

Article

Workforce Localization in the Arab Gulf Countries: How Do Organizations Socialize the Members of a Powerful Minority?

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Abstract: This paper addresses a key social–cultural aspect of sustainability in the Gulf region: Workforce localization (WL). Our research objective is to empirically explore organizational socialization (OS) practices in the context of WL in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where National Citizens (NCs) are a powerful minority in the workforce. This research adopts a qualitative methodology, using semi-structured interviews with managers in charge of the WL program in 14 organizations in the UAE, across different industrial sectors and ownership. We found five major OS practices: Establishing thorough orientation programs, providing formal training programs (skills, diversity/cultural awareness, supervisor, mentoring and coaching team building), redesigning NCs’ jobs and work teams, engaging expatriates in NCs’ OS processes, and organizing networking events. All organizations rigorously evaluated the effectiveness of their OS practices. This study contributes to the empirical literature on management OS, WL, and diversity management in a non-western, emerging Arab country. It contributes to theory development on the content of OS practices, showing how a minority can be a powerful group around whom socialization processes are tailored to integrate them fully into the organization. Practically, our findings inform managers of how to adapt their existing OS practices to the specific needs of minority members, and support Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)-based organizations and policymakers with the design, monitoring, and implementation of WL programs, and with the development of a sustainable workforce.

Keywords: organizational socialization; work place integration; practices; localisation; nationalisation; diversity management; Arab; UAE; HRM; social sustainability

1. Introduction

Sustainable development is the “development that meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs and aspirations” [1] (p. 43). This definition is most often operationalized through a triangular vision of sustainability, including ecological, social or socio-cultural, and economic aspects [2]. This paper addresses a key social–cultural aspect of sustainability in the Arab Gulf region: Workforce localization (WL). WL policy “aims at reducing dependence on expatriate workers and creating job opportunities for nationals in both the public and private sectors” [3]. Over the last 30 years, each of the six member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)) has adopted some form of politically-led WL program to facilitate the recruitment and development of their National Citizens (NCs), which has changed the employment market landscape, and made WL a significant staffing consideration for international businesses operating in this region [4–9].

To facilitate the implementation of WL programs, HR managers design, implement, and monitor strategic human resource management (HRM) and diversity management practices [10]. A key aspect of diversity management is the efficient socialization of new employees [11]. This research addresses the lack of insights into the actual practices that organizations in the GCC implement to socialize their NCs. Organizations in the UAE seek to employ NCs to comply with government initiatives and achieve their social responsibility goals. Despite numerous challenges, private and public organizations spend significant efforts and resources to recruit and select NCs, who are a minority in the UAE workforce, with some mixed results [10]. However, the success of a specific staffing program does not only depend on the quality of the hiring processes, but also on the effective socialization of the new members after their arrival in the organization [12]. The magnitude of an employee's contribution to their organization depends on the use of their skills and more broadly on their workplace integration. NCs' organizational socialization (OS) is thus an important aspect of their fit, effectiveness, and retention in the workplace.

Organizational socialization is an "ongoing long term process through which an individual learns and secures relevant job skills, acquires the knowledge of organizational understanding, becomes an acceptable member of the organizations social group and accepts and understands the values and expected behaviors within the organization" [13]. The OS process is an ongoing process, which is not limited to the first few months of membership, but continues long into the average member's tenure [14]. OS is a two-way process, where both organization and newcomer play important roles.

Successful OS is important to organizations and individuals. It is important for organizations because it helps to ensure the continuity of core organizational values [15], results in higher commitment levels in general [16], increases employees' career satisfaction, and reduces turnover [17]. OS is also important to the individual, because it reduces new member's uncertainty and anxiety, allows new members to acquire expected attitudes, behaviors, and skills to become effective organizational members, and determines future performance [18]. In our research, we focus on the organizations' perspective.

Prior research has shown it is more difficult for minority members to adjust to the organizational culture than for majority members. Minority members are provided with less information about the operations and the politics of the organization [19], have more difficulty adapting to and attaining organizational norms and values created by the majority [20], are less likely to be accepted and tolerated when they express criticism [21], have fewer and less-established networks within the organization [22], and are more likely to be harshly evaluated [23]. In existing literature, however, employers do not necessarily spend significant efforts and resources to socialize the members of the minorities [24]. The assumption is that minority members want to be socialized because they need the job and want to do well. But UAE NCs are members of a powerful minority. The UAE indigenous context presents unique demographic, political, and socio-cultural features [25], and UAE NCs are a socially and economically privileged group [26] who are sought by employers across the UAE due to localization targets. They also have other alternatives to secure revenue (e.g., entrepreneurship, sponsorship). In these circumstances, how do organizations socialise the NCs? We could not find any literature on how organizations socialise the members of a powerful minority.

We identified three specific gaps in the literature. First, there is a lack of empirical research on management practices in the Arab world [27], and specifically on those practices that facilitate WL [9,10]. Previous research on WL in the GCC countries has shown that, when compared with research from other regions, such as Asia and Africa, there are few similarities in the localization practices and outcomes: Context matters. The multiple contextual differences between countries/regions, in terms of demographics, history, and culture limit the utility of cross-country/region knowledge on localization [28]. So, as context matters in terms of successful WL practices. Second, there is a lack of research on OS of minority employees [29] in non-western, emerging Arab countries. We could not find any published research on OS of NCs in the Gulf countries. The specific context of NCs as minority members in the WL process in the UAE is well suited to collect observations on socialization practices that are not yet well known. Third, little is known about diversity management at the organizational level in general, and in non-western countries in particular. Diversity-related issues have been mostly

examined in the context of managing migrant workers and ethnic minorities employed in western, industrialized countries [30], and past research has been mostly conducted at the team and individual level of analysis [31]. In this paper, we will focus on OS in a diversity management context at the organizational level, in the UAE.

Our research objective is to empirically explore organizational socialization (OS) practices in the context of WL in the UAE, where NCs are a powerful minority in the workforce. We will use an exploratory, qualitative, inductive research methodology.

2. Literature Review

The context is the one of WL policies in the UAE and Gulf countries. The six GCC nations present similar demographic and labor market characteristics: Rapid growth in total population, extensive reliance on expatriates, NCs' high unemployment rates, NCs' low levels of private-sector employment, and low women workforce participation. By the mid-1990s, shrinking public sector opportunities prompted most GCC governments to focus on more effectively integrating local workers into the private sector, and WL became their strategic priority. In general, GCC countries adopted localization policies based on enhancing NCs' education and training, diversifying the economy towards a knowledge-based economy, and regulating the labor market, employing quota systems to foster the employment of NCs in the private sector [9,10]. In a recent initiative to boost localization, the UAE implemented a tier-based system of targets, based on minimum levels of Emiratization, associated with financial incentives and penalties. Organizations that achieve higher levels of localization are rewarded by paying lower fees to process visas for their expatriate employees [9,10].

Multiple authors have examined the challenges to effective implementation of WL programs in the GCC, relating to the characteristics of the GCC countries' labor markets, education systems, social and cultural norms, legal framework, the low skills and competency levels of NCs, weaknesses in policy design and implementation systems, and inappropriate HRM practices [3,5,7–10]. After four decades of localization efforts, UAE NCs are still a minority in most of the private and public sector organizations they work for. NCs still prefer working in public organizations, where they benefit from shorter working hours, higher salary and benefits, work in an Arabic speaking context, and have more native colleagues, rather than working in private organizations, where they have to work for longer hours, usually in a foreign organizational culture, with English as the main language, with lower pay rates, and more limited benefits [10,32]. NCs are a minority in the UAE population: In 2016, they represented only 11.5% of the total UAE population. NCs are an even smaller minority in the workforce: In 2009, their workforce-participation rate was of 54 percent [33]. In 2016, Emiratis made up only 4% of all working residents in Dubai [34]. WL has been relatively successful in the federal governmental sector, where the Emiratization rate is around 60% [34], and in the largest Abu Dhabi government-related firms (partially owned by UAE governmental entities) and in the UAE National banks, where the Emiratization rates are about 30% [35] (Duncan, 2014). Localization in private sector organizations is much lower, however: In 2019, NCs represented only 3.64% of the private workforce [36].

NCs in the GCC are different from other ethnic minorities, however: They are a privileged, powerful minority in their own countries. Contrary to local citizens in Asian and African countries, GCC NCs have little economic pressure to work, and have other alternatives to secure revenues (e.g., entrepreneurship, sponsorship). Their employment is strongly encouraged and protected by laws, as the development and employment of NCs are a key priority for all GCC states. Employers implement special programs to hire them to satisfy their localization and social responsibility goals [10]. GCC nationals are the only type of residents not to need an employment visa to work in their own countries. When working for state-related and governmental organizations, NCs' pay scale is superior to expatriates, and their working conditions more advantageous. GCC NCs have more political, social, and economic rights than non-citizens [37]. In the existing literature, we could not find any research on how to socialize the members of a powerful minority, neither/nor NCs.

OS tactics are the ways in which the experiences of an individual in transition from one role to another are structured for him by others in the organization, and the way this process organizes the learning experiences of a newcomer to a particular role [13]. A typology of six non-exhaustive, dichotomous OS tactics has been the basis of a great deal of organizational socialization research [8]. These OS tactics are generally categorized as ‘institutionalized’ or ‘individualized’ [38]. Institutionalized socialization tactics are usually based on collective, sequential, formal, serial, fixed, and investiture practices. They lead to employee understanding and acceptance of organizational values [38], job satisfaction, and commitment, but also to role ambiguity and turnover intentions [39,40]. In contrast, individualized socialization tactics encourage new comers to be innovative and to actively design their own organizational role. They encourage the newcomer’s self-dependence, and innovative role orientation, and are based on rather individual, random, informal, and disjunctive practices. They have been found to lead to employee role innovation, but also stress [13,38]. Recently, “customized” approaches including “dual” (i.e., both institutionalized and individualized) and “integrative” tactics have been proposed to facilitate the recent immigrants’ OS process by increasing their social integration and job performance, which would ultimately facilitate their workplace adjustment [41]. Integrative tactics provide opportunities to new and existing organizational members to maintain some degree of their own cultural integrity and identity while facilitating their participation in the broader organizational network. With integrative tactics, acculturation is not limited to new employees: All existing employees become aware of new employees’ acculturation processes to help facilitate their successful integration [41].

Some of the tactics are described by using OS practices [13], so implicitly positing the existence of an articulation between the content of OS tactics and practices. OS practices refer to sets of experiences and situations that are mobilized by the organization and its members and which influence the socialization of new company hires [42]. Some authors argue that OS tactics guide OS practices [43]. In this study, we will examine OS practices from the perspectives of the organizations/managers in charge of the WL program.

Based on the discussion above, we expect organizations to develop specific OS practices to socialize the NCs. Our research questions are: (1) What OS practices do companies in the UAE use to socialize their NCs? And (2) how do these organizations evaluate the effectiveness of these OS practices?

3. Research Methods

In order to examine the OS practices applied to NCs, we adopted a qualitative, inductive methodology, based on face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The inductive approach reflects the exploratory nature of this study.

To build our sample and ensure adequate participation, we targeted organizations that: (1) Have been established in the UAE for a least five years, (2) have an established WL program, and (3) consider WL as an organizational strategic objective. We included UAE organizations with different kinds of ownership, i.e., private (PRIVO), both local and multinational (MNE), and public (PUBO) organizations (including state-owned and public services organizations), across a variety of industries, to provide variation in our sample [44]. We used the snowball technique, where we contacted a few personal contacts and from there generated a viable sample of 14 organizations. Data collection for research purposes is difficult in the Arab region, in part because of a lack of understanding of the research process [45]. Snowball sampling is particularly valuable when the population is difficult to access and is well-suited to qualitative work where external validity and concerns in respect of generalizability are not as central as they are in quantitative studies [46]. All participants requested anonymity for themselves and their organizations, so we report only basic information about the participating organizations and respondents in Table 1. The average Emiratization rates were of 25.6% among PROs, 44.8% among state-owned, and 62% among the public service organizations. In all the organizations except the public service ones, NCs were minority members in their workplace. The average tenure of the respondents in their position was 4.3 years. Nine out of 14 respondents were UAE citizens.

Table 1. Characteristics of our sample organizations. PRIVO: Private Organization; PUBO: Public Organization; MNE: Multinational.

Organizations	Ownership	Industry	Job Title of Resp.	Nationality of Respondent
PRIVO1	Private, MNE	Banking	HR/WL manager	UAE
PRIVO2	Private, MNE	Banking	WL manager	Expat
PRIVO3	Private, UAE	Banking	WL manager	Expat
PRIVO4	Private, UAE	Real Estate	WL manager	UAE
PRIVO5	Private, UAE	Trade	HR manager	Expat
PRIVO6	Private, MNE	Confidential	HR Manager	Expat
PUBO1	State-owned	Banking	WL manager	UAE
PUBO2	State-owned	Oil and Gas	HR Manager	UAE
PUBO3	State-owned	Oil and Gas	HR manager	Expat
PUBO4	State-owned	Confidential	HR Specialist	UAE
PUBO5	State-owned	Real Estate	WL manager	UAE
PUBO6	Public service	Public Service	HR manager	UAE
PUBO7	Public service	Public Service	HR specialist	UAE
PUBO8	Public service	Public Service	HR specialist	UAE

To collect our data, we conducted personal, semi-structured interviews with the managers in charge of the WL program in 14 organizations, six PRIVOs and eight PUBOs. We decided to use face-to-face interviews because these provide a greater degree of social interaction between interviewers and interviewees [47]. The interviews lasted around 60 min, were conducted in the respondents' office, in English, and were preceded by a telephone discussion, during which the project was briefly described, respondents expressed their agreement to give an interview, and the date for the interview was arranged. Interview questions included open-ended questions organized in three sections: The WL program, OS practices related to NCs, and effectiveness evaluation of these OS practices. Since most of the participants were not willing to be audio-recorded, detailed notes of the interview were taken by one of the researchers present. The interviewers occasionally asked for clarifications and supplementary information, and checked their correct understanding with the interviewees to increase validity. The detailed notes were then checked for accuracy within the research team immediately after each interview took place, which ensured that all valuable data was recorded. It is undoubtedly disappointing when interviewees refuse to be tape recorded, however, this does not mean the interview should not be conducted, as the opportunity to obtain relevant information to the objectives of the study from knowledgeable informants cannot be lost [46]. This study was approved by the University Internal Review Board to ensure compliance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and all respondents signed an informed consent before the interview.

Within our study, the unit of analysis is the organization, and thus data were analyzed at the organizational level. Each interview was transcribed from detailed notes and individually coded by two researchers using thematic coding. Thematic analysis involves going beyond simply counting words or phrases, focusing instead on identifying and describing the implicit and explicit ideas discovered within the data, i.e., the themes [48] (p. 20). Following the 6-stage process identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) [49], we began with stage 1, which requires that each interview is read several times to familiarize ourselves with each aspect of the dataset, enabling us to understand our data in-depth. Familiarization also requires that the data is initially interrogated for items of interest and the generation of data relevant to the research questions guiding the study. We then moved to stage 2, where we began to generate our initial codes. As discussed by Braun and Clarke, the initial codes can be either latent, i.e., they prioritize the existing theoretical framework and are thus deductive in nature. Alternatively,

codes can be semantic, i.e., more inductive as they emerge from the data itself. In our study, OS practices are our focus and thus we prioritized latent coding, focusing on codes pertaining to key OS practice areas. We then moved on to stage 3 of the process, where we searched for themes. We did this by reviewing our codes and searching for ‘repetition’, i.e., topics that frequently recurred; ‘metaphors and analogies’, i.e., the way in which participants use metaphor and analogy to represent their thoughts; ‘transitions’, i.e., recognition of variation of topics across transcripts; ‘similarities and differences’, i.e., seeking to assess the way in which respondents discussed topics in either similar or different ways, to assess the nuance and richness of respondents understanding of the topic. Through these processes, we were able to organize codes into themes with confidence in the grouping of thoughts and ideas across respondents. We finally looked for ‘linguistic connectors’ such as ‘because’ or ‘since’, as this provided evidence of causal connection between thoughts and ideas in the minds of our respondents. Central to our study was the coding of relevant segments at the practice level. Once the key themes had been established, we conducted stage 4, which required reviewing our themes, and 5, where we defined and named each theme. This was achieved by discussing each theme amongst the research team to ensure that all data relevant to the research questions had been included and each theme contributed to understanding issues central to the study. Themes were considered final when consensus on its meaning and contribution to the theoretical framework was reached. To test the robustness of the themes identified, we finally conducted within-case and cross-case analyses [50]. The double coding, regular discussions in the research team, and the within- and across-case analyses increased the reliability of our analysis. The sixth and final stage is the presentation of our findings, which can be found in the next section. From the 10th interview, we reached data saturation, i.e., supplementary respondents did not bring any new OS practice.

4. Findings

We found that our participating organizations used five major OS practices to socialize NCs: Establishing a thorough orientation program, training initiatives (formal skills, diversity/cultural awareness, supervisor, mentoring/ coaching, and team building training programs), redesigning NCs’ job and project teams, engaging expatriates in the OS processes, organizing networking and social events. These practices were shared between PRIVOs and PUBOs. We also found that all participating organizations rigorously evaluated the effectiveness of the OS process (Table 2).

Table 2. Organizational socialization (OS) practices in the context of workforce localization (WL).

<p>1. Orientation/Induction Program (All Resp.) Precise orientation to the job, organization, and possible career paths. Organization and distribution of detailed information kits.</p>
<p>2. Formal training and development programs</p>
<p>2a. Formal skills training (all resp.) Use of training needs analysis, competency models, multiple kinds of formal training methods.</p>
<p>2b. Diversity /cultural awareness training Offered to all national citizens (NCs), but not solely.</p>
<p>2c. Supervisor training Arabic language and culture, United Arab Emirates (UAE) culture, prevention of stereotypes, prevention of cultural biases and stereotypes in the performance evaluation and management process, giving constructive feedback. Offered to all supervisors of NCs, or all supervisors.</p>
<p>2d. Mentoring and coaching programs Offered to all NCs, but not solely.</p>
<p>2e. Team building training For special projects including NCs.</p>

Table 2. Cont.

3. Redesigning NCs' jobs and team projects To clarify NCs' roles, accommodate their personal needs, facilitate team work and collaboration, encourage knowledge sharing between NCs and expatriates.
4. Engaging expatriates in the NCs' OS process Informing, training expatriates on NCs' OS issues. Involving expatriates in the socialization, mentoring, coaching, training of NCs. Holding expatriates accountable for NC's OS.
5. Organizing networking and social events (shared, but PUBOs++) To facilitate social support among all employees, including NCs. Socializing events in both work and non-work environments.
6. Evaluating the effectiveness of NCs' OS practices (all resp.) Importance of these measures (all resp.)
6a. Quantitative measures Most popular measures: NCs' retention rates (shared), satisfaction rates with OS activities (shared, PUBOs+), role performance (PRIVOS+). Other measures: Numbers of complaints from NCs on their OS, NCs' promotion rates, engagement rates, turn up on networking events, number of NCs using the open-door policy (shared), NCs' productivity rate, cost of OS activities (MNE).
6b. Qualitative measures Qualitative, informal feedback received from NCs and their managers (PRIVOS, state-owned organizations), quality of social interactions, exit interviews (state-owned organizations).

4.1. Orientation/Induction Programs

All respondents offered a formal orientation/induction program for their NCs, lasting from two to seven days. These programs covered general items such as the organization's mission, vision, values, objectives, diversity/WL program, code of conduct, a visit to the offices and facilities, and included also customized items such as the specific job content of the new hires, specific career information, and a formal introduction to their future collaborators and managers. The new NCs meet their supervisors, co-workers, and those they will work with. Most organizations distributed detailed orientation kits including all the information new employees need to know about the organization and their jobs. Several respondents mentioned that the induction program for NCs was longer than for non-NCs, and included a longer presentation of possible career paths for NCs, to give them a better career perspective. Organizations made sure that high profile managers and NCs, organizational members, were included in the orientation program. Several respondents commented their organizations wanted to live up to their organization's NCs' value propositions, and maximize NCs' experience, from the induction step, and even before, at the "pre-employment stage".

4.2. Formal Training and Development Programs

All respondents reported providing extensive and systematic training to NCs, and deploying a wide range of specific training and development programs. Participation in these programs with other NCs, and also regular employees, provided NCs an opportunity to communicate with others and share their experiences. We identified five different kinds of training initiatives.

4.2.1. Formal Skills Training

All respondents reported providing NCs thorough formal skills training programs. Most of the time, it is a customized program, based on individual needs assessment, competency models, and job analysis, and using different training methods; on the job, off the job, on-line, interactive, mentoring, coaching, special projects and assignments.

"HRM department, through intensive training, make sure that UAE nationals have the chance to integrate with other employees within and outside the organization, through training

programs in UAE or outside UAE, where they have a better chance to meet other employees and discuss various experience that they had to go through and how they overcome their obstacles, whether its work related or socially related.”

4.2.2. Diversity/Cultural Awareness Training

A majority of respondents reported providing diversity/cultural awareness training. Most of the time, this training was implemented for all employees, including supervisors, and covered how to overcome cultural stereotypes, increase social acceptance of NCs, create an accepting diverse climate, and ultimately, facilitate role adjustment and performance of all newcomers. One organization mentioned that their diversity training is designed for all employees who don't speak Arabic.

“We offer Diversity Training to all employees, NCs, and expatriates, to overcome stereotypes and increase NCs role adjustment and performance.”

4.2.3. Supervisor Training

Another shared practice was to organize specific training for all supervisors of at least one NC. Respondents stressed the important role of managers and supervisors in creating a welcoming environment for NCs, and the importance of educating them on WL and diversity management issues, and equipping them with skills to promote an inclusive climate for NCs. The training content for supervisors included an introduction to the Arabic language and culture, UAE culture specifics, how to avoid cultural biases and stereotypes in management, give constructive feedback, effectively delegate, and provide career guidance to NCs and other employees.

“Supervisor training on supervision management and evaluation, for all supervisors with at least one NC.”

4.2.4. Mentoring and/or Coaching

Equally popular and shared, was the design and implementation of a mentoring system, with experienced expatriate or local senior managers mentoring new NCs. One organization implemented a ‘buddy system’, where the new NCs were paired with experienced employees at the same level. Among the eight organizations that offered mentoring, six also offered coaching to NCs. Some respondents noted that they usually used coaching when managers get promoted, but they also used coaching to socialize their new NCs, when needed.

“The Emiratization committee selects senior staff as mentors for junior employees. . . . These mentors provide guidance, educate NCs on new policies, discuss challenges, and discuss how to become a valued organizational member.”

4.2.5. Team Building

Some respondents reported that for important projects including NCs, they would train the whole project team using team building exercises to ensure effective communication and trust among NCs and expatriates.

Finally, several semi-governmental and public service organizations mentioned that most training initiatives designed for NCs were delivered in Arabic, or in English with simultaneous oral translation, to make sure that NCs understood the content very well.

4.3. Redesigning NCs' Jobs and Work Teams

Respondents reported redesigning NCs' jobs and teams and monitoring these. The objectives were (1) to clarify, sometimes simplify, NCs' job roles, (2) to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing between NCs and experienced expatriates, (3) and ultimately facilitate NCs' OS and integration. This meant ensuring that (1) tasks and responsibilities assigned to NCs correspond to their capabilities,

by sometimes temporarily modifying the job description [10], and are clearly communicated and understood, (2) NCs learn and grow on their jobs by including useful learning opportunities and assignments in the job description, and (3) the equal distribution of responsibility between NCs and expatriates. Moreover, some PUBOs respondents reported to adapt NCs' work schedules to their personal needs. When designing a new project team involving NCs and expatriates, some respondents also added team building activities. Respondents also mentioned that redesigning NCs jobs could lead to scheduling difficulties and raise jealousy among other workers that could not enjoy this option, so this needed to be precisely justified and managed.

"We try to perform certain projects through diversified teams where a non-NC is appointed as the group leader. Each time an expert expatriate goes out to meet an important partner/client, we make sure this expatriate takes an NC for learning purposes."

4.4. Engaging the Expatriates in the OS Processes

Seven respondents mentioned that to reduce expatriates' resistance to NCs' socialization, and increase the effectiveness of NCs' OS process, they engaged the expatriates directly in these OS processes. Expatriates were actively involved in the NCs' process, from the recruitment and selection, to socialization, networking, training and development, mentoring, and coaching of NCs. Two local organizations (one private, one public) mentioned that the expatriate managers' performance evaluation was linked to the achievement of WL targets. Both mentioned that holding expatriate managers accountable for WL was one of their best practices for successful NCs' OS. Other respondents mentioned that they informed and trained expatriates on WL (importance, legislation, processes, challenges) and communicated with expatriates the importance of their excellent contributions, and reassured them that the organization needed them, to motivate them to collaborate on the WL project and facilitate NCs' OS.

"Linking expatriate performance with achieving the targets of the WL program."

"We educate expatriates on why exactly NCs are needed, and on the benefits of the WL program. We explain to expatriate managers that the NCs will not put their jobs under risk, and that we need the expatriates help in socializing the NCs."

4.5. Organizing Networking and Social Events

Several respondents, mostly from PUBOs, mentioned that their companies organized structured social and networking events, both inside and outside the organization, to facilitate social interactions and support between all organization members, across cultural groups and hierarchical levels: Between NCs and expatriates from different cultural groups, new and experienced members. These events enabled the development of deep social ties between members. For the respondents, it was important to enable employees to share their professional and personal experiences, and give them a chance to meet each other in different contexts, between colleagues in the company, and with their families outside of the organization.

"Quarterly gathering of all employees to promote integration and collaboration among all."

"Social events such as lunch and dinner invites, boat trips, gatherings, to meet colleagues in a non-work environment."

4.6. Evaluating the Effectiveness of the OS Practices

Our second research question related to the effectiveness evaluation of these OS practices. All our respondents reported to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of their OS practices. The PRIVOS, and especially the MNEs, use more measures to evaluate the effectiveness of their OS practices than PUBOs. One private MNE company used up to nine quantitative and qualitative measures to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of their OS practices. In general, respondents mentioned the

importance of collecting and analyzing precise metrics about the effectiveness of their OS practices, because these measures informed their WL strategies, and helped them to continuously challenge, modify, and enhance their OS practices, and also get a better return on their WL efforts. To collect data, our sample organizations mostly used employee surveys, HR data base, and performance management documents.

4.6.1. Quantitative Effectiveness Measures

Most of the respondents used multiple quantitative measures, usually comparing the results for NCs and expatriates. Most of the PRIVOs and PUBOS monitored NCs' retention rates, and this was the most popular measure across our sample. Ten organizations, of which seven were PUBOS, measured the satisfaction rates of employees with OS practices, comparing NCs' and expatriates'. Half of the participating organizations, mostly those from the private sector, measured employees' performance as a way to measure OS effectiveness. Much less popular evaluation measures included the number of complaints about the OS process, promotion, and engagement rates. Even more rarely, organizations in our study measured turn up rates to networking events and number of employees using the open-door policy. Two organizations (one private, one public) linked effectiveness of the NC's OS/training/performance to the direct supervisor/managers' own key performance indicators (KPI) to make them accountable for NCs' successful integration. Only one MNE declared measuring the cost of the OS activities, and another MNE measured NCs and expatriates' productivity rates.

"We monitor the number of complaints received from NCs about their OS and work experience in our organization."

"We precisely monitor NCs' retention rate: Including high caliber NCs' retention rate. These are reviewed annually; we compare retention of NCs versus general employee rate and versus market rates."

"We conduct annual employee engagement surveys for NCs and expatriates using an international method. We compare these two kinds of employees, and also measure disparity against international standards (benchmarking)."

"One of our most effective OS practices was to link expat performance evaluation with achieving the targets of the WL program." "Having the NCs' training effectiveness part of the supervisors KPI was actually a best practice."

"We measure employees' productivity rate. Time sheets record every task of an employee and the time duration. It contains the details of their accomplishing tasks for the project."

4.6.2. Qualitative Effectiveness Measures

All private organizations and four state-owned organizations, but none of the public service organizations, also used qualitative measures. The most popular qualitative measure was the feedback collected from NCs and their managers (all private, but only one state-owned organization). The other qualitative measures were mentioned only a few times, by different organizations: Observation of the quality of social and work interactions, and general qualitative information collected on OS in exit interviews.

5. Discussion

Our findings support and refine previous research findings on OS of diverse and global employees. A formal induction program is usually the first socialization experience for the new employee [51], and has been found to facilitate employees' socialization in multiple and diverse contexts. For example, induction programs fostered migrants' integration into their Australian [52] and Finnish [53] workplaces. At the induction stage, all new employees should be introduced to the company's policies regarding

diversity, and the way to report any discriminatory misconduct. Several months later, employees could be invited to discuss their difficulties and challenges in a follow up meeting to help them find solutions [54].

The implementation of formal training programs are also in line with previous research findings. Based on the shortcomings of the educational system and the lack of NCs' market-related skills and experience [4,5,9,10], NCs' training programs are key for successful integration of NCs in the workforce. Successful companies do not simply aim to meet localization quotas, but develop NCs into skilled and leadership positions [55]. NCs are commonly hired or promoted into positions and then supported in their education, training, and development needs to meet the necessary qualifications [9]. Key skills training and development practices have been found to facilitate diverse employees' adjustment in the workplace, such as migrants [46,56] and Canadian indigenous employees [24]. Diversity awareness training facilitates the successful OS of diverse group members because it builds a common understanding of the value of diversity, helps to build social cohesion, and results in improved individual and organizational outcomes [57]. Training all employees on "diversity and cultural awareness" highlights the role of the existing employees in the successful integration of NCs. It has been suggested that cultural training could be used for all employees to facilitate migrants' OS [58]. Supervisor training has also been used to facilitate OS of minority members in the Canadian mining industry: Educating supervisors about indigenous cultures and realities had positive effects on retention and work climate [24]. Employers should provide training to raise managers' awareness of minority groups' challenges and provide them with the skills to promote inclusive environments and address unhelpful or unacceptable behavior [59]. Offering cultural diversity, supervision, and team training, not only to NCs, but to all employees in contact with NCs, including supervisors, is considered an "integrative tactic" [35]. Mentoring is another strategy for facilitating diversity. Mentors play a significant role in new employees' professional development and successful integration into the workplace [60]. Successful senior mentors are matched with junior minority employees, with the objective of enabling under-represented demographic groups to move through invisible barriers and advance in their careers [61]. Mentors should be selected based on their job-responsibilities and interest in mentoring, and must be trained on the importance of diversity [54]. Only 4% of UAE organizations use mentoring to develop NCs [55]. The fact that six out of our 14 participating organizations used coaching suggest that these organizations are among those that take WL very seriously. Coaching minority members has been identified as a beneficial practice for the indigenous workforce in the mining industry [24]. Coaching and mentoring programs are effective tools to promote diversity, as non-directive learning delivered through one-to-one meetings can be a powerful way to develop people, but these relationships should be offered to all employees to avoid favoritism [59].

The practice of redesigning and monitoring NCs' job and teams relates to the efficient management of multicultural, diverse teams [62,63]. In the WL context, it is not uncommon for expatriates' job description to be altered to include training their national replacements [28]. From the literature on global mobility, we know that job clarity and autonomy help expatriates to adjust to their new job [64,65] and reduce their time to proficiency [66]. Canadian organizations modified the working schedules of the indigenous employees as a retention strategy, and reported the same challenges related to scheduling difficulties and tensions between employees who enjoy these options and those who don't [24].

Increasing commitment of collaborators and managers to NC's OS throughout the organization was crucial to our sample organizations. A survey in the Australian private sector found limited understanding of diversity management initiatives among mid-level managers [67]. Even if senior managers champion WL through policies and pledges, these could have little effect if middle managers and collaborators don't engage in the process [68]. A key to successfully managing diversity lies in reducing managers' resistance, which can be done by engaging them in promoting the programs in ways that feel more empowering than prescriptive [69]. Responsibility and accountability are key

factors in the success of any diversity or change management initiative [70]. Managers at all levels should be held accountable for diversity results at their level [71].

Our sample organizations used structured networking and social events to allow them to share job related issues and knowledge, as well as personal challenges and successes, with each other. In the OS literature, it is well established that networking and social events provide a planned opportunity for all employees to interact with each other [72]. They facilitate the development of friendly relations among other employees, at all levels, and so improve the development of NCs' social capital and their informal networks [73].

Our last result related to the effectiveness evaluation of the OS practices. The foreign MNEs in our sample developed the most sophisticated OS effectiveness evaluation measures, certainly because they had the lowest localization rates, and the most difficulty in socializing the NCs. Public service organizations developed the least sophisticated OS effectiveness evaluation systems, maybe because they had the highest localization rates, and employing and socializing NCs was easier for them. Previous research highlighted the importance of using both quantitative and qualitative measures to evaluate WL practices effectiveness [10,28]. Surprisingly, only one private foreign MNE declared monitoring the cost of its OS activities. Our sample organizations did not specifically measure the effectiveness of their major OS practices, such as their induction, NCs' training and development, supervisor training, or coaching/mentoring practices. For example, organizations could evaluate the effectiveness of their induction practices by using a satisfaction survey to be filled by the inductees just after the program and again one semester later, comparing satisfaction rates across time and employee categories [54]. NCs' retention rates relative to expatriates' retention rates, one year and two years after induction, should be measured and monitored, by department and for the entire organization. The effectiveness of each training and development initiative should be assessed at the affective, cognitive, behavioral, and organizational results levels, and for its economic value or return on investment [74]. The effectiveness of the supervisors' training program could be assessed by their National employees' satisfaction with the quality and frequency of support and guidance received from their supervisor, the quality and frequency of performance evaluation feedback received from their supervisor, and the optimal utilization of their competencies. NCs' performance levels could be monitored and compared to those of expatriates, for each department and for the company as a whole. The effectiveness of the mentoring program could be assessed by monitoring the number of mentor/mentees matches, satisfaction rates of mentors and mentees, and the mentees' performance levels. Progress on diversity and inclusion requires managers throughout the organization to be held accountable both through the KPIs they are measured against, and through unhelpful and unacceptable behavior being called out [59]. Recent research found that UK employers lacked workforce data on diversity, race, and ethnicity, both in coverage and quality, and that data collection on diversity was a challenge for them [75]. The fact that our respondents spent some time and effort on evaluating their OS practices' effectiveness show their commitment to the WL agenda. The HRM function is still developing in the GCC, however, the main HRM challenges in the region are related to the strategic alignment of HRM practices with organizational goals, improvement of HRM practice effectiveness, and the development of GCC-specific HR practices [32,76].

Finally, we note that in most of our sample organizations, these formal diversity management practices were first introduced to facilitate the WL process, even if the UAE workforce is extremely diverse. The lack of diversity management strategies in Arab organizations has been documented previously [77,78].

Our study presents a few limitations. First, the participant organizations reflect a small subset of organizations with well-established, successful WL programs, which limits the generalizability of the research to these kinds of organization. Second, we interviewed HR/WL managers accountable for the WL program within their organization, so their answers could be influenced by social desirability bias [79]. This is especially the case for government related organizations that face big pressure to localize their workforce. These two limitations were mitigated to some extent by increasing the

reliability of the data through selective sampling of respondents that (1) have in-depth knowledge of the topics studied, and (2) for maximum variation across different industrial segments and ownership structures [80]. Finally, we only focused on the organizational perspective of OS.

Future research could examine in detail the specific training and development, performance management, and compensation practices used to facilitate the implementation of WL programs in GCC organizations. Future research could also explore OS from the individual perspective: What are the NCs' perceptions and reactions to the different OS practices of their employers? What are the NCs' individual acculturation/socialization strategies? Finally, quantitative studies could examine the impact of both OS practices and individual strategies on outcomes such as NCs' engagement, role performance, time to proficiency, social integration, satisfaction, and retention.

Theoretically, this study contributed to the empirical literature on WL, OS, diversity management, and management at the organizational level, in Gulf countries, by outlining the OS specific practices related to WL in the UAE. It expanded the scope of understanding of the OS processes in a specific, under-studied context: Non-western context, Arab emerging Gulf country. This paper also contributed to theory development on the content of OS practices in relation to minority employees, by evidencing how a minority group can actually be a powerful group around whom OS processes are tailored to best suit their needs and integrate them fully into the organization. By including organizations from different kinds of ownership, semi-governmental and public service organizations, we provided a new perspective to the existing literature on OS, predominantly focused on private organizations. From a practical perspective, our findings provide advanced knowledge to WL and HRM managers on the OS practices that are currently applied to facilitate NCs' adjustment to their organizational context, and on ways to adapt their existing OS practices to the specific needs of a diverse workforce in the UAE. We also hope to support GCC-based organizations with the implementation of their WL programs and their development of a sustainable workforce. In addition, these findings will be useful to NCs to better understand their organizations' efforts for their successful workplace integration. Finally, our study highlighted practices facilitating the implementation of WL, which policy-makers could use in the design, implementation, and monitoring of WL, and ongoing policy development.

6. Conclusions

The research objective was to examine the practices used by organizations to socialize the members of a powerful minority. How do organizations in the UAE socialize their NCs? How do they measure the effectiveness of these OS practices? In summary, all types of organizations in our sample took great care in designing, implementing, and monitoring specific OS to socialize their NCs, taking into account the specificities of their local context. All our sample organizations, including PUBOs, demonstrated a high level of professionalism and rigor when it came to socializing NCs in their workplaces. Our sample organizations developed a mix of shared practices to socialize their NCs. A first group of OS practices could be related to institutionalized tactics: Some aspects of the induction, and job-related training programs [13] are collective, formal, sequential, organized for all new comers, and also for all NCs. The second group of OS practices could be linked to individualized OS tactics: Individual needs assessments and development plans, mentoring and coaching, job and team redesign are highly customized on NCs' individual situations. A third group of practices are integrative tactics: Cultural training for all employees, supervisor training, team training for whole teams, engagement of expatriates in the OS process, and networking events for all employees. All participating organizations developed several measures to evaluate the effectiveness of their OS practices.

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