A Mixed-Methods Study of Personality Conceptions in the Levant: Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the West Bank
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A Mixed-Methods Study of Personality Conceptions in the Levant: Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the West Bank

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Personality taxonomies are investigated using either etic-style studies that test whether Western-developed models fit in a new culture, or emic-style studies that derive personality dimensions from a local culture, using a psycholexical approach. Recent studies have incorporated strengths from both approaches. We combine the 2 approaches in the first study of personality descriptors in spoken Arabic. In Study 1, we collected 17,283 responses from a sample of adults in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the West Bank (N = 545). Qualitative analysis revealed 9 personality dimensions: Soft-Heartedness, Positive Social Relatedness, Integrity, Humility versus Dominance, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Intellect, and Openness. In Study 2, we converted the qualitative model into an indigenous personality inventory and obtained self-ratings of a sample of adults in the same region (N = 395). We also simultaneously obtained self-ratings on an adapted etic inventory that measures the lexical Big Five (N = 325). Psychometric and conceptual considerations yielded a robust 7-factor indigenous model: Agreeableness/Soft Heartedness, Honesty/Integrity, Unconventionality, Emotional Stability, Conscientiousness, Extraversion/Positive Social Relatedness, and Intellect. Initial validation evidence shows that 5 of the 7 factors overlapped with the Big Five, whereas Honesty/Integrity and Unconventionality did not overlap. Also, scores on the indigenous tools were better predicted by relevant demographic variables than scores on the etic tool. Our study demonstrated the viability of combining etic and emic approaches as key to the understanding of personality in its cultural context.

Keywords: Arab personality, Arabic personality items/test, emic etic combination, indigenous personality, psycholexical

Supplemental materials: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000148.supp

The structure of human personality has been summarized in a variety of dimensions, including one (Musek, 2007), two (Saucier, Thalmayer, & Bel-Bahar, 2014), three (Barrett, Petrides, Eysenck, & Eysenck, 1998; de Raad et al., 1992), five (Goldberg, 1990), six (Lee & Ashton, 2008), and even 16 (Cattell & Mead, 2008) personality dimensions. Models that include five dimensions (e.g., Five Factor Model; Costa & McCrae, 1992) and six dimensions (e.g., HEXACO; Lee & Ashton, 2004) were found to be structurally replicable in various languages. However, these popular models originate from Germanic languages, and what their successful cross-cultural replication ultimately means is that they fit into non-Western cultures. The focus on fitting these etic models onto new cultures may lead to omission of salient personality dimensions in the new cultures being investigated. Conversely, examining personality indigenously from the ground-up allows us to uncover how personality is implicitly construed in a new culture. It may lead to the discovery of new personality dimensions, specific manifestations of existing dimensions, or to finding solid evidence for existing models. Yet, by itself, such an emic approach will be insufficient to answer the question of the comparability of indigenous dimensions to existing ones. In this paper, we combine both approaches in an investigation of four Arab-speaking countries. We highlight the shared and nonshared space between personality variables measured etically and emically, aiming at a comprehensive picture of personality in the Arab Levant (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the West Bank).

Etic and Emic Approaches to Personality Structure

Initially, personality researchers analyzed the English and German lexicons, under the psycholexical assumption that human traits important to a society will be encoded in its natural language
In this paper, we examine personality in four Levant nations, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the West Bank (Palestinian Territories), using a mixed-methods procedure that triangulates etic and emic approaches in two studies. In Study 1, we rely on qualitative analysis of descriptors in vernacular Arabic to derive indigenous (emic) implicit personality conceptions. In Study 2, we convert the qualitative model into an indigenous instrument, collect participant ratings on both the indigenous tool and an etic tool jointly, draw conclusions about the structure of Arab personality, and relate this structure to etic models. Importantly, we do this in a language, culture, and region understudied in psychology.

Arab Levant Culture and Language

The Levant is a geographical area that includes countries in Western Asia and the Mediterranean. In this study, we use Arab Levant to refer to the Arab-speaking countries of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the West Bank (Palestinian Territories). These countries are geographically close, and considered ethnically and culturally similar. Peoples of this region are described to be on the collectivist end of the individualistic-collectivist continuum (Ayyash-Abdo, 2001; Gregg, 2005). However, diversity in subcultures and rapid sociopolitical and technological changes mean that there may be significant individual variation from the cultural norm (Joseph, 1996; Swedenburg & Stein, 2005). What seems to be consistently echoed in the literature is the importance in this region of group belonging in family and kinship, and notions of honor, shame, respect, hierarchy, patriarchy, hospitality, and reciprocity (Barakat, 1993; Gregg, 2005; Joseph, 1996; Saad, 1995; Shryock, 2004).

The countries share Arabic as their language. Arabic, a Semitic language like Hebrew, is the official or coofficial language of 261 countries in Asia and Africa, and the fifth largest language (Lewis et al., 2013; “Nations Online Project,” 2015; Weber, 1997). An interesting feature of Arabic is that it exists in different varieties that are functionally complementary and that are all relevant to this study. One variety, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), is a modern version of Classical Arabic (the language of the Qur’an), which also serves as a unifying language of the countries of the Arab Levant. It is mainly used in written expression, formal oral expression (e.g., news broadcasts, public speeches), and taught in all Arabic schools (Al-Tamimi, 2011; Ryding, 2005). It is also the language found in Arabic dictionaries. However, MSA is rarely if at all used in everyday oral communication. To communicate about ordinary everyday topics, people use a vernacular form of Arabic (their mother tongue). The vernaculars are spoken at work, at home, and on media (except in the case of intercountry broadcasts). MSA coexists with the vernaculars on a continuum from a “high” language (very literary or formal) to a “low” language (very colloquial), with several levels of variation and registers in between (Ryding, 2005). Vernaculars do not formally exist in written form. However, the increasing use of text messages, emails,

1 The number differs slightly based on the inclusion of Somalia, South Sudan, and Tanzania. The remaining countries are Algeria, Bahrain, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara, and Yemen.
Personality research in Arab countries has followed the etic approach, and clustered around the translation of Western imported instruments into Arabic (MSA), and the reporting of their psychometric properties in specific populations. Although this research is helpful, it does not allow for local personality concepts to emerge. The first study to investigate lexical personality traits and produce an indigenous personality model was a psycholexical investigation of MSA using an Arabic dictionary (Zeinoun, Daouk-Öyry, Choueiri, & van de Vijver, 2015). The authors found that six personality factors best summarized personality traits in MSA, as rated by participants in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the West Bank. These were: Morality (I), Conscientiousness (II), Righteousness (III), Positive Interpersonal Relatedness (IV), Emotional Stability (V), and Dominance (VI), while an Openness factor was not replicated. The authors concluded that the basic ingredients of etic models like the FFM and HEXACO were present in the Arab Levant lexical study. The psycholexical study served as a starting point for exploring personality concepts in the Arab Levant. The methodology, comparable with mainstream psycholexical methodology, allowed the authors to conduct an investigation in Arabic, while comparing the findings with those of other similar studies. The dictionary, based on the official variety of Arabic (MSA), was a logical starting point for the first lexical study. However, the study revealed shortcomings of using MSA as the only source of lexical personality terms. The terms needed extensive filtering to ensure that they were familiar to participants and usable in daily life. Moreover, despite the geographical proximity of the Arab Levant countries under investigation, some MSA words seemed to be understood differently in the different countries. Additionally, the analysis of the MSA dictionary revealed an overrepresentation of evaluative terms, while terms related to openness were underrepresented. The lack of an Openness factor was attributed to the shortcomings of dictionary-bound MSA as a sole source for descriptors, a problem that has also been observed in other languages (McCrae, 1990; Saucier, 1997).

In the first study here, we analyzed the vernacular varieties of Arabic thereby bypassing the shortcomings of using MSA in the investigation of personality. In the second study we converted the implicit personality model into an indigenous instrument, and compared the indigenous tool with an etic tool adapted from English. By triangulating results from emic and etic perspectives, we highlight the divergence and convergence of personality constructs in a model of personality in the Arab Levant that combines the culture-informed nature of the emic approach with the psychometric accuracy of the etic approach.

**Study 1**

The purpose of Study 1 is to conduct a psycholexical investigation of the vernacular varieties of the four Arab Levant nations. We first collected data from nationals of these nations using structured open-ended questions. Then, we analyzed the data to identify all the personality relevant descriptors in the data set and reduced them into clusters.

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2 This informal usage of the Latin alphabet letters to spell Arabic words should not be confused with more formal, and controversial efforts to Romanize the Arabic alphabet that date back to the early 1920s (Halpern, 2007). There are also recent elaborate systems of transliterating Arabic (e.g., the Buckwalter Transliteration) which are used in teaching Arabic, computational linguistics, natural language processing, and Application Program Interfaces such as smart Arabic keyboards that automatically transliterate Romanized Chat Arabic into Arabic characters (e.g., www.yamli.com).
Method

All studies in this manuscript received exemption from the institutional ethics board from the American University of Beirut and Tilburg University (OSB.LD.07 - Indigenous Personality Structure in the Levant: An Analysis of Phrasal Colloquial Descriptors in 4 Countries; OSB.LD.13 - Personality in the Arab World). Exemption was granted because the research involved collecting data anonymously and confidentially using surveys. All data collectors completed an ethics course and were trained and supervised by the first author.

Participants. We recruited a total of 545 participants, comprising Lebanese (n = 159), Syrians (n = 112), Jordanians (n = 147), and Palestinians (n = 124). Participants’ ages ranged from 17 to 67 years (M = 27.5, SD = 10.4), with 62% identifying as female and 37% as male. The sample was fairly educated and bilingual. About half of the sample had a university degree at the Bachelor’s (43.9%) or Master’s level (12.1%), and reported excellent proficiency in Arabic (M = 3.61, SD = .67) on a scale of 1 (Poor) to 4 (Excellent). Also, 83% (n = 454) of the sample was proficient in English, French, or another language, in addition to Arabic. An analysis of variance showed that self-rated proficiency in Arabic did not differ across countries, F(3, 539) = 0.98, p = .40.

Procedure. We recruited Lebanese, Syrian, Jordanian, and Palestinian adults between 2012 and 2014, using paper-and-pencil and online methods. Because of ongoing conflict and travel restrictions in the various territories, we had to be creative in data collection. Lebanese participants3 were students and alumni targeted through mass emails distributed in Lebanese universities where English or French was the medium of instruction, and laypersons approached in public spaces, such as market places, and on social media through shares on pages. Syrian participants could not be recruited from Syria primarily because there was fear for the physical safety of the data collectors, and because the target population comprised potentially vulnerable persons. Instead, we employed Syrian students and community members who then recruited Syrians recently settled in Lebanon and Jordan, and who were not refugees, through a snowballing method. Jordanian participants were recruited from the Jordanian cities of Amman, Irbid, Zarqa, and Adaba through local data-collectors, through e-mails to constituents of companies and universities, and through social media. Palestinians were recruited by two data-collectors at the University of Birzeit, Ramallah and Al-Quds in the West Bank, and through social media.

Instruments. Open-ended questions. We developed nine questions based on those used in the development of the South Africa Personality Inventory by Nel et al. (2012). Participants were instructed to think about the target person, and describe his or her personality in terms of how they think, feel, and behave across situations and settings. They were required to say or write their responses in vernacular using the popular way of writing Arabic online and in text messages. Questions asked participants to describe the personality of a close friend from the same and opposite sex, of one parent, of the worst and best spouse for oneself (or for one’s children), of a colleague or classmate that performs well at work and one that performs poorly at work, and of a leader, boss, or teacher that they like and one that they dislike. We used contextualization (work, friend) and dichotomy (like, dislike) to ensure a variety of descriptions. All questions were intended to refer to people known by the participants, except the question requiring them to describe their ideal or worst intimate partner. Each question was followed by two prompts (“Are you sure you described everything about this person?” and “Would you like to add anything before submitting?”) to ensure the target was described in full.

Data analysis. Reduction of emic descriptors. Qualitative analysis was based on the method of template analysis (Cassell & Symon, 2004) and techniques used in similar studies of personality (Nel et al., 2012) and love (Fehr, 1988). The reduction and conversion from raw (verbatim) statements to personality traits was conducted manually over the period of two years by the first three authors, and the help of senior psychology students. It was not possible to use language software4 for our responses were written using both Arabic characters and Arabizi (consisting of Roman characters and numerals). Therefore, the same word could be rendered or transliterated in different written forms, which are not supported by current software.

In data preparation, we divided the verbatim utterances into Units of Responses (URs), which was operationalized as “a word or phrase of any length that broadly refers to one behavioral repertoire or trait” (e.g., “brave” or “I like that he asks about my well-being, and cares about my whereabouts even when I am far”). Each UR was then given a unique identifier that linked it to the statement that was uttered before and to the one that came after it (i.e., providing behavioral context), to the question that prompted it, and to the participant’s nationality. This allowed us to order the responses according to each of these variables, and to interpret responses in the context in which they occurred. We describe the methodology by dividing it into four phases: Semantic Coding, Conceptual Coding, Consultations, and Iterative Clustering.

Semantic coding. We clustered the units of responses linguistically, by grouping together single words, and labeling them semantically. For instance, all literal instances of a common word like “kind” were labeled as “kind.” We included under the same label responses that were two-word combinations, if the additional word merely served to qualify the core trait in terms of frequency/time (”always honest”) or intensity (“very honest”). When two-word combinations led to a change in meaning of the core trait, namely when the qualifier changed the meaning to an antonym (e.g., “not honest”), these were labeled separately. Unlike English, Arabic does not have negative prefixes such as dis-in dishonest or un-in ungrateful; instead it uses a variety of short words with negative/privative meaning, which can precede the adjective, noun, or verb to negate them. We labeled all such two-word combinations with a generic negative qualifier (e.g., all variations of “not honest” were labeled as “honest/not”). This coding assured that we stayed semantically close to the original response without jumping to conclusions as to the meaning of terms with negative qualifiers.

3 Participating institutions included Amideast: America Mideast Educational and Training Services, Notre Dame University, Antonine University, American University of Beirut, and Haigazian University.

4 In the past few years, there has been considerable progress in Arabic text-analytics. A re-analysis of the data using software may be possible in the near future, particularly in parsing word-classes.
Then, we addressed longer response units that could still be clustered semantically but were more nuanced than single-word terms or simple two-word combinations. The raters were instructed to skip phrases that were too vague, unclear, or simply difficult to code, and address straightforward descriptors, such as situation-specific traits (e.g., dedicated to work) and unambiguous behaviors (e.g., attentive to details when working on a task). We also coded idioms such as qalbo aa rass lseno [His heart is on the tip of his tongue], which can be translated as “Wears his heart on his sleeve.”

At this point, we treated the created labels as a template that we attempted to apply to these units (King, 2014). As a general rule, if a UR occurred once or twice, such as in the case of some region-specific terms or idioms, it was fitted into an existing template (label). If the descriptive phrase was encountered more than twice, or if we could not adequately fit it into a template, then a new label was created for it. At this stage, labels were worded as close to the UR as possible. We did not use terms that were not found in our data. By the end of the first phase of Semantic Coding, we had created 1,000 labels for 10,000 responses. The first author translated labels into English, and defined them based on consultations with cultural experts (see below).

**Conceptual coding.** In the second stage, we addressed URs that were lengthier and more complex, and that needed a more refined understanding of behavior, personality, and culture. The coders were the first three authors, and five consultants with a graduate degree in psychology who had lived most of their lives in the Arab Levant. In a series of meetings, the coders analyzed the URs, discussed their meaning, and assigned them labels from the existing template. To clarify the meaning of the responses, we arranged the descriptors in a way that allowed the raters to examine what other descriptors were used for the same person, and extrapolate the most likely meaning of those responses. Without this context, significant errors in meaning could have occurred. To illustrate, consider the UR “lives in the present, without thinking about the future.” This may refer to someone mindful and attentive to details when working on a task. By looking at other descriptors of the same person, we noted that participants also referred to those persons as being “ignorant,” and “backward in their thinking.” The context clarified that the response “lives in the present, without thinking about the future” refers to an undesirable trait, and was therefore matched to the descriptors of someone who lacks foresight. By the end of this stage, we had added 178 labels that represented concepts expressed in lengthier phrases or descriptors, totaling 1178 labels.

**Consultations.** We consulted with laypersons and professionals from the four countries, which we refer to as “cultural experts,” in all the phases of analysis. We describe the procedures here although they do not technically form a stand-alone phase. Cultural experts were consulted to clarify terms unfamiliar to the authors and to validate our understanding of other terms. They were asked to review unclear vernacular descriptors, provide one or more definitions, synonyms and antonyms, if any. The definitions were then reviewed and discussed between these experts and the first author. Most terms were local vernacular variations, although a few were idiosyncratic expressions used in some but not all countries. When a term or label had more than one definition across the different Arabic vernaculars, all definitions were noted.

**Iterative clustering.** In this phase the first author conceptually organized related labels into facets—semantically related traits. For instance, the Arabic words for “sad” and “depressed” were assigned to the facet we named Depressed. Facets were then grouped together into subclusters representing medium levels of abstraction. All subclusters were defined and operationalized so that they were as homogeneous as possible, and as differentiated as possible with other subclusters. For example, the facet of Depressed was joined with facets of Hopeless and Self-Victimized in the subcluster of Depression/Sadness. Then, subclusters were grouped into broader personality dimensions, but each subcluster was defined in a way to differentiate it from other related subclusters. Following our example, Depression, and the related subclusters of Anxiety, Depth, Dissatisfaction, Emotional Vulnerability, Impulsivity, Maturity, Moodiness, Self-Esteem, and Temper-Control were subsumed in the cluster of Emotional Stability. The organization took into consideration the pattern of co-occurrence in the data, and the location of facets and domains from existing Western personality models. At the time of analysis, we did not yet have clear results from the Arab Levant model derived from MSA Arabic, and thus it was not taken into consideration. The organization of labels, facets, subclusters, and clusters was reviewed over a period of six months by three authors (one Lebanese professor of psychology, one Lebanese professor of linguistics, and one Dutch professor of psychology) through bimonthly reflective meetings. Accordingly, we adjusted the organization until consensus was reached.

** Interrater reliability.** During the conceptual coding stage, we examined the interrater reliability, whereby a subsample of 442 responses was labeled independently by the second and third authors. When the iterative clustering was completed, we examined the degree of agreement between the raters at the level of facets and subclusters, by using Cohen’s kappa (κ)—a measure of interrater agreement beyond what would be expected by chance (Landis & Koch, 1977). We found that agreement was substantial when URs were assigned to one of 195 facets (κ = 0.65), and agreement was almost perfect when assigned to one of 63 subclusters (κ = 0.99).

**Results**

Through the manual procedure described, we reduced the personality relevant descriptors from 17,283 utterances into nine clusters of personality. We excluded about 11% of responses that were clearly not relevant to personality. We also excluded responses that were possibly relevant to personality, but after consultations, we were still unable to confidently assign them to personality dimensions. As noted in Table 1, those were either too

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5 We thank the following people for providing valuable cultural information and semantic clarifications: Phaedra Abi Haidar, Ruba Abou Tarboush, Dr. Anies Hroub, and Omar Najjar (Jordan), Dr. Lina Adwan, Hana Masoud, Mouheeb Jouda, Ruba Musleh, and Aya Shweiki (Palestine), Dr. Reem Asaad, Lily Abou Chara, Laura Jabri, Dr. Najla Jarkas, Anas Mayass, Rasha Tabakh (Syria), and Mona Ayoub, Sariah Daouk, Aya Hmedeh, Sara Michli, Helen Sawaya, Lucy Tavitian, Hrag Vosgharian (Lebanon).
ambiguous, focused on relationships or feelings to the extent that we could not extrapolate personality characteristics, or they referred to moral judgments, curses and terms specific to a region or gender. From the remaining 15,086 personality-relevant responses, we obtained nine broad personality clusters. In order of decreasing size, they were named: Soft-Heartedness, Positive Social Relatedness, Integrity, Humility versus Dominance, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Intellect, and Openness. Most of the clusters consisted of 4 subclusters, and the maximum number of subclusters was 11 (Extraversion and Emotional Stability), totaling 63 subclusters. Table 2 provides the clusters and subclusters (a full list of facets and translated examples are available in Table 3 of the Supplementary Materials).

The largest cluster of Soft Heartedness encompassed desirable internal characteristics of being helpful, kind, affectionate, compassionate, heedful, and protective, as well as selflessly giving to others, and being sacrificial. This stood in contrast with being cold-hearted, unforgiving, paranoid, self-centered, stingy, and inconsiderate of others’ feelings and circumstances.

Positive Social Relatedness defined how a person relates to others (friends, neighbors, family, and strangers), beyond the gregarious aspects described in Extraversion. It referred to someone who is generally approachable, easy to interact with, warm, respectful of others, has good manners, is cooperative, and “gives and takes.” Additionally, it included being socially savvy and diplomatic in conflict resolution, behaving and talking eloquently to people, understanding social nuances, facilitating and guiding others, and being a nurturing family person who invests time in children and spouse. This is in contrast to someone who is not respectful in relationships, difficult to get along with, meddlesome, tactless, lacks diplomatic skills, and has a heavy and annoying presence.

In Integrity, the most prominent descriptors were of interpersonal transparency and sincerity, behaving according to a set of ethical principles, being honorable, respectable in the eyes of the community, loyal, trustworthy, fair in dealing with others, and having a sense of patriotism. Integrity terms included having religious morals and good familial upbringing (presumed to bring about integrity). On the opposite pole was someone who is unprincipled, not respected, does not follow morals, and is unfair and hypocritical.

Humility versus Dominance is a cluster that despite its many responses had a narrow meaning. In terms of dominance, utterances ranged from undesirable behaviors of actively seeking and abusing power, being tyrannical, imposing opinions and orders on others, following a “divide and conquer” mentality, and being hostile, denigrating, and passive-aggressive. On the opposite pole was someone who is easily swayed, avoidant of conflict at all costs, and a follower rather than leader. Somewhere in the middle were desirable characteristics of being assertive, decisive, democratic, giving credit when it’s due, and being an opinion leader with a “strong personality.” Humility reflected someone who is modest, and grateful for what they have (and at the extreme end, fatalistic and reliant on divine providence), and not haughty and greedy.

Conscientiousness descriptors involved being ambitious, goal-oriented, invested, dutiful, orderly, reliable, perseverant, resilient, efficient, competent, and resourceful. This is opposed to being lazy, unorganized, irresponsible, unsuccessful, and not invested toward goals.

Table 1
Number of Included and Excluded Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of response</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtained units of response</td>
<td>17,283</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevant responses excluded</td>
<td>607</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>Her eyes are captivating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>I don’t have friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>My father is a retired army general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>She comes from a lower social status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habit</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Sleeps a lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>From another religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical/National</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>An Arab and not a foreigner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>A mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Communist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibly relevant excluded</td>
<td>961</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguous</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>He brightens my day even when he’s not near.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship-focused</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>Our relationship is one of intimacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling-focused</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>I love her a lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>He is exactly like my father.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative/Moralistic</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>A womanizer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slang/Idiosyncratic</td>
<td>186</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English descriptors excluded</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total descriptors excluded</td>
<td>2197</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality relevant analyzed</td>
<td>15,086</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labels</td>
<td>823 (1178) *</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facets</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subclusters</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clusters</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The number of labels when negative qualifiers are added.
Table 2
Structure of Clusters, Corresponding Subclusters, and Frequencies of Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster Subcluster</th>
<th>Cluster Subcluster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soft Heartedness (3040)</td>
<td>\begin{itemize} \item Altruism versus Egoism (770) \item Empathy (1092) \item Good Heartedness (1098) \item Mistrust (80) \end{itemize}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Social Relatedness (2320)</td>
<td>\begin{itemize} \item Family Orientation (173) \item Good Manners (145) \item Guidance (246) \item Interpersonal Flexibility (283) \item Likability/Approachability (1073) \item Meddlesome Behavior (80) \item Social Intelligence (303) \item Social Involvement (17) \end{itemize}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity (1786)</td>
<td>\begin{itemize} \item Fairness (174) \item Honor (183) \item Interpersonal Transparency (691) \item Loyalty (193) \item Nationalism (33) \item Principled (229) \item Spirituality (168) \item Trustworthiness (115) \end{itemize}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility versus Dominance (1746)</td>
<td>\begin{itemize} \item Dominance (679) \item Hostility (374) \item Pompousness (537) \item Satiability (156) \end{itemize}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness (1604)</td>
<td>\begin{itemize} \item Achievement Orientation (322) \item Competence (79) \item Dedication (184) \item Dutifulness (325) \item Future Orientation (164) \item Meticulousness (118) \item Orderliness (184) \item Perseverance (92) \item Resource Efficiency (136) \end{itemize}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion (1592)</td>
<td>\begin{itemize} \item Boredom Tolerance (9) \item Captivating (76) \item Courage (70) \item Energy (95) \item Expressiveness (232) \item Humor (203) \item Materialism (103) \item Pleasure-Seeking (201) \item Positive Emotionality (213) \item Rebelliousness (22) \item Sociality (368) \end{itemize}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Stability (1481)</td>
<td>\begin{itemize} \item Anxiety (117) \item Depression/Sadness (48) \item Depth (108) \item Dissatisfaction (71) \item Emotional Vulnerability vs. Ego Strength (218) \item Impulsivity (74) \item Inattention (27) \item Maturity (349) \item Moodiness (89) \item Self Esteem (97) \item Temper Control (283) \end{itemize}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellect (1012)</td>
<td>\begin{itemize} \item Epistemological Inquisition (38) \item Intelligence (465) \item Knowledge And Competence (401) \item Rationality (108) \end{itemize}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The numbers in parentheses refer to the frequency of responses within the cluster, subcluster, and facet. Jor = Jordan; Leb = Lebanon; Pal = Palestine; Syr = Syria.

Extraversion mostly referred to someone who is outgoing, talkative, bubbly (as opposed to calm), funny, playful, often smiley, enjoys the “pleasures of life,” takes risks, is rebellious and has low tolerance for boredom. This person is the charm of the party, as opposed to someone who does not like to be around people, is calm, reserved, does not like joking, and is not concerned with his or her looks.

Emotional Stability described a person who maintains a balanced life, is mature and takes things seriously, is in control of their anger and emotional reactions, and is patient and deliberate before acting, as opposed to someone who is petty, childish, superficial, easily angered, overly sensitive, demanding, moody, sad, and dejected.

Intellect was about being smart, knowledgeable about various topics, academically oriented, sophisticated, and logical, as opposed to lacking intellectual curiosity and education.

Openness largely reflected someone who is emancipated from social norms, is unique, and liberal in the values, is open to diverse ideas, values, and experiences, can appreciate others’ perspectives, and is creative and fond of music, sports, arts, travels, and discoveries. This is in contrast to a person who is described as conventional, with a preference for tradition, is concerned with negative repercussions of going “against the stream,” is close-minded to differing perspectives, and fanatical about his or her beliefs.

Study 2
It is a limitation of Study 1 that the structure, derived from the qualitative analysis, could not be validated. This issue is addressed in Study 2. The purpose of Study 2 is to triangulate results from qualitative and quantitative sources, to arrive at a model of personality in the Arab Levant. We first developed a pool of items based on the implicit personality model of Study 1. Then, we collected self-ratings on the indigenous items and items on an adapted etic tool, in an Arab Levant sample.

Method
Participants. We obtained a sample of N = 395 (49% females); the majority were of Jordanian (n = 182), Palestinian (n = 123), and Lebanese (n = 73) nationality. A minority identified themselves as Syrian (n = 9), and as other Arab or non-Arab nationality (n = 8). Ages ranged from 18 to 74 years (M = 34, SD = 14.59). As for language, on a scale of 1 (Poor) to 4 (Excellent), self-ratings of proficiency were excellent for Arabic (M = 3.84, SD = .38), and good for English (M = 3.21, SD = 0.67). About 52% of participants spoke one or more additional languages, such as French and Hebrew. The sample was educated, with about 40% reporting having a bachelor’s degree (equivalent
to about three years of university), whereas 41% reported a monthly income of less than 999 USD.

**Procedures.**

**Indigenous instrument development: The Arab Personality Inventory (API).** The first author constructed items for each of the 197 facets, resulting in 354 items. Most facets were represented by one item, while others had more than one item for the purpose of identifying the best one. Our choice of words in the items reflected the words/phrases that were not only the most frequently uttered but also equally used across the four countries. English items were independently developed by a bilingual masters-level psychologist from Lebanon, blinded to the Arabic items. Arabic and English items were reviewed by the four authors for content accuracy, and were edited accordingly. The Arabic items were additionally reviewed by a group of five laypersons from Jordan, Syria, and Palestine who were instructed to read the items and judge the degree to which they thought the average person would understand the statements. They had to choose words that are common and close to vernaculars of the region.

**Data collection.** The items of the indigenous inventory, the IPIT, demographic questions, and informed consent were made available online on www.qualtrics.com, through an anonymous link. The study was advertised through paid social media advertisements from the Facebook page “Personality in the Arab world.” The ads ran for one month, and targeted people between 18 and 60, who speak Arabic, and live in Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. Unfortunately, it was not possible to target Syria in Facebook advertising.

**Data analysis.**

**Missing values.** Data were analyzed using SPSS 23 and R Studio. For both tools, we addressed missing values by first deleting cases that were missing more than 25% of their item ratings. This reduced the sample that had completed the IPIT to N = 325. For the indigenous tool, values were missing completely at random, and Little’s MCAR test was not significant, χ²(55604, N = 395) = 55569.20, p = .54, while IPIT values were missing at random (MAR), and Little’s MCAR test was significant, χ²(1633, N = 325) = 2099.52, p < .001. Next, missing values were imputed using Expectation-Maximization for both data sets (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

**Arab Personality Inventory (API).** To ensure that all facets were represented by an approximately equal number of items we examined facets that had more than 4 items, and removed items that had the highest mean and lowest variance (a total of 15 items). We also removed 2 additional items that had a mean above 4.7 and a variance less than 0.3. In total, 17 items were removed, and 299 items retained.

Next, we applied Principal Component Analysis (PCA) on raw data of 299 items, to derive 1 to 10 unrotated factors. To decide on the best solution, we narrowed down the number of factors by examining the drop in eigenvalues in scree plots, the size of residual correlations, and results of a parallel analysis (Revelle, 2011; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The scree test showed a slope

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>IPIP Agr N = 320</th>
<th>IPIP Cons N = 316</th>
<th>IPIP Extr N = 319</th>
<th>IPIP Emo-Stab N = 317</th>
<th>IPIP Int-open N = 321</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>API Agr</td>
<td>.596**</td>
<td>.182**</td>
<td>.120*</td>
<td>.114*</td>
<td>.148**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>API Integ</td>
<td>−.449**</td>
<td>−.484**</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>−.416**</td>
<td>−.220**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>API Uncon</td>
<td>−.145**</td>
<td>−.151**</td>
<td>−.068</td>
<td>−.013</td>
<td>−.199**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>API Emo-stab</td>
<td>−.289**</td>
<td>−.292**</td>
<td>−.200**</td>
<td>−.794**</td>
<td>−.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>API Extr</td>
<td>.481**</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.646*</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.180**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>API Cons</td>
<td>.240**</td>
<td>.620**</td>
<td>−.217**</td>
<td>.283**</td>
<td>.418**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>API Intel</td>
<td>.212**</td>
<td>.287**</td>
<td>−.019</td>
<td>.131**</td>
<td>.436**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. IPIT = International Personality Item Pool; API = Arab Personality Inventory; Agr = Agreeableness; Cons = Consciousness; Extr = Extraversion; Emo-Stab = Emotional-Stability; Int-open = Intellect-Openess; Integ = Integrity; Uncon = Unconventionality; Intel = Intellect. *p < .05. **p < .01.
change after the fifth component, and a parallel analysis found that 14 to 16 components best fit the data. Therefore, we focused on the adequacy of extracting 5 to 14 components by examining the residual correlations. When a good part of (the absolute value of) residual correlations are greater than 0.05, then more factors should be extracted (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). At the sixth solution, 26% of residuals were greater than 0.05. The number improved by 2% with each additional factor extracted, until improvement plateaued and only improved 1% after nine factors were extracted. This meant that the best solution was probably between 6 to 9 factors.

To decide on the type of rotation, we rotated the solutions obliquely (oblimin), and examined factor correlations. We found correlations exceeding .32, suggesting sufficient overlap in variance among factors to warrant oblique rotation (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Finally, we conceptually examined the solutions of 5-, 6-, 7-, 8-, and 9-principal component solutions, subjected to oblimin rotation, to find the most meaningful solution.

**International personality item pool.** In our sample, the internal consistency of the IPIP scales, based on ipsatized data was mostly comparable with that obtained from the English version of the IPIP, except for Extraversion and Intellect. Alpha coefficients were .86 for Emotional Stability, .80 for Agreeableness, .79 for Conscientiousness, .68 for Extraversion, and .67 for Intellect.

**Results**

**Factor structure of the Arab Personality Inventory (API).** The five-factor solution yielded variants of (I) Conscientiousness (subsuming most items of Intellect), (II) Honesty/Integrity, (III) Openness, (IV) Agreeableness and Extraversion merged, and (V) Emotional Stability. The six-factor solution led to a separation of Agreeableness and Extraversion, but did not produce an Intellect factor. The seven-factor solution (explained below in detail) added Intellect, and preserved all the previous domains. The eight-factor solution was similar, with the addition of a Dominance component. However, the component comprised weak loadings ranging between −0.47 and 0.48, and heterogeneous items. Finally, the nine-factor solution was similar to the previous one, with the addition of a small and specific component representing social aloofness. In conclusion, results of the seven-factor solution were found to be best interpretable and to represent the major domains of personality.

In the seven-factor solution, the first component was Agreableness/Soft Heartedness, mostly comprising items from the cluster of Softheartedness, subcluster of Guidance (in Positive Social Relatedness cluster) and subcluster of Openness to Ideas & Opinions of Others (in Openness cluster), the latter perhaps reflecting thoughtfulness. The second factor was Honesty/Integrity, with highest loading items from the clusters of Integrity and Humility versus Dominance clusters. It reflected lack of interpersonal transparency, and dominant, nonhumble behavior. The third component, named (Un)conventionality, reflected the tendency to be religiously dutiful, conventional, and compliant, versus being unbound by social and traditional conventions. Most of the spirituality/religiousness items that loaded on this factor were included in the Integrity cluster of the qualitative analysis. We named this factor (Un)conventionality, rather than Openness, despite it being a clear variant of Openness, because it emphasized tradition versus lack thereof, and lacked typical hallmarks of Openness, such as creativity. The fourth factor (Emotional Stability) comprised items mostly from the Emotional Stability cluster, but also items from the Extraversion cluster that refer to having (or not) positive emotions, low tolerance for boredom, and impulsive behavior. Extraversion was the fifth component, which comprised items from the clusters of Extraversion and Positive Social Relatedness. Highest loading items referred to being captivating, fun-loving, and cheerful (Extraversion), but also likable, approachable, loved, and smart in social situations (positive social relatedness). The sixth factor (Conscientiousness) comprised being studious, competent, and achievement/task oriented. Finally, the seventh factor (Intellect) comprised being rational, knowledgeable and cultured, and also mature, and self-aware.

**Overlap of indigenous and etic tools.** To quantify the degree of overlap between the emic and etic models, we correlated participants’ scores on the etic tool with their factor scores on the emic tool, and also conducted multiple regression analysis using inventory scores, and demographic variables.

To correlate scores, we first computed z-scores for the IPIP scales using the scoring criteria available online on http://ipip.org/, hence producing a score for each participant on each of the IPIP scales. We then computed regression-based factor scores for the indigenous tool, which indicate the standard score of each individual on each of the seven derived factors. Scores were correlated for N = 326 participants that had completed both tools.

Results indicated strong significant relationships between the etic and emic counterparts of Agreeableness (.60), Extraversion (.65), Conscientiousness (.62), and Emotional Stability (.79), while emic Unconventionality showed a weak relationship with etic Intellect/Openness (0.20), emic Intellect a medium correlation with this factor (.44), and emic Honesty/Integrity had moderate correlations with etic Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Emotional Stability (see Table 3).

**Relationship with demographic variables.** To further understand how scores on the personality tools relate to obtained demographics, we conducted multiple regression analyses using the stepwise method, to predict each of the seven API factor scores from age, gender, nationality, Arabic proficiency, education, and income (independent variables). This analysis was repeated with the IPIP scales as the outcome variable to examine which set of scores was better predicted by background variables. For analyses, all required assumptions were met, including normality, the absence of multicollinearity and homoscedasticity, and outliers were replaced by the mean.

The emic factor of Unconventionality was well predicted by demographic variables, so that reporting less proficiency in Arabic (β = .27, p < .001), being more educated (β = .18, p < .001), being younger (β = −.19, p < .001), and being Lebanese (β = −10, p < .05) meant being more secular and unbound to traditions (Adjusted R² = .15, F(3, 386) = 22.42, p < .001). Also, being older (β = .28, p < .001) and more proficient in Arabic (β = .14, p < .05) predicted higher scores on emic honesty/integrity (Adjusted R² = .11, F(2, 387) = 24.28, p < .001).

In terms of Intelect, being male (β = .24, p < .001) and reporting more Arabic proficiency (β = .25, p < .001) predicted 13% of variance in indigenous Intellect scores (Adjusted R² = .13, F(2, 387) = 29.00, p < .001), while being male (β = .27, p < .001) and more educated (β = .22, p < .001) predicted 10% of the
variance in etic Intellect scores (Adjusted $R^2 = .10, F(2, 312) = 17.53, p < .001$).

Being older ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$) and more educated ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$) predicted about 9% of the variance in Emotional Stability on the indigenous tool (Adjusted $R^2 = .09, F(2, 387) = 19.75, p < .001$), but only age ($\beta = .22$, $p < .001$) was predictive of etic Emotional Stability, with a smaller proportion of variance accounted for than the indigenous tool (Adjusted $R^2 = .05, F(1, 309) = 15.70, p < .001$).

Being older ($\beta = .18$, $p < .01$), male ($\beta = .16$, $p < .01$) and choosing not to report income ($\beta = -.12$, $p < .05$) predicted higher levels of conscientiousness and perceived competence on the indigenous tool (Adjusted $R^2 = .10, F(3, 386) = 13.16, p < .001$), while only age ($\beta = .20$, $p < .01$) and income ($\beta = -.13$, $p < .05$) predicted etic conscientiousness, and to a lesser degree than the indigenous tool ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .001$). Finally, we found that being older ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$) explained 2% of variance in emic Agreeableness scores (Adjusted $R^2 = .02, F(1, 388) = 8.03, p < .05$).

Indigenous and etic extraversion were not significantly predicted by any variable. Moreover, background variables tended to show stronger associations with the emic scales than the etic scales.

**General Discussion**

To our knowledge, this is the first study that examines implicit personality conceptions in the Arab Levant (or any Arabic-speaking country), despite the Levant comprising about one third of the population in the Middle East and the Arabic language being spoken by more than 200 million people globally (Lewis et al., 2013). It is also among the few studies that triangulate qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the overlap between emic and etic structures of personality in a new culture. By asking participants to describe target persons in vernacular Arabic, and subjecting their utterances to rigorous qualitative analysis, we arrived at nine emic personality clusters - Soft-Heartedness, Positive Social Relatedness, Integrity, Humility versus Dominance, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Intellect, and Openness. We then operationalized these dimensions into items that were self-rated by participants, and analyzed the results to reach a seven-factor solution: Agreeableness/Soft Heartedness, Honesty/Integrity, Unconventionality, Emotional Stability, Conscientiousness, Extraversion/Positive Social Relatedness, and Intellect. Comparisons with self-ratings on an etic instrument of the Big Five revealed that five of the seven factors overlapped with the Big Five, while Integrity and Unconventionality had a unique contribution. Further analyses revealed that relevant individual variables, such as age and Arabic proficiency, were more predictive of score variance in the new indigenous scales, than in the etic scales.

**The Arab Levant Personality Model**

The seven-factor solution bears many similarities to the Big Five, with four of seven factors showing strong correlations between the Arab Personality Inventory and a Big Five tool adapted from English, while Honesty/Integrity and Unconventionality do not. These nonoverlapping factors are comparable with the HEXACO model of personality (Lee & Ashton, 2008). HEXACO stands for Honesty/Humility (H), Emotionality (E), Extraversion (X), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C), and Openness to Experience (O). The model resembles the Big Five in Extraversion and Conscientiousness, but Agreeableness emphasizes Anger on its negative pole, Emotional Stability emphasizes sensitivity, and Openness emphasizes unconventionality. It additionally departs from the Big Five by having a sixth factor that includes lack of greed, trustworthiness, and integrity, named Honesty/Humility. The HEXACO framework has been shown to emerge in the reanalysis of data sets of seven independent psychosocial studies (Ashton et al., 2004). Additionally, variants of an Honesty/Humility factor have emerged in Korean (Hahn, Lee, & Ashton, 1999), French (Boies, Lee, Ashton, Pascal, & Nicol, 2001), Dutch (de Raad, 1992), and German studies (as cited in Ashton et al., 2004), although the factor was not consistently named as such initially.

In the Arab Levant model, similarities to the HEXACO framework are clear. The factor of Honesty/Integrity robustly derived by triangulating qualitative and quantitative data, is a close counterpart to the Honesty/Humility factor of the HEXACO, although the HEXACO factor does not capture the integrity component. In our study, the factor describes someone who is (not) interpersonally transparent and trustworthy (coded on the qualitative dimension of Integrity in Study 1), and is (not) dominant, greedy, selfish and indirectly hostile (qualitatively coded on Humility vs. Dominance). Therefore, although the authors initially conceptualized Integrity and Humility as two different dimensions, this distinction did not hold in the quantitative validation. Another similarity is the (Un)Conventionality factor. Like the O in HEXACO, the counterpart of Openness emphasized conventionality and tradition (particularly religiousness), rather than creativity and imagination.

In retrospect, it would have been interesting to make comparisons to results from the HEXACO tool, instead of the IPIP. However, at the time of designing the study, the IPIP was the obvious choice, as this inventory had been previously adapted to Arabic with some preliminary data on its adequacy in an Arab Levant sample, making it a more appropriate candidate than the HEXACO, which has not been adapted to the Arab Levant.

**From Etic to Emic and Back: Triangulating the Findings**

The idea of triangulation is that the most robust findings would remain invariant across methods, while those that do not converge would be specific to the methods employed. In the Arab Levant personality studies, we find that both etic concepts and culturally relevant concepts related to local values, remained robust as we shifted perspectives from full etic to full emic.

In the approach closest to an etic perspective, where the IPIP was used on an Arab sample, we replicated basic personality traits such as the Big Five. However, this approach failed to capture personality dimensions that emerged in the qualitative analysis of implicit personality conceptions, such as spiritualty, traditional values, social intelligence, trustworthiness, and integrity. Notably, even if we had used an etic instrument that measures integrity, such as the HEXACO-PR, such an instrument would have still fallen short of covering the breadth of the integrity nuances that were derived qualitatively. Conversely, in the approach closest to the emic perspective, where we qualitatively grouped layperson descriptors into 195 facets of personality, we found conceptions that are traditionally within the realm of etic personality studies.
Several new factors emerged in our exploratory model, which included cultural concepts unique to the Arab Levant. These factors were related to cultural values such as placing importance on family, tradition, and authority. Interestingly, these additional factors continued to showcase culturally relevant values in the quantitative model, and could be predicted by relevant demographic variables. "Unconventionality" strongly featured value-like concepts such as holding progressive values (e.g., "I am secular"), and going beyond social traditions (e.g., "I am not bound by social convention"), as opposed to being religiously dutiful (e.g., "I abide by my religious duties"), embracing traditional or conservative values (e.g., "I am a traditional Arab woman/man"), being of lineage (e.g., "I come from a family of good social standing"). These items reflect traditional social norms in the Arab Levant culture, such as the importance of being powerful and belonging to a kin (Barakat, 1993). Perceiving oneself as unconventional may be related to being more "westernized." It is not surprising that background demographics implicated in being more Westernized (such as being young, educated, not well versed in the Arabic language, and Lebanese) predicted 14% of variance in Unconventionality scores. Furthermore, our emic measure shows that salient values and virtues in our sample influenced implicit personality views, thereby blurring the boundaries between personality and other noncognitive domains such as virtues and values. Age correlates also seemed to be consistent with normative patterns of personality change in adulthood among Western samples (Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2006).

Therefore, the triangulation of data from the etic measure (IPIP), to qualitative exploration of implicit personality (open-ended questions), and back to quantitative validation of the implicit model (new items constructed), showed that the majority of concepts covered in the Arab Levant personality model are shared with those of established etic models (Big Five and HEXACO), and a minority are unique to the cultural context. Moreover, the new tool is related to individual variables, above and beyond the etic instrument.

Generalizing from these findings, it can be said that using different methodologies is needed to reveal different aspects of the personality structure in a new culture and language. On the one hand, studies designed to be etic will likely highlight the personality concepts that are shared with cultures already investigated. On the other hand, studies designed specifically for a new language and culture will likely find culturally relevant constructs or culture-specific aspects of etically derived traits. Our study shows that personality structure and assessment in the Arab Levant has both etic and emic aspects. The mixed-methods approach adopted in our study, shows that personality structure and assessment in the Arab Levant have both etic and emic aspects. A mixed-methods approach is best suited to uncover both types of aspects.

Our combined emic–etic approach shifts the study topic from the question of the universality of a single, typically Western personality model to the culturally more interesting question of what is shared and what is unique about personality in a specific cultural context. This combination also makes it clear that etic and emic aspects can be found both at the level of concepts and indicators.

**Study Limitations**

Our first study poses some limitations. The use of questions about different people may have influenced the saliency of some personality descriptors more than others. For instance, when asked to describe an authority figure, it is more likely that participants will talk about behaviors related to authority, such as humility, than about behaviors related to, say, friendship. However, the variability in questions allowed different descriptors to emerge, even if some descriptors were more likely to be activated by specific questions (Tett & Guterman, 2000). Second, the political turmoil in the region at the time of data collection limited our opportunities to reach participants. The personality structure we found awaits confirmation in other parts of the Arab world, using other sampling frames.

**Conclusion and Future Directions**

We examined personality concepts in four Arab countries using etic and emic methods. Using qualitative procedures, we derived a nine-dimension emic model filled with rich and informative implicit personality conceptions in the Arab Levant. This model was quantitatively tested to yield a seven-factor structure that resembles the six-factor HEXACO model more than the Five Factor Model, with the addition of a seventh Intellect factor. Cultural values remained relevant even in the quantitative model, giving meaning to the factors of Unconventionality and Honesty/Integrity. Our study shows how a combination of etic and emic methods can help to identify both universal and culture-specific traits or aspects thereof.

This study sets the stage for future personality studies in the Arab region. Subsequent studies will need to test the model in other Arab countries, Arab-speaking communities in non-Arab countries, and non-Arab samples. The items will also serve as a blueprint for—more indigenous and combined emic—etic instruments, an initiative badly needed to complement the use of adapted Western instruments in the region. Then, we can begin drawing more accurate and culture-informed conclusions about personality constructs in Arab-speaking samples, in the realm of occupational (organizational), clinical and social psychology.
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