identity theory, especially that identity is more prominent akin to global cultural flows as postulated (Mazurkevych et al., 2024). The average scores in identity and the diverse qualitative scripts show that the students work on their identities by making comparisons with global norms taught in international schools.

The results are also characterized by the framework of school organizational culture (Torres, 2022). Schools that had high multicultural cultures including those in the UAE and Oman gave learning experiences within which students were able to experience less fluid global as well as local identities. Conversely, schools that had disjointed or poor cultural systems exhibited diminished levels of attainment congruency among leadership practice and the student identity outcomes.

The research also validates the findings of the distributed instructional leadership model (Ude, 2025), which shows that the leadership practices do indeed have an indirect impact on the cultural identity and global citizenship by shaping the school climate and pedagogical coherence. Lastly, the critical global citizenship education theory sheds light on explaining the positive attitude to the idea of global citizenship among students: the schools that tended to offer experiential, dialogic, and intercultural learning at school enhanced the level of civic awareness and responsibility in students.

Contextual Implications for Arab Educational Leadership

The triangulation outcomes point at significant implications to schools and education policymakers in the Arab region. First, the comparative power of culture identity in the three countries proves that globalization has not rendered national and cultural belonging unnecessary but is rather, identity is being renegotiated in the hybrid educational settings. This drives the importance of seven globalization leadership tools that contain global exposure and a deliberate cultural heritage.

Second, the results have indicated that international schools in UAE and Oman are in a higher position to promote global citizenship competences among the students basing on their heterogeneous student body, learning multiple languages and the school facilities stressing global values. Schools in Iraqi are trying to overcome decades of political and economic problems and might again need additional organizational assistance to adopt similar practices. Third, cultural competence, intercultural communication, and strategies to inculcate the local wisdom should be incorporated in leadership development programs throughout the Arab region, and this echoes (Adams & Velarde, 2020; Mazurkevych et al., 2024). Such abilities are critical in the way it navigates the cultural diversity that typifies international school environments.

Last but not the least, the weak leadership-student outcomes correlation suggests that there is a need to make reforms at the policy level such as updating the curriculum, teacher training,

and intercultural learning policies and to enhance the effects of school leadership. The gap between cultural preservation and only global citizenship doesn't get bridged by individual leaders without more stabbing compliments in the systems

Conclusions

From the findings of this research, it can be deduced that, there is a complicated interaction between leadership practice, school organizational culture and culturally sensitive pedagogical methods on cultural identity and global citizen-ship acquisition in secondary learners in the UAE, Oman and Iraq. The quantitative analysis showed that the cultural identity level was moderate and for the three contexts the level of global citizenship awareness is relatively high, although the difference between the countries was statistically significant but not high. Qualitative tips also illuminated the ways school leaders create a conceptualization of identity formation as a dynamic process due to the effect of globalization, multicultural school setting and strategic placement of international schools. Collectively, these results bring more emphasis to the role played by consensus in leadership policies and participatory teaching contexts for enhancing the capabilities of students to maneuver and absorb local and global identities.

Individually, the research provides effective and powerful evidence for the effectiveness of the promotion of cultural identity and global citizenship on those occasions when schooling leadership, school culture and pedagogical practices are aligned. The evidence suggests that professional development should be focused by policies and school leaders, with the goal of strengthening culturally competent school leadership, enhancing teacher skills in multicultural pedagogy, and fostering positive cultures in schools for students' identity development. Finally, the paper depicts schools; particularly those international and culture-diverse, as spaces where young people can be shaped to become international and culture-sensitive throughout the Arab world.

Although the study has made contributions, it does have its limitations. The sample varied across the three countries was, however, restricted to high profile international secondary schools and the findings could not be generalized to schools in the community and schools in the rural areas with varying cultural climates/experiences. The cross-sectional design does not necessarily allow establishing causal relationships between variables and depending on the self-reported measures can lead to the bias of the responses. Further, the qualitative interviews, though rich, involved only a limited number of leaders in each country which may not indicate the perception differences within the leadership in each country.

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Author Contributions

The author conducted all stages of the research, including conceptualization, methodology, data analysis, writing, revision, supervision, and funding acquisition, and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

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