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## Destructive leader behaviour: A study of Iranian leaders using the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire

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### Abstract

This study examines destructive leader behaviours among a sample of Iranian leaders. Destructive leader behaviour was measured using the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ) developed by Shaw et al. (2011). Data from 700 Iranian subordinates who completed the DLQ were used to identify the dimensions of destructive leadership using principle components factor analysis. The factor analytic data were used to develop an Iranian version of the DLQ. Behavioural scale scores were then used to identify a typology of destructive leaders in the Iranian sample.

### Keywords

Destructive leadership, comparative leadership, culture and leadership, Iranian leadership, cross-cultural leadership

Recently, there has been an increased interest in ‘destructive’ leadership. Einarsen et al. (2007: 208) defined destructive leadership as ‘*The systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor, or manager that violates the legitimate interests of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization’s goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates.*’ Research related to destructive leadership includes bullying, (Ferris et al., 2007; Harvey et al., 2007), toxic leadership (Lipman-Blumen, 2006; Pelletier, 2010), abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), narcissistic leadership (Paunonen et al., 2006) and, specifically, destructive leadership (Einarsen et al., 2007; Erickson et al., 2007; Kellerman, 2004).

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Research indicates that destructive leadership can negatively affect the leader, the organisation, and subordinates. In terms of the impact on leaders, Shaw (1990) noted that individuals recognised as leaders gain social power and influence, and are more likely to receive credit for positive group outcomes. Individuals not recognised as leaders (for example, destructive leaders) may find it difficult to influence subordinates' behaviour and may not receive credit for positive group outcomes even when they are partly responsible for those outcomes. From an organisational perspective, destructive leadership may lower productivity and financial performance (Field, 2003; Keelan, 2000). Erickson et al. (2007) identified three major effects that destructive leadership had on the organisation. These were: (1) *Human resource loss*, i.e. not getting the full potential from people, harming the organisation's ability to recruit, high turnover rates, time lost to employees job hunting, and excessive absenteeism; (2) *Creating a bad organisational culture*, i.e. loss of trust among colleagues, creating fear within the work unit, increased political behaviour, work unit instability, increased cronyism and nepotism, and increased employee fear of making mistakes; and (3) *Performance loss*, i.e. increased errors and waste, lowered growth and productivity, decreased service quality levels, and the abandonment of organisational goals.

In terms of the impact on subordinates, Erickson et al. (2007) found that subordinates of destructive leaders had increased feelings of anger, frustration, and lowered self-esteem. Subordinates also indicated less motivation to do an appropriate quantity or quality of work. They became more selfish in their attitudes and activities within the organisation, were less likely to share information with others, and engaged in greater levels of political behaviour. Subordinates of destructive leaders experienced higher levels of stress, and reported that their negative work environment affected their non-work life as well. Leyman and Gustafsson (1996) and Wilson (1991) found that victims of destructive leadership often showed psychological effects similar to post-traumatic stress syndrome. Similarly, Einarsen, (1999) and Einarsen and Raknes (1997) found that a subordinate of a dysfunctional leader can suffer a variety of social, psychological and psychosomatic symptoms.

To better understand destructive leadership, Einarsen et al. (2007) proposed a two-dimensional model of leader behaviour: subordinate oriented and organisation oriented behaviour. Leaders who act against the interests of subordinates or the organisation (or both) are categorised as one of four types of destructive leaders. *Tyrannical leadership* undermines the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates without obstructing organisational goal achievement. *Derailed leadership* displays both anti-subordinate and anti-organisational behaviours. *Supportive-disloyal leadership* shows consideration for the welfare of subordinates while violating the interests of the organisation. Finally, *Constructive leadership* involves behaviour that is constructive to both subordinates and the organisation.

A study by Aasland et al. (2010) found that each type of destructive leadership was prevalent in a Norwegian workforce sample. Interestingly, Laissez-Faire leadership behaviour (passive leadership that is neither for or against the organisation and neither pro- nor anti-subordinates), was found to be the most prevalent destructive leadership behaviour, followed by supportive-disloyal leadership and derailed leadership behaviour. Tyrannical leadership behaviour was found to be the least prevalent type of destructive leadership behaviour.

In Erickson et al. (2007), 767 examples were collected of behaviours and other characteristics that caused respondents to classify their boss as a 'destructive leader.' These were then classified into 11 major categories, e.g. Autocratic Behaviour, Poor Communication,

Excessive Political Behaviour, and Lack of Strategic Skills. More recently, Shaw et al. (2011) developed a questionnaire to identify behavioural and personality-based dimensions of destructive leadership. Seven hundred and seven respondents (mainly from the US and Australia) responded to a web-based version of the 127 item Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ). Factor analysis of the items identified 22 categories of destructive leader behaviour (e.g. acting in a brutal and bullying manner, lying and other unethical behaviour, and micro managing and over controlling). Our current study uses the Shaw et al. (2011) DLQ to examine destructive leadership in Iranian leaders.

Few studies have examined cross-cultural differences in destructive leadership behaviours. Dastmalchian et al. (2001) noted that the majority of literature on effective leadership is based on research from industrialised, mostly western countries. Such criticism is even more justified with respect to destructive leadership.

However, Dickson et al. (2003) assert that since 1996 there has been an explosion of cross-cultural research on leadership. Perhaps the most extensive study of culture and leadership to date is the GLOBE Research Project (House et al., 2004). The Global Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness Research Program (GLOBE) was a 10-year research program conducted across 62 societies.

Results from GLOBE identified factors that are universally considered to facilitate effective leadership. These include being trustworthy, just and honest (integrity), having foresight and planning ahead (charismatic-visionary), being positive, dynamic, encouraging and building confidence (charismatic-inspirational), and being communicative, informed, a coordinator and team integrator (team builder). The GLOBE studies also suggest that some leader behaviours are universally considered impediments to effective leadership, i.e. being a loner, antisocial, non-cooperative, irritable, non-explicit, egocentric, ruthless, or dictatorial. Further, the GLOBE studies identified leadership behaviours and attributes that were considered to enhance effective leadership in some cultures but that were considered to be impediments to effective leadership in other cultures. The methodology and the results of the GLOBE studies appear to have facilitated additional research not only on the topic of culturally contingent effective leadership but also culturally contingent destructive leadership.

For example, Van de Vliert and Einarsen (2008) conducted an analysis of GLOBE survey data to examine whether regional atmospheric climates along with the relative wealth of the societies within the regions influenced the extent to which cultures perceived differences between constructive and destructive leader behaviours. In summarising their results, Van de Vliert and Einarsen (2008: 275), stated that *'middle managers from 61 societies in 58 countries hold different views on destructive versus constructive leadership profiles depending on the harshness of thermal climate and the degree of collective wealth. The cognitive contrast between more destructive autocratic and self-protective leadership components and more constructive team-oriented and charismatic leadership components is construed as small in harsh/poor environments (e.g. China, Kazakhstan), moderate in temperate climates irrespective of collective wealth (e.g. New Zealand, Zambia), and large in harsh/rich environments (e.g. Canada, Finland).'*

While there is increased interest in destructive leadership, there remains a paucity of research in countries other than the West. The current study addresses this deficit by examining destructive leadership in a culture that is widely different from western cultures. Iran was chosen due to a serendipitous relationship between the first and third authors and the second author of this paper. The second author is an Iranian academic who became interested in the DLQ (Shaw et al., 2011) while visiting the first and third author's

university. The DLQ was translated into Farsi and the second author conducted a research study using the translated DLQ in her home country. She then made this data available to the first and third authors. The availability of data from Iran was particularly useful because Iran represents a country with a very different cultural background from those countries typically the site of research on destructive leadership.

Some research suggests a unique leadership style and set of leadership values in Iran (e.g. Ali and Amirshahi, 2002; Alavi et al., 2004; Dastmalchian et al., 2001; Javidan and Dastmalchian, 2003). Dastmalchian et al. (2001) used the GLOBE research methodology to examine the nature of leadership effectiveness in Iran. They surveyed 300 middle managers on the nine cultural dimensions and six leadership factors identified in the GLOBE studies. They found that Iranian managers scored high for power distance and in-group collectivism and quite low on social collectivism and assertiveness. They found that gender egalitarianism is not highly emphasised in Iran, while humane orientation and performance orientation are strong societal norms. Finally, both future orientation and uncertainty avoidance received relatively low emphasis in Iran. In a study of 153 Iranian managers, Yeganeh and Su (2007: 1) found that 'Iranian managerial culture is characterized by traditional values such as collectivism, past orientation, high hierarchical distance and evil orientation expressed in terms of mistrust and conspiracy.' These findings are consistent with those found in Dastmalchian et al. (2001) and other earlier studies.

Dastmalchian et al. (2001) also examined the attributes of effective leadership found among Iranian managers. Factor analysis of a 166-item questionnaire yielded seven scales: supportive, dictatorial, planner (i.e. future orientation), familial (willingness to put family first), humble (low attention to one's own importance), faithful (believing in and acting according to the standards of religious doctrine) and receptive (anticipatory, benevolent, and amicable).

While research has identified some of the values and behaviours of effective Iranian leaders, no work to date has specifically examined the nature and prevalence of destructive leadership in Iranian leaders. Given the increasing interest in destructive leadership, it seems timely that we explore this. This paper utilises the data collected in Iran by the second author and represents an Iranian replication of the Shaw et al. (2011) study of destructive leadership which used a sample of primarily Western managers.

As noted earlier, Dastmalchian et al. (2001) found cultural characteristics in Iranian managers that would be quite different from that of the Australian and American managers who dominated the Shaw et al. (2011) study sample. One could reasonably expect that while destructive leadership exists among Iranian managers, the behavioural manifestations associated with destructive leadership in Iran could be quite different in nature.

The three primary goals of our study were to: (1) identify the dimensional structure of an Iranian version of the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ-I), (2) develop scale items to reliably measure these dimensions in our Iranian sample, and (3) use the scale measures to identify a typology of destructive leaders within our Iranian sample. We were interested in whether this Iranian typology was similar to the typology of destructive leaders identified in the Shaw et al. (2011) study of mainly Australian and American managers.

## Method

Data were collected using a paper and pencil version of the Iranian version of the DLQ (DLQ-I). Data were obtained by the second author and her Iranian colleagues from respondents in four different locations in Iran.

### The Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ)

The DLQ elicits responses to 127 items using a rating scale with six responses ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. A response of 'don't know' is also provided on each item. Four of the 127 items ask respondents to indicate an overall judgment of their current supervisor (i.e. *My boss is a terrible boss to work for*; *Of all the bosses I have known, my boss is one of the very best* {reverse scored}; *Of all the bosses I have known, I would prefer to work for my boss more than any of the others* {reverse scored}; and *My boss is not a very good boss*). These four items were averaged to form a scale measuring the overall perception of respondents as to whether their leader was a good/effective or bad/ineffective leader (a high score indicated a very bad boss). This scale is referred to as the 'Overall Good-Bad' scale and was used in some of the analyses described later in this paper. Nineteen of the 127 items relate to broad personal characteristics of the leader, (e.g. *my boss is compulsive*; *my boss is arrogant*; or *my boss is lazy*). One hundred and four items of the DLQ focus on specific behaviours in which a leader might engage, (e.g. *my leader often makes knee jerk reactions to problems* or; *my leader often takes credit for the work that others have done*).

Responses to some items are reverse scored so that a *high* rating indicates a *high* level of destructive leader behaviour or a high level of a destructive personal characteristic. On one additional item (Worst-Best Boss) respondents rated their overall perception of their current supervisor by indicating a number from 1 to 100, where '1 = the absolute WORST leader you could possibly imagine working for, and 100 = the absolute BEST leader you could possibly imagine working for.' The remaining items on the DLQ ask respondents to provide demographic information about their current supervisor and themselves (age, gender, nationality, and education level).

### Constructing the Farsi version of the DLQ

The second author of this study is a native Iranian and translated each item from the English DLQ into Farsi, asking questions of the first author about items that needed further clarification. The Farsi version, the DLQ-I, was then given to a skilled Farsi-English translator. This individual translated the DLQ-I items back into English. These retranslated items were given to the first author who examined each to insure that the retranslated items were identical in meaning to the original versions. Through this *back translation* process (Brislin, 1970, 1980; Van De Vijver and Leung, 1997) a final DLQ-I version was achieved which we believed to be a good Farsi interpretation of the original DLQ.

### Data collection procedures

Paper and pencil DLQ-I questionnaires were distributed in four cities: Tehran, Mashhad, Neyshabour, and Bojnourd. The completed questionnaires were then collected by the second author and her colleagues. Some questionnaires were only partially completed and these were excluded from our sample. Data from all four locations were provided by employees in government organisations. No private sector firms were included in the sample.

In Tehran, questionnaires were distributed among console advisers, tax experts, and other similar individuals within the Organisation of Tax Administration, one of the largest organisations in Iran. Of the 190 distributed, 121 were fully completed and included in the study (63.7%). For the Neyshabour sample the questionnaires were distributed among accounting

and management post-graduate students. Of the 140 questionnaires distributed, 30 were fully completed and included in our analyses (21.4%). For the Mashhad sample, questionnaires were distributed to individuals in the Central Administration Office, the School of Economy and Business, the Faculty of Banking Science at Ferdowsi University, and in the Mashhad municipality (including Transportation, Statistics and Information Technology, Traffic Control, Cultural Organisation). Of the 830 questionnaires distributed, 462 were fully completed and included in the analyses (55.7%). In Bojnourd, 120 questionnaires were distributed to employees in the Treasury Organisation. Of these 87 were fully completed (72.5%). This resulted in a total sample of 700 fully completed questionnaires out of the 1280 distributed (54.7%).

### *Characteristics of the final sample*

All of our respondents were enrolled in post-graduate studies and were currently employed. The average respondent was 32.3 years old (Std. Dev. = 6.6) with a range of 18 to 57 years. Of the respondents, 67.3% were male, 22.6% were female, with 10.1% unspecified. Average age of the leaders being rated was 42.0 (Std. Dev. = 8.6) with a range of 24 to 75 years. In the sample, 84.3% of the leaders were male with the remaining being either female (6.4%) or unspecified (9.3%). Respondents were highly educated, with 72.7% of the respondents having university bachelors, masters or doctoral degrees. Respondents' professional work experience averaged 8.5 years (Std. Dev. = 6.3) and ranged from less than a year to 37 years. In the entire sample 70 respondents had less than 3 years work experience, while only 32 of those had less than 2 years.

While we cannot claim that the sample was representative of any particular occupational population, the current leaders rated by respondents represented a wide variety of fairly senior positions. Of these leaders 86.2% were in positions with titles analogous to CEO/Managing Director, Director, Executive Officer, Senior Partner, General Manager, Functional Manager, Unit Manager, Department Manager, Policy Advisor or Senior Consultant. Academic managers with titles analogous to Vice Chancellor, Dean, or Department Head represented 0.7% of the current leaders. Lower level managers such as supervisors or team leaders comprised only 4.1% of the current leader sample with the remaining leaders representing a range of mid-level managerial positions. Respondents who were the immediate subordinates of these leaders had a wide variety of position titles.

## **Analyses and results**

There was a sufficient variable to sample size ratio (1:5) to conduct factor analyses on both the 19 personality items and 104 behavioural items (Byrant and Yarnold, 1995; Gorsuch, 1983; Hatcher, 1994). Thus, we felt we could realistically examine the factor structure of the DLQ-I items among Iranian respondents. Basic descriptive, factor, reliability, and cluster analyses were conducted in pursuit of our study objectives.

### *Item descriptive statistics*

There was missing data or 'don't know' responses (which were recorded as missing) for all of the items on the DLQ-I. The average number of respondents across all items was 654 with a median of 662.

For all items except the single Worst–Best Leader item, responses ranged from one to six, with item means ranging from 1.81 to 4.75. Item standard deviations ranged from 1.11 to 1.71. The average and median item ratings across all items were 2.86 and 2.80 respectively. The average and median standard deviations across all items were both 1.50. For the Worst–Best Leader item, the mean was 70.55 (Std. Dev. = 23.38). These data seem to indicate that respondents used the full range of response options available with sufficient variance in their ratings for subsequent analyses.

### *Item intercorrelations*

Item intercorrelations were, with very few exceptions, statistically significant thanks to the large sample size. Raw item intercorrelations ranged from moderately negative, (e.g.  $-0.56$ ) to highly positive (e.g.  $0.82$ ) with an average intercorrelation across items of  $0.34$ . This level of item collinearity presented a significant challenge for conducting our main analyses. However, as described below, we employed an approach used earlier in Shaw et al. (2011) that we believe allowed us to identify the underlying factor structure of the DLQ-I items.

### *DLQ-I destructive leadership scales*

The construction of destructive leadership scales in the English version of the DLQ is fully described in Shaw et al. (2011). Shaw and his colleagues conducted principal components, oblimin factor analyses (PCOA) on both the DLQ raw and ‘residual’ items. An initial analysis indicated a strong halo effect among the raw item ratings which, when submitted to factor analysis, resulted in one common factor accounting for the majority of variance explained. In order to alleviate this strong halo effect, the single ‘Worst–Best boss’ item was regressed on each of the raw items of the DLQ. Residual scores were obtained for each item with the effect of ‘Worst–Best Boss’ partialled out. These residual items were then subjected to two factor analyses – one for the 19 personal characteristics items and one for the 104 behavioural items. In the Shaw et al. (2011) study, four factors were extracted from the 19 personal characteristics items, while 22 factors were extracted from the 104 behavioural items.

With our Iranian sample, factor analyses conducted using raw item ratings yielded a factor structure dominated by a single factor with all scales resulting from these factors showing extremely high levels of inter-scale correlation. In an attempt to identify the underlying factor structure of the DLQ-I items, residual item scores were calculated using the same procedure as used in Shaw et al. (2011). The intercorrelations among these residual item scores were more moderate when compared to the raw items scores. The average residual item intercorrelation was  $0.17$ , with a range from  $-0.48$  to  $0.70$ . Factor analyses utilising these residual item scores yielded factors that were more interpretable in nature and provided destructive leadership scales with more acceptable scale intercorrelations. Thus, all analyses described in the remainder of this paper used *residual* item scores and not the raw item ratings. Thus, scale scores of  $0.0$  represent the *average* rating on a particular scale, not a *zero* level of a particular characteristic or behaviour.

The factors resulting from the principal components, oblimin factor analyses (PCOA) conducted on the 19 personality and 104 behavioural items of the DLQ-I are presented in Table 1. These factors are the final result of an iterative process with the factors representing sets of items all with communalities  $0.40$  or above (Costello and Osborne, 2005).



**Table 1.** Behavioural and personality residual items pattern matrices.\*

	Loading
<b>Factor 1: Inability to take action when needed due to lack of skills or experience (19.3/22.4)</b>	
• 90 My boss often fails to monitor the actions of others	0.581
• 127 My boss has difficulty mobilising the efforts of others	0.580
• 123 When action really needs to be taken my boss is unable or unwilling to act	0.506
• 93 If my boss makes a mistake someone else usually has to fix the problem	0.478
• 79 My boss can only talk about issues that are very short-term	0.373
• 73 My boss lacks the skills and/or experience needed to function job effectively	0.315
<b>Factor 2: Dominating and over-controlling (4.9/28.1)</b>	
• 76 Anyone who challenges my boss is dealt with brutally	0.706
• 26 My boss wants to dominate/control everything	0.531
• 81 You never know from day to day how my boss will behave	0.408
• 30 My boss sees every negotiation issue as a win/lose conflict	0.366
• 124 Once my boss has made up his/her mind there is no changing it	0.329
• 101 My boss attempts to exert total control over everyone	0.326
• 38 My boss holds grudges	0.292
<b>Factor 3: Inability to build a team and inspire others (3.5/32.2)</b>	
• 22 My boss is not a very good coalition builder	0.713
• 33 My boss does not systematically develop the skills of his or her subordinates	0.616
• 24 My boss rarely seeks opinions from a wide variety of people	0.564
• 18 My boss is not very good at inspiring others	0.489
<b>Factor 4: Tends to bully others and violate their trust (2.6/35.2)</b>	
• 112 I have often seen my boss bully another employee	0.596
• 113 My boss has often committed a serious breach of trust	0.541
• 20 My boss rarely shows a high level of respect for others	0.499
• 77 My boss enjoys making people suffer	0.447
• 37 My boss often acts in an unethical manner	0.296
<b>Factor 5: Inability to deal with new technology (1.9/37.4)</b>	
• 54 My boss seems not to enjoy new technology	0.802
• 16 My boss avoids having to use new technology	0.795
• 92 Sometimes I think my boss is frightened by new technology	0.762
<b>Factor 6: Inability to communicate effectively (1.7/39.4)</b>	
• 32 My boss is an ineffective communicator	0.538
• 34 My boss is unable to effectively manage change	0.530
• 68 My boss is a poor negotiator	0.440
<b>Factor 7: Engages in autocratic behaviour and lacks trust in subordinates (1.6/43.1)</b>	
• 58 My boss does not show trust in subordinates by assigning them important tasks	-0.838
• 61 My boss does not seek out or pay attention to the opinions and wishes of subordinates	-0.522
• 60 My boss is very poor at building team spirit	-0.446
• 25 My boss does not share power with the people with whom he or she works	-0.338
• 63 My boss is autocratic	-0.316
• 99 My boss is very poor at listening to what others are saying	-0.301
<b>Factor 8: Acts in a self-centred and isolating manner (1.5/44.9)</b>	
• 118 My boss spends too much time promoting him/herself	-0.610
• 114 My boss places brutal pressure on subordinates	-0.556
• 116 My boss does NOT know what subordinates are thinking	-0.547
• 117 My boss does NOT know what the goal of our unit is or should be	-0.479
• 108 My boss is NOT very good at developing the skills of subordinates	-0.406
• 109 My boss has a difficult time dealing with change	-0.354
• 84 My boss has lost credibility with stakeholders	-0.345
<b>Factor 9: Inability to solve problems and persuade others (1.5/46.6)</b>	
• 49 My boss manages interpersonal conflict poorly	0.403
• 44 My boss treats many employees unfairly	0.384

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

	Loading
• 53 My boss is very ineffective in persuading others	0.371
• 62 My boss is a micro-manager	0.361
• 69 My boss is an ineffective problem solver	0.352
• 71 My boss is ineffective at educating and developing subordinates	0.322
<b>Factor 10: Does not make expectations and priorities clear (1.4/48.2)</b>	
• 95 I often have to guess what my boss really expects of me	0.551
• 87 My boss does not understand the needs strengths weaknesses and responsibilities of subordinates	0.427
• 59 My boss does NOT pay enough attention to what really matters	0.385
<b>Factor 11: Lacks knowledge of subordinates' needs and behaviour (1.3/49.7)</b>	
• 51 My boss treats both good and bad performers the same way	-0.526
• 57 My boss rarely tells subordinates what he/she wants them to do	-0.511
• 56 My boss has no idea what it takes to motivate subordinates	-0.420
<b>Factor 12: Erratic and inconsistent in their decision making behaviours (13/51.2)</b>	
• 47 My boss is unable to take a stand and stick to it	-0.558
• 31 My boss often makes knee jerk reactions	-0.526
• 43 My boss will act one way and then later acts in the exact opposite manner	-0.486
• 29 In an ambiguous situation my boss has great difficulty making a decision	-0.426
• 67 My boss deals very ineffectively with complex situations	-0.358
<b>Factor 13: Ignores the most important issues (1.2/52.6)</b>	
• 55 If my boss screws something up it stays screwed up forever	0.703
• 111 My boss lies a lot	0.369
• 106 My boss is very poor at solving problems and making decisions	0.315
• 103 My boss often ignores the big picture	0.295
<b>Factor 14: Unable to delegate and prioritise (1.2/54.0)</b>	
• 107 I have trouble understanding what my boss means or wants	0.625
• 100 My boss is unable to delegate properly	0.469
• 21 My boss is unable to prioritise very well	0.333
<b>Factor 15: Inconsistent and ineffective behaviour in managing subordinates (1.1/56.7)</b>	
• 96 My boss does NOT trust others to do tasks properly	-0.488
• 86 My boss is invulnerable to reason	-0.465
• 94 My boss actively demotivates his/her employees	-0.401
• 88 My boss often fails to provide subordinates with information and resources	-0.386
• 91 My boss often says one thing while doing exactly the opposite	-0.304
<b>Factor 16: Unable to make decisions in complex situations (1.1/58.0)</b>	
• 97 My boss is unable to focus very well on the most important issues	0.726
• 104 My boss makes poor decisions under pressure or difficult conditions	0.473
• 89 My boss is an ineffective coordinator	0.460
• 72 My boss does not adapt well to new and changing circumstances	0.414
<b>Factor 1P: Arrogant and self-centred (3.1/33.8)</b>	
• 9 My boss is self-centred	0.824
• 8 My boss is arrogant	0.814
• 48 My boss is pig headed i.e. extremely stubborn	0.707
• 115 My boss is a tyrant	0.669
<b>Factor 2P: Lacks drive and intelligence (1.6/51.4)</b>	
• 4 My boss lacks drive and energy	0.827
• 14 My boss is lazy	0.803
• 11 My boss is not very smart	0.645
• 3 My boss is indiscrete	0.474
• 6 My boss is an inconsiderate person	0.323

\*(eigenvalue/cumulative percent variance accounted for by the factors) follows each factor name.

### Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations on DLQ-I scales

Descriptive statistics and scale intercorrelations for the behavioural and personality scales of the DLQ-I are presented in Tables 2 and 3. The means and standard deviations indicate a substantial range of responses for each of the scales. Scale intercorrelations were moderate in size and, with the sample size involved, almost all statistically significant. Scale intercorrelations ranged from 0.13 to 0.65, with an average intercorrelation of 0.41.

The analyses conducted so far identified the dimensional structure of the DLQ-I with scales measuring these dimensions possessing sufficient psychometric reliability. We were interested in whether some of these dimensions had a greater or lesser impact on determining whether Iranian subordinates classified their leaders as 'good' or 'bad.' To examine this issue, we used the 16 behavioural scale scores to predict the 'Overall Good-Bad' scale score previously referred to in this paper. In conducting this analysis, theoretically, we would have expected little relationship between the scores on the residual behaviour scales and the measure of good/bad leadership. After all, the residual items which comprise the behaviour scale scores had partialled from them any general positive or negative impression of the leader as measured by the 'Worst-Best Boss' item. However, it was our assumption that, even with the general positive or negative view of the leader removed, the behavioural scale scores would represent some 'pure' attributes of the leader and thus be predictive of a subordinate's overall view of their boss.

A stepwise regression analysis was conducted with the 16 behavioural and two personality scale scores used to predict scores on the Overall Good-Bad scale. A total of six behaviour scales contributed significantly to the overall  $R$  of 0.467 ( $F = 5.59$ ,  $df = 1,599$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $\text{Adj. } R^2 = 0.210$ ). The scales in the final model were: 1 – *Lacks knowledge of subordinates' needs*

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics for residual item-based behavioural and personality DLQ scales.

<i>Residual behaviour factors</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b><i>Residual behaviour factors</i></b>					
1. Inability to take action when needed due to lack of skills or experience	621	-2.17	3.11	-0.011	0.694
2. Dominating and over-controlling	620	-2.26	2.18	0.137	0.652
3. Inability to build a team and inspire others	618	-3.33	2.43	-0.010	0.744
4. Tends to bully others and violate their trust	620	-2.73	2.81	-0.066	0.684
5. Inability to deal with new technology	617	-1.73	2.86	-0.012	0.816
6. Inability to communicate effectively	621	-3.29	2.39	-0.045	0.759
7. Engages in autocratic behaviour and lacks trust in subordinates	621	-3.03	2.34	-0.083	0.688
8. Acts in a self-centred and isolating manner	621	-3.33	2.68	0.018	0.702
9. Inability to solve problems and persuade others	621	-2.85	2.35	0.011	0.652
10. Does not make expectations and priorities clear	619	-3.41	2.85	-0.061	0.756
11. Lacks knowledge of subordinates' needs and behaviour	618	-2.79	2.28	0.016	0.765
12. Erratic and inconsistent in their decision making behaviours	621	-3.06	2.44	-0.024	0.676
13. Ignores the most important issues	620	-3.31	3.20	0.056	0.773
14. Unable to delegate and prioritise	621	-1.92	2.54	0.020	0.724
15. Inconsistent and ineffective behaviour in managing subordinates	621	-3.09	3.53	0.021	0.762
16. Unable to make decisions in complex situations	615	-3.20	2.90	-0.004	0.768
<b><i>Residual personality factors</i></b>					
1. Arrogant and self-centred	621	-3.12	2.54	0.013	0.807
2. Lacks drive and intelligence	621	-2.25	2.86	0.010	0.604

**Table 3.** Behavioural and personality residual item-based scale intercorrelations and coefficient alphas.\*

Residual behaviour factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	IP	2P	
1. Inability to take action when needed due to lack of skills or experience	<b>0.79</b>	0.29	0.34	0.30	0.48	0.54	0.34	0.62	0.57	0.52	0.48	0.59	0.53	0.54	0.62	0.51	0.32	0.47	
2. Dominating and over controlling	<b>0.77</b>	0.26	0.45	0.24	0.23	0.47	0.46	0.30	0.31	0.24	0.27	0.34	0.23	0.54	0.14	0.65	0.17		
3. Inability to build a team and inspire others	<b>0.66</b>	0.27	0.21	0.30	0.55	0.39	0.48	0.34	0.37	0.35	0.33	0.28	0.36	0.38	0.35	0.33	0.33		
4. Tends to bully others and violate their trust	<b>0.68</b>	0.26	0.23	0.45	0.43	0.31	0.31	0.13	0.24	0.43	0.18	0.41	0.31	0.54	0.36				
5. Inability to deal with new technology	<b>0.80</b>	0.38	0.26	0.43	0.34	0.37	0.36	0.41	0.32	0.39	0.44	0.39	0.44	0.39	0.26	0.36			
6. Inability to communicate effectively	<b>0.65</b>	0.32	0.50	0.58	0.44	0.41	0.57	0.45	0.45	0.48	0.34	0.41							
7. Engages in autocratic behaviour and lacks trust in subordinates	<b>0.73</b>	0.50	0.50	0.48	0.32	0.40	0.41	0.30	0.49	0.42	0.57	0.35							
8. Acts in a self-centred and isolating manner	<b>0.67</b>	0.52	0.51	0.56	0.50	0.44	0.50	0.52	0.43	0.41	0.46	0.43	0.41						
9. Inability to solve problems and persuade others	<b>0.54</b>	0.47	0.46	0.44	0.43	0.54	0.47	0.39	0.35										
10. Does not make expectations and priorities clear	<b>0.61</b>	0.50	0.36	0.45	0.46	0.36	0.33	0.33											
11. Lacks knowledge of subordinates' needs and behaviour	<b>0.71</b>	0.53	0.49	0.56	0.52	0.35	0.46												
12. Erratic and inconsistent in their decision making behaviours	<b>0.65</b>	0.42	0.56	0.50	0.44	0.43													
13. Ignores the most important issues	<b>0.57</b>	0.48	0.42	0.30	0.39														
14. Unable to delegate and prioritise	<b>0.77</b>	0.43	0.54	0.34															
15. Inconsistent and ineffective behaviour in managing subordinates	<b>0.71</b>	0.43	0.54	0.34															
16. Unable to make decisions in complex situations	<b>0.71</b>	0.27	0.50																
<b>Residual personality factors</b>																			
1. Arrogant and self-centred																		<b>0.77</b>	0.35
2. Lacks drive and intelligence																		<b>0.66</b>	

\*Coefficient alpha shown in the italic bold font.

and behaviour, 13 – Ignores the most important issues, 10 – Does not make expectations and priorities clear, 8 – Acts in a self-centred and isolating manner, 9 – Inability to solve problems and persuade others, and 5 – Inability to deal with new technology. It was interesting that Scale 10 – Does not make expectations and priorities clear, had a negative beta weight ( $-0.258$ ), which indicates that leaders who do make expectations and priorities clear to their subordinates were viewed less favourably than those who do not!

### Identifying a typology of destructive Iranian leaders

Our third major objective was to use scales created from the DLQ-I to identify a typology of destructive Iranian leaders. As noted earlier, Shaw et al. (2011) identified seven major types of destructive leaders in their study. We conducted a series of cluster analyses to group together leaders with similar patterns of scores across the various DLQ-I scales.

Our purpose here was to describe a taxonomy of destructive *leaders* rather than of destructive *leadership*. In order to do this, we first needed to identify a group of destructive leaders in our sample. The leaders in our sample were classified as good, middle, or bad leaders using the 'Overall Good-Bad' scale described earlier. Cut points were determined that, across the  $N = 700$  sample, divided leaders into the worst 1/3 of leaders on the Overall Good-Bad scale ( $N = 223$ , average score of 3.0 or higher), the middle 1/3 of leaders ( $N = 154$ , average score greater than 1.75 but less than 3.0), and the best 1/3 of leaders as measured by the scale ( $N = 243$ , average score of 1.75 or less). We then used only those leaders who fell into the worst third of leaders in our cluster analyses, i.e. we were looking only for a typology of 'bad leaders.' Because the two personality-based scales had not been significantly related to subordinate perceptions of their leaders (measured by the Overall Good-Bad scale) in the regression analysis described above, we dropped these two scales from the cluster analysis procedures and used only the 16 behaviour scales.

To ensure that the good-average-bad leader groups differed significantly from one another on the 16 behaviour scales, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with the behaviour scales as the set of dependent variables and the good-average-bad categorisation variable as the independent variable. All results from this MANOVA indicated a significant effect for the independent variable on the set of behaviour scales. However, post-hoc comparisons did indicate that for behaviour scales 2, 3, 4, 7, and 16 average leaders were not significantly different from good leaders and in the case of scales 2, 4, and 16 the only significant post-hoc comparison was between the good and bad leader groups. Despite this, we felt there were sufficient differences among the leader groups to warrant use of all 16 behaviour scales in the cluster analysis procedure.

The cluster analyses used only data from respondents who had described leaders who fell into the bottom third 'worst' leaders in our sample ( $N = 218$ ). Based on work by Kellerman (2004), information taken from popular literature on the nature and types of 'bad bosses,' as well as the results from the Shaw et al. (2011) study, the cluster analysis was conducted to yield cluster solutions ranging from 4 to 8 clusters. We used Ward's hierarchical clustering method in which two clusters are joined at each step that minimise intra-cluster variance while maximising between-cluster variance.

One problem with cluster analysis methods is determining the number of clusters that should be extracted. The 'elbow criterion' is often used and requires a graph of the percentage of variance explained by the clusters against the number of clusters. The number of clusters chosen is the point at which increasing the number of clusters does not add markedly

to the variance explained. Graphically this appears as a noticeable bend in the graph (the elbow) (found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Data\\_clustering](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Data_clustering)). Unfortunately, in the current study, the 'elbow criterion' did not provide a clear choice of the best cluster solution to use. As a result, we plotted the cluster mean for each of the dependent variables for each of the cluster solutions and conducted an 'intuitive analysis' to determine which of the cluster sets seemed to make the best logical sense. This intuitive analysis indicated that a 6-cluster solution yielded clusters that each contained a sufficient number of cases to be meaningfully interpreted. In addition, the pattern of cluster mean scores across the dependent variables allowed us to identify reasonably interesting and different types of destructive leaders.

We conducted a MANOVA using cluster membership as the independent, fixed variable and the 16 behaviour scale scores as the set of dependent variables. As expected, there was a very significant overall MANOVA main effect for cluster membership ( $p < 0.001$  for Pillai's Trace, Wilk's Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root statistics). Univariate analysis of the 16 behaviour scales also showed a significant main effect for cluster membership for each scale. Post hoc tests indicated that the six cluster groups differed significantly from one another on some, but not all behaviour scales. A summary of these cluster group differences are presented in Table 4. To aid in our interpretation of the different clusters, the patterns of scale scores for each cluster were graphed as was the average of each scale for the top third 'good leaders' in our sample (Figure 1). Thus, we could compare the destructive-leader cluster patterns to each other, as well as to that of the average good leader. Remember that when examining Figure 1 a *high* score represents *destructive* leader behaviour.

### Categories of destructive leaders

There are a number of distinct patterns of behaviour in the six cluster groups. Each the cluster description below will focus on the three or four highest destructive behaviours exhibited by leaders in the cluster as well as the two or three destructive behaviours on which they scored lowest. The average scale score for each cluster is shown in parentheses in the cluster description.

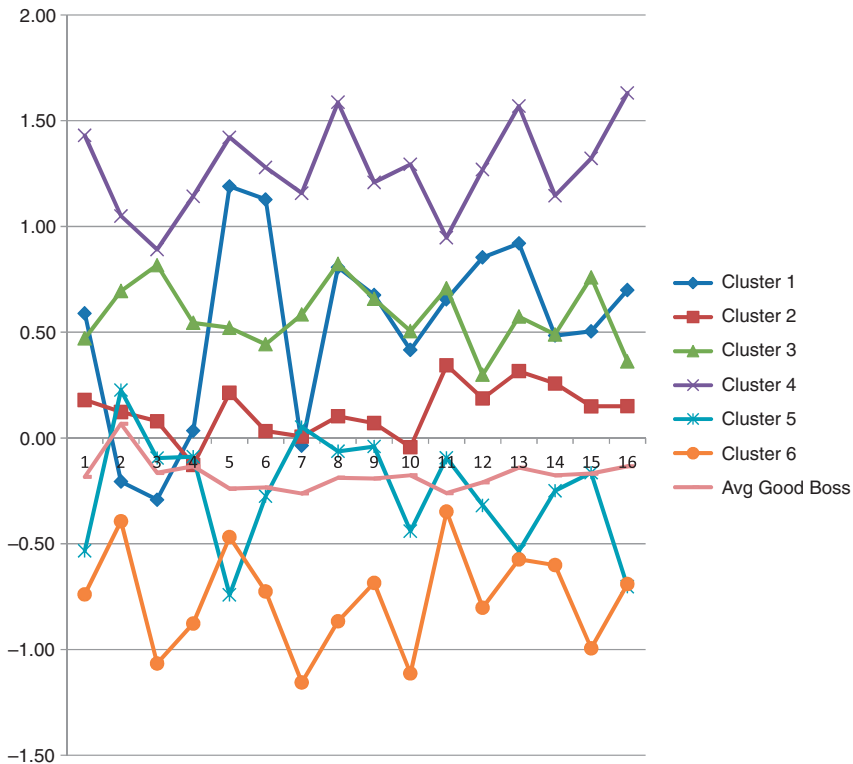
**Type 1,  $N = 22$ .** Type 1 leaders were characterised as showing an *inability to deal with new technology* (1.19) and an *inability to communicate effectively* (1.13). They also were viewed as *ignoring the most important issues* (0.92) in their work setting. They were not, however, viewed as particularly *dominating and over-controlling* (-0.21) or *unable to build a team and inspire others* (-0.29). In fact, they showed slightly lower levels on these two characteristics than the average good boss (0.07 and -0.16 respectively).

**Type 2,  $N = 95$ .** Type 2 leaders might be characterised as the 'not so bad destructive leader.' As seen in Figure 1, leaders in this cluster scored higher levels of destructive leader behaviour across all 16 scales when compared to the average good leader. However, the level of destructive behaviour was quite modest. The three highest destructive leader behaviours exhibited by these leaders were: *Lacks knowledge of subordinates' needs and behaviour* (0.34), *Ignores the most important issues* (0.32), *Unable to delegate and prioritise* (0.26). These leaders were not seen to *bully others or violate their trust* (-0.13), and were relatively low on the behaviour scale *does not make expectations and priorities clear* (-0.04). These leaders lacked knowledge of the people they lead (which may also be viewed as one of the 'most important issues'), but were not seen as bullies and were willing to tell subordinates what they expected of them. Across all behaviour scales, these leaders showed very modest

**Table 4.** Post-hoc test results for six cluster groups across 16 behaviour scales.

Residual behaviour factor	Cluster subsets*	Lower score (less) →	higher score (more)
1. Inability to take action when needed due to lack of skills or experience	6,5	2,3	3,1
2. Dominating and over-controlling	1,6	2,5	3
3. Inability to build a team and inspire others	6	1,5,2	3,4
4. Tends to bully others and violate their trust	6	2,5,1	3
5. Inability to deal with new technology	5,6	2,3	1,4
6. Inability to communicate effectively	6	5,2	3
7. Engages in autocratic behaviour and lacks trust in subordinates	6	1,2,5	3
8. Acts in a self-centred and isolating manner	6	5,2	1,3
9. Inability to solve problems and persuade others	6	5,2	3,1
10. Does not make expectations and priorities clear	6	5	2
11. Lacks knowledge of subordinates' needs and behaviour	6,5	2,1,3	1,3,4
12. Erratic and inconsistent in their decision making behaviours	6	5	2,3
13. Ignores the most important issues	6,5	2,3	3,1
14. Unable to delegate and prioritise	6,5	2,1,3	4
15. Inconsistent and ineffective behaviour in managing subordinates	6	5,2	1,3
16. Unable to make decisions in complex situations	5	6	2,3

\*Clusters listed within each subset are not significantly different from one another, but a cluster within a subset is significantly different from another cluster in other subsets. For example in the case of *Inability to take action when needed due to lack of skills or experience*, clusters 6 and 5 are significantly different from all other clusters. Cluster 2 is significantly different from clusters, 6, 5, 1, and 4, but not different from cluster 3. Cluster 1 is different from 6, 5, 2, and 4, but not from cluster 3. Cluster 4 is significantly different from all other clusters. Clusters to the left have lower scores on the scale and as you move to the right in the table, cluster scores on the scale increase, representing higher levels of the destructive leader behaviour.



**Figure 1.** Graph of six cluster solution across 16 behaviour scale scores in a sample of bad leaders.

levels of destructive behaviour, although they had fallen into the worst third of leaders as rated by their subordinates.

**Type 3,  $N = 38$ .** Type 3 leaders had considerably higher levels of destructive behaviours compared to the average good boss, and this was consistent across all behaviour scales. These leaders were described as *unable to build a team and inspire others* (0.82), *acting in a self-centred and isolating manner* (0.82), and *exhibiting inconsistent and ineffective behaviour in managing subordinates* (0.76). Across all behaviour scales, these leaders were characterised as having a moderate level of destructive behaviour. Their lowest levels of destructive behaviour were on the scales, *unable to make decisions in complex situations* (0.36) and *erratic and inconsistent in their decision making behaviours* (0.30).

**Type 4,  $N = 13$ .** Type 4 leaders might well be described as ‘the leaders from hell.’ Luckily, this cluster was comprised of the smallest number of individuals. These leaders had a higher level of destructive behaviour on every scale when compared to the average good leader and all other clusters as well. Type 4 leaders were *Unable to make decisions in complex situations* (1.63), *acting in a self-centred and isolating manner* (1.59), *ignoring the most important issues* (1.57), and *being unable to take action when needed due to lack of skills or experience* (1.43). They were seen as remarkably destructive on every type of behaviour measured by the DLQ-I. With only a few exceptions, their lowest levels of destructive behaviours were higher than the highest levels of destructive behaviours among leaders in the other clusters.



**Type 5,  $N=33$ .** This cluster is unusual in nature. Leaders in this cluster were rated as exhibiting less destructive behaviour on eight of the 16 behaviour scales when compared to the average good manager. The highest level of destructive behaviour exhibited by Type 5 leaders was *dominating and over-controlling* (0.23). On a number of behaviour scales, these leaders showed substantially low levels of destructive activity. Their subordinates viewed them as exhibiting very low levels of such destructive behaviours as: *unable to deal with new technology* (-0.74), *unable to make decisions in complex situations* (-0.70) *ignoring important issues* (-0.54), and *inability to take action when needed* (-0.53). This is an interesting cluster and, as we will discuss in more detail later, the reason that these leaders fell within the 'bad' leader group may be due solely to their moderate tendency to dominate and over-control situations. The importance of over-controlling or micro-managing in determining a subordinate's overall view of their leader seems high and is consistent with evidence from the Western managers of the Shaw et al. (2011) study.

**Type 6,  $N=17$ .** This cluster of destructive leaders was also unusual in nature. Type 6 leaders scored *lower* on destructive behaviours across all scales when compared to the average good leader. They were also lower on 14 of the 16 behaviour scales when compared to leaders in the other five clusters. These leaders seemed, really, to have no particular vices. Their most destructive behaviours were *ignoring the most important issues* (-0.57), *inability to deal with new technology* (-0.47), and *dominating and over-controlling* (-0.39). To explain the nature of this cluster, it may be that these leaders could be characterised as 'non-leaders' who simply did not engage in much behaviour of any kind. While they did not exhibit negative leader behaviours, it may have been that they were not seen to exhibit many positive behaviours as well. The DLQ-I focuses the attention of subordinates on the extent to which leaders engage in negative behaviour, but does not tell us the extent to which they engage in positive leader behaviour.

## Discussion

The goals of this study were to identify behavioural and personal attribute categories that would describe destructive leadership in Iranian leaders, and to develop scales to reliably measure these categories. We then wanted to use the scale measures to develop a typology of destructive Iranian leaders. We were successful in achieving all three of these goals.

The second author collected data from 700 Iranian subordinates who rated their leaders on each of the 127 items of the Iranian version of the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ-I). Using an approach developed by Shaw et al. (2011), we factor analysed those items and developed measurement scales for each of the categories of destructive leadership that were evident in the factor analytic results. The DLQ-I scales derived from the data showed very adequate internal reliability. This was interesting given that a large portion of the items' common variance had been removed through the process of partialling out the variance in items due to the subordinates' overall positive or negative views of their leaders.

The nature of the DLQ-I's factor structure is compatible with the factors identified in the GLOBE studies which were universally perceived as impeding leader performance. These include being: a loner, antisocial, non-cooperative, irritable, non-explicit, egocentric, ruthless or dictatorial. In our study, the factors identified included: *acts in a self-centred and isolating way* (loner, egocentric and non-cooperative); *dominating and over-controlling, tend to bully others and violate their trust*, as well as *engages in autocratic behaviour* (ruthless or dictatorial); *does not make expectations and priorities clear* (non-explicit); and *inability to build a team*

*and inspire others* (non-cooperative). Such results reinforce the GLOBE findings on ‘universal’ impediments to effective leadership. Elements that impede effective leadership in Iran are similar to those that impede effective leadership in other cultures and countries. In addition to factors which match those of the GLOBE study, we identified a number of other factors that seem to fit the broader cultural characteristics of Iranians identified by Dastmalchian et al. (2001). In particular, high power distance and in-group collectivism seem to underlie a number of the DLQ-I factors. In regards to high power distance, factors related to this cultural dimension are: *does not make expectations and priorities clear*, *ignores the most important issues*, *unable to delegate and prioritise*, and *unable to make decisions in complex situations*. Each of these dimensions represents behaviours in which a high power distance leader should engage. When they do not, subordinates are likely to consider them as destructive leaders. One exception to this is the dimension of *does not make expectations and priorities clear* which will be described below. In terms of in-group collectivism, these factors include: *inability to build a team and inspire others*, *tends to bully others and violate their trust*, *inability to communicate effectively*, *lacks knowledge of subordinate’s needs and behaviour*, and *inconsistent and ineffective behaviour in managing subordinates*. Leaders showing high levels of these factors would likely be viewed as destructive in terms of not fostering in-group collectivism.

While many of the factors identified in our study reflect Iranian managerial culture, many are also similar to those found in Shaw et al.’s 2011 study of mainly western managers. Behaviours common to destructive leaders in both Western and Iranian samples include *bullying*, *micro-managing/over-controlling*, *inability to deal with new technology*, *inability to effectively manage and coordinate subordinates*, *inability to delegate and prioritise*, *erratic and inconsistent behaviour*, *behaviours which indicate a lack of appropriate skills to match the job*, and *inability to make decisions when necessary* – particularly in complex situations. In fact, the factors which represent destructive leadership in Iran, as a whole, are quite similar to those identified in the Shaw et al. (2011) study.

In our study we also tested the explanatory power of DLQ-I scale scores in predicting subordinates’ overall view of their leaders. A stepwise regression analysis was conducted using DLQ-I scale scores to predict the view of subordinates of their leaders as measured by the ‘Overall Good–Bad’ scale. These analyses indicated that six of the DLQ-I scales contributed to the prediction of Overall Good–Bad scale scores. The overall multiple correlation was 0.467 ( $R^2$  of 0.21). This finding was particularly interesting since the DLQ-I scores were based on items from which subordinate overall perception of their leaders, using the Worst–Best Boss item, had already been partialled out from the individual item ratings. Nevertheless, there was a significant level of predictive power inherent in the DLQ-I scale scores. One unexpected result was that Scale 10 – *Does not make expectations and priorities clear* had a negative beta weight (–0.258) indicating that leaders who *made* expectations and priorities clear to their subordinates were viewed less favourably than those who did not! One possible reason is that the tasks performed by many of our respondents tended to be highly specialised with very clear tasks by nature and design. Thus, employee expectations about their jobs were generally very clear and leaders who spent a lot of time ‘over-clarifying’ these tasks may have been viewed negatively.

A complementary set of analyses were conducted by trichotomising our sample into good–bad–average leaders. We then conducted MANOVA and subsequent univariate analyses using DLQ-I scale scores as dependent variables. The overall MANOVA main effect was significant (consistent with the regression analysis results) and the univariate analyses

indicated that *all* scales varied significantly among the good, bad, and average leader groups. We feel that these analyses indicated strongly that our DLQ-I scales, based on residual item scores, represent important, underlying dimensions of destructive leadership.

The third goal of our study was to develop a meaningful typology of destructive leaders in our Iranian sample. In the Shaw et al. (2011) study, seven types of destructive leaders were identified using scores from original DLQ. *Type 1* was characterised as making decisions based on inadequate information; lying and engaging in other forms of unethical behaviour; unable to deal with new technology and other forms of environmental change; unable to prioritise and delegate; and unable to make clear and appropriate decisions. *Type 2* was ineffectual at negotiation and persuasion; did not have the general skills required for their job; was unable to understand and act on a long-term view; and was unable to develop and motivate subordinates. *Type 3* only had one really negative trait, i.e. they tended to engage in micro-managing and over-controlling. *Type 4* was unable to deal with interpersonal conflict or other difficult interpersonal situations, played favourites among subordinates, exhibited other forms of 'divisive' behaviour, and exhibited high levels of inconsistent and erratic behaviour. *Type 5* was characterised as the 'not all that bad but not all that good' leader who did not exhibit any particularly negative behaviours, but was only average on most of the other behavioural dimensions. The most negative behaviour that did characterise this type of destructive leader was that they did not seek information from others and were ineffective in coordinating and managing diverse issues. *Type 6* had the predominant feature of *acting in an insular manner relative to other groups in the organisation*. Finally, *Type 7* was a truly despicable leader characterised as acting in a brutal bullying manner, lying and engaging in other unethical behaviour, micro-managing and over controlling, unable to deal with interpersonal conflict or other complex interpersonal situations, not having the skills to match their job, and finally – unwilling to change their mind or listen to others.

In comparing the typologies derived from the Iranian and predominantly Western sample of Shaw et al. (2011) the *general* nature of the destructive leader types is fairly similar. However, the specific behaviours represented in each type vary somewhat. In terms of similarity, Type 3 from the Iranian sample contains a number of behaviours consistent with those found in Type 4 from the Western sample. In both samples, these leaders are characterised as erratic in their behaviour and lacking in the ability to build and inspire a team. Types 5 and 6 (Iran) and Type 3 (Western) contain leaders who are not destructive in most ways, but do tend to micro-manage, dominate and over-control. This aspect of micro-management and over-controlling seems viewed as a crucial aspect of destructive leaders in both the Western and Iranian samples, given that leaders in the clusters are reported as not exhibiting many other forms of destructive behaviour. In both samples, one type of destructive leader can be referred to as 'the leader from hell.' In the Iranian and Western samples there existed leaders with many destructive leader behaviours. They bullied, could not act appropriately because they did not have the skills to do their job, could not make appropriate decisions, and were self-centred and unable to deal with interpersonal situations.

The similarity between the Shaw et al. (2011) results and our Iranian results are interesting given that the Shaw et al. sample was comprised of individuals from predominantly private organisations, while all respondents in the current sample were from government organisations. Tajaddini et al. (2009: 4) stated that the Iranian Islamic revolution '*changed the entire structure of the country as well as that of workforces.*' Other authors note that in Iranian public organisations the recruitment of managers involves not only assessment of specific managerial skills, but also other Islamic and revolutionary criteria (Danaee Fard et al., 2010;

Yeganeh and Su, 2008). Thus, for a variety of reasons, the respondents in the two samples are likely to be quite different from one another. However, despite these likely differences in the skills and background of employees from Iranian public organisations in our sample and those in the earlier Shaw et al. (2011) study who came from predominantly private organisations, the respondents in both studies defined destructive leader behaviours in very similar ways. This is consistent with the GLOBE study findings that there are 'universal' characteristics which are viewed, regardless of the specific culture involved, as negative leadership behaviour.

### *Limitations of the study*

Despite these interesting results, there are limitations to the study. The sample was more highly educated than the general Iranian population, with the majority of respondents having a university bachelors or master's degree. The majority of leaders were male as were the respondents. This would be expected in a society low on gender egalitarianism (Dastmalchian et al., 2001). Thus, the results from this sample are based on responses from relatively young, highly educated, male subordinates with male bosses in public organisations. These results would be representative of the typical Iranian government-based professional working population, though perhaps not of Iranian private sector workers or of the population as a whole, where an average Iranian has only 7.3 years of education (United Nations, 2011).

A second potential bias in the sample could be that respondents willing to complete the survey were those particularly affected by the behaviour of destructive leaders and thus gave a specialised view of destructive leadership at work. While this could occur, respondents in our sample rated leaders in a range from exceptionally good (1 on a 6-point scale) to extremely destructive (6 on a 6-point scale). In fact, the median of all respondent ratings on the Overall Good–Bad Leader scale was 2.25 out of 6.0 with a mean of 2.65. Since a high score on this scale indicates a 'bad' leader, the majority of respondents felt that their leaders were pretty good. Given the data above, we believe that while biases certainly exist within the sample, they are not sufficient to invalidate our conclusions. However, replication of our DLQ-I factor structure in a larger Iranian sample that more accurately reflects the general working population is needed.

A third limitation of our study is the use of residual scores in the PCOA procedures. The removal of the 'overall liking/disliking' of their leader from the respondents' ratings may remove a potentially important variable. The effect of this is difficult to assess in a Western sample and is likely even more difficult to assess in an Iranian sample. However, factors identified using this approach 'make sense' and are consistent in nature with previous research on the characteristics of destructive leaders and are compatible with the findings of Dastmalchian et al. (2001) regarding Iranian leaders.

### **Conclusions and areas for future research**

In summary, our study has provided a measurement device, the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire – Iran (DLQ-I), that consists of meaningful groups of items that have been formed into scales with acceptable internal reliability. Our study has shown that the original version of the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ) described by Shaw et al. (2011) can serve as a basis for examining similarities and differences in destructive leadership across

cultures. Furthermore, the current study provides significant confirmation of the GLOBE findings concerning leader behaviours which are universally endorsed as inhibiting effective leadership.

Our study did find differences in the number of factors obtained from the DLQ-I when compared to a Western sample. Furthermore, there are subtle differences in the item composition of these factors between the Iranian and Shaw et al. (2011) samples. These differences were evident in the typology of destructive leaders identified in our study when compared to the earlier Western results. However, while differences did exist, there was also a significant level of similarity when comparing the current study with the primarily Western study of Shaw et al. (2011).

Importantly, the DLQ-I can serve as a basis for further research on the nature of destructive leadership in Iran. One obvious future study would be to examine destructive leadership in a sample of Iranian managers from both public and private organisations. Another interesting topic would be the extent to which similar levels and types of destructive leader behaviour yield similar subordinate, organisation and leader outcomes in Iran vs Western societies. For example, 'Making Decisions Based on Inadequate Information' and 'Inability to Understand and Act on a Long Term View' are seen by Iranian subordinates as forms of destructive leadership. However, economic and political instability in Iran may make it difficult for Iranian managers to obtain good, stable information. Subordinates may attribute the behaviour of leaders high on these dimensions to external (rather than internal) causes, and the negative impact of such behaviour for the leader might be lessened. The DLQ-I provides a consistent measurement device for examining these and many other interesting issues related to destructive leadership in different cultural settings.

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