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Executives' attitudes towards globalisation

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Abstract: Globalisation has emerged as an important phenomenon affecting the environment in which businesses operate. While trade and economic issues have dominated public perception of globalisation, we argue that it needs to be construed as a multi-dimensional construct. Based on a social representations perspective, this study surveys executives to discern their attitudes towards globalisation. Results suggest that executives perceive globalisation in complex ways and are influenced by cultural, political and environmental issues, in addition to the business and economic ones. Nationality, age and work experience significantly affect their perception. The varying perceptions of the executives can affect how organisations deal with the opportunities and threats in the global environment, so organisations would benefit from building an internal consensus on their global vision.

Keywords: globalisation; multidimensional; executive attitudes; social representations; business environment; global mindset.

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1 Introduction

Globalisation has emerged as a catchall term to signify the current global environment. It is used extensively in both the popular media and scholarly literature. While the term often seems to be used interchangeably with the word international, it also carries a separate attribution suggesting a phenomenon that is unique to our present times (Economist, 2009a).

Some scholars see globalisation as all pervasive (Ohmae, 1999; Rodrik, 1997) and affecting several areas of activity, with dramatic differences across regions of the world (Merino and Vargas, 2013). Others have argued that globalisation is not extensive as generally perceived, and that data suggests regionalisation or localisation rather than globalisation (Ghemawat, 2011; Rugman, 2003). However, the significance of globalisation is exemplified by the fact that it even inspired an anti-globalisation movement (Epstein, 2001) aside from concerns that the global financial crisis of 2008 has resulted in 'deglobalisation' (Economist, 2009b).

Some of the disagreement amongst scholars about globalisation can be due to the different meanings attributed to the term which in turn has led to misconceptions about globalisation. Confusion can range from whether it is a state of affairs or a process; and yet again, whether it is the cause or the effect of events. Even the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York in 2001 was seen as an attack on globalisation (LaFeber, 2002).

Various global surveys have attempted to measure the attitudes of the public towards globalisation. The Pew Global Attitudes Survey in 2002/2003 reported that "people almost everywhere like globalisation" (p.5) based on responses to questions on global interconnectedness through trade, culture, and so on. But on a question about globalisation *per se*, the report adds that "in many countries, high percentages of respondents offered no opinion, indicating a lack of familiarity with the term" [Pew, (2003), p.5]. A Canadian mass opinion poll conducted by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada in 2001 found greater support for free trade issues than for globalisation which was defined in the survey as a process linking the economies of the world (quoted in Mendelsohn et al., 2002).

The details in the Pew and the Canadian mass opinion poll surveys reveal a rather cloudy picture about attitudes to globalisation. Majorities variously report that it creates positive impacts on the opportunities, development, culture, etc., as well as problems with regard to jobs, poverty, human rights, the environment, and so on. Variations are often noticed depending on national origin, or stage of development of the country (Pew, 2007).

When scholars explain or define the term, they often do so in uni-dimensional terms, such as economic globalisation, migration and movement of peoples, and so on. Some scholars recognise that it has many dimensions, but due to the difficulty of studying it, they focus on one aspect such as economic globalisation (e.g., Zdravkovic, 2007). Thus, it is not surprising that the 2008 global economic downturn dampened enthusiasm for globalisation processes which some attributed to have caused, or at least furthered, the macroeconomic problems across nations.

In this study, we argue that globalisation, as an environmental phenomenon, needs to be understood in multi-dimensional terms. We then discuss the concept of social representations and its ability to influence attitudes. We rely on five domains to present a comprehensive view of globalisation, namely, economic, business, political, social and the physical. Data collected from executives on their perception of a variety of trends and attitudes in these domains reveal a complex understanding of globalisation that challenges the simplistic functional representation so dominant in the literature. The executives' attitudes are also influenced by nationality, age, and work experience. Thus, we believe our study makes a unique contribution in attempting an empirical understanding of the multidimensional nature of globalisation and does so from the perspective of executives. We derive implications from our study for organisations.

2 Globalisation: toward a comprehensible meaning

In this section, we will first clarify the meaning of globalisation, and its interplay with the environment. The perception of what globalisation is and what it stands for varies between different disciplines. Each discipline has tended to take a parochial view to suit the analytical perspective of the discipline. The dominant economic and business conceptions of globalisation have tended to define it in terms of free trade between nations (Bhagwati, 2004; Stiglitz, 2002). Sociologists have tended to view globalisation as social relations that link various localities (Giddens, 2003). Other disciplines, such as geography and political science, have also defined globalisation to suit their analytical purposes (Steger, 2003; Dicken, 2004). As Leiserowitz et al. (2006, p.430) note, "globalisation is a catchall term that includes a number of different trends occurring simultaneously, sometimes synergistically and sometimes in opposition to one another".

The scholarly debate on what globalisation is and how it is to be conceived is in stark contrast to the perspective of a business person. McNamee (2004), a venture capitalist, likens the debate on globalisation as fish debating the merits of living in the sea. This managerial perspective leads us to consider globalisation as an environmental phenomenon within which businesses have to operate.

The environment, i.e., the external forces that impact a firm, has a significant impact on the strategy and operations of the firm and is extensively analysed in the strategic management literature. Eisendhart (2002) observed that globalisation has contributed to a new economic playing field by introducing turbulence in the form of unpredictability and ambiguity of the environment. Globalisation has to be understood in the context of this environment because of its impact on how we conceive the environment (Eden and Lenway, 2001). Strategic management of the firm requires that it choose a path where the firm's resources and capabilities optimally exploit the opportunities available externally. As globalisation has increased the complexity of the environment, it becomes an important strategic capability for a firm to build an appropriate perspective (Doz and Prahalad, 1991; Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989). This strategic perspective is one that is not an objective phenomenon but a subjective one created by our own conception and decisions. Thus, executives' perceptions of the globalisation phenomenon can influence their strategies.

How people perceive the environment can influence their decision making. Attitudes and personality traits can generally be relied upon to explain human behaviour. Psychologists understand that predicting specific human behaviour is fraught with difficulty; however, at an aggregate level, general attitudes do predict behavioural aggregates (Ajzen, 2005), and self-reports of attitudes, in particular, have been found to predict human behaviour (Kraus, 1991). Scholars in the areas of organisational research (Harrison et al., 2006), and marketing (Maison et al., 2004) in particular, have examined attitudes to get a better understanding of future behaviour. Thus, by studying the attitudes of executives towards globalisation, we would be in a better position to understand how they are likely to make decisions in an environment impacted by the process of globalisation.

More recently, a global mindset has been seen by many scholars as a way of looking at the connection between the cognitive orientation of the executives and how it can benefit internationally oriented organisations. Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) grounded their discussion of the need for a global mentality on the strategic complexity faced by transnational corporations in the context of globalisation. Global mindset, an evolving concept, has been defined variously in terms of cultural diversity (e.g., Perlmutter, 1969), or strategically as dealing with the complexity of the environment (e.g., Murtha et al., 1998). Begley and Boyd (2003) see a global mindset as the ability of organisations to build criteria for performance, structures and processes that transcend several countries. In their detailed review of the literature on global mindset, Levy et al. (2007) suggest that for future research global mindset be treated as a multidimensional construct, both from the environmental and from the individual's perspective.

3 Attitude and social representations

The above discussion suggests that a better understanding of how individuals perceive globalisation in its integrated form and the complex interconnections within it (Kedia and Mukherji, 1999) will help to clarify the building blocks of the global mindset. Therefore, we chose to measure perceptions of globalisation with the Social Representation concept. It was defined by Roussiau and Bonardi (2001) as "an organization of socially constructed views with respect to a given object from a set of social communications, to control the environment and to integrate elements according to their symbols" (*our translation*, p.19). In other words, the social representation of an object (globalisation) is its image shared by a group of individuals (managers). Hence, this theory helps in studying managers' views as their representation of globalisation.

The theory of social representation (Durkheim, 1897) allows us to conceptualise and understand how attitudes form and to anticipate cognitive behaviours. A social representation is built upon a "*process of mental activity by which an individual or a group reconstitutes reality facing it and attach it a specific meaning*" [Abric, (1988), p.64]. Hence it operates at the first stage of understanding a problem which is at the origin of social actions (Vergès, 1994). Attitudes are part of the process that leads to building a social representation. Attitude is an individual's position used in the "*evaluation of a social entity*" and shapes the social representation through the allocation of "*a specific meaning*" [Doise, (2003), p.242]. Attitude alters the image of a social object; on the one hand it transforms the information about an object to conform it to the original attitude and on the other hand it anchors the new information next to extant

knowledge. Thus, attitudes are a component or a dimension of the social representation associated with the individual's meaning of the social object.

4 Attitude towards globalisation

Previous efforts at measuring attitudes to globalisation have taken a more narrow view, such as limiting it to economic linkages. This may also have been guided by the availability of secondary data of limited scope. O'Rourke (2003) used attitudes to trade and immigration as a proxy for attitude to globalisation and found that nationalist attitudes strongly predict a desire for trade protection. Similarly, although Hainmueller and Hiscox (2006) use the term globalisation, they are more narrowly focused on international trade. Peng and Shin (2008) surveying American business students found they had a positive attitude towards globalisation and its benefits for US consumers, companies and the economy, but were more dismal about its impact on jobs. Non-Americans were less enthusiastic. However, they do not define or explain globalisation in the survey.

In a US survey of 243 protestors (students and professionals) against the policies of the World Bank and the IMF, Adler and Mittelman (2004) asked the respondents to evaluate if seven features 'associated with globalisation' are benefits or costs to ordinary people of the world. The features were: altering local cultures, reduce government spending, privatisation, export promotion, increasing migration, greater availability of consumer goods, and technological advances. Results showed that the respondents (decidedly biased) did not consider globalisation as a monolith but were able to differentiate between its effects.

Held et al. (1999) provided a three-fold summarisation of the literature as representing distinct accounts of globalisation, after recognising that there is 'substantial disagreement' on how best to conceptualise globalisation. However, they also warned that "none of these three schools map directly on to traditional ideological positions or worldviews" (p.2). The three categories are: *Hyperglobalisers*, who see globalisation as a new era where people are being subject to a global marketplace; *skeptics*, who see globalisation as a myth while the international economy is segmented into three regional blocks, and national governments are still powerful; and the *transformationists* who see the globalisation process as unprecedented and states try to adapt to an interconnected world. Although this categorisation has been critiqued as being simplistic and reducing the many distinctions made in the literature (Michael, 2003), it provides an intuitive range of views from the positive through neutral to the negative. Our search of the literature did not reveal any attempts at measuring attitudes using this framework.

Edwards (2006) attempted an analysis of globalisation from both the economics and cultural perspectives. He used data for 17 countries (developed and developing) from the 2002 Pew Global Attitudes Survey, selecting questions where respondents were asked to evaluate whether communications and travel, and access to movies and television, trade and business ties, globalisation, and trade and communications' connections were good or bad for their respective countries. Several respondents viewed international integration negatively and consistently. Both wealthy and poorer countries belonged to groups that viewed communication and travel positively and negatively; however, wealthy countries were more inclined to respond negatively with regard to trade and business ties while

respondents from poorer countries viewed it positively. Edwards also found that the values that people hold has an important effect on how they assessed globalisation.

Globalisation as a process affecting the environment can be incorporated into the various dimensions that have already been identified in the literature [such as the categorisations by Clark (2002), or Narayanan and Fahey (2001)]. The KOF Index measures globalisation along three dimensions, namely, economic, political and social (KOF, 2012). Gopinath's (2011) framework builds on these and describes a comprehensive view of globalisation as comprised of five domains, namely economic, social, political, business, and the physical. These are not mutually exclusive categories, and using the logic of systems analysis, he suggests that these domains interact; i.e., the elements of one domain impact another in a continuous process. Hence, attitudes to globalisation cannot be neatly categorised as falling with one domain, or seen uni-dimensionally in terms of trade, migration, and so on, but may well represent a complex picture.

Thus, a study of perceptions will help us understand the origins of the executives' attitudes which can influence their behaviour. This leads us to the first research question:

RQ1 How do executives perceive the globalisation environment?

Demographic and personal factors: various studies have suggested that personal and demographic factors (Arora et al., 2004) can influence our perceptions of the environment. As they shape our experiences, they also affect our attitudes, and cause different individuals, experiencing the same event, to consider it differently.

Pew Global Attitudes Survey in 2007 showed a distinction between the *developed and developing countries* in their attitudes – people from the poor and middle income countries generally welcomed international trade and the multinational corporations while those in the developed countries were becoming more apprehensive about the global economy (Pew, 2007).

Managerial position has no effect on global mindset, while age and foreign country living experience has a significant effect (Arora et al., 2004). Attitude can be formed in the working environment (Doise, 2003), thus position in the organisation has to be monitored. *International travel* can influence perceptions, such as making them parochial (Alden et al., 2006; Kanter, 1995). *Gender* differences have presented a mixed picture with regard to issues pertaining to the economy. Kaufman and Zuckermann (1998) found that women were more likely to support economic reforms in Mexico than men. Women are less likely to support European integration, free trade, or a single European currency (Banducci et al., 2003; Gabel and Whitten, 1997; Mayda and Rodrik, 2005; O'Rourke, 2003; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). However, Edwards (2006) did not see any differences due to gender. These variables have not been studied in a globalisation framework, or from the perspective of executives. The mixed effects of these variables suggest the need for further exploration. This leads us to our second research question:

RQ2 Do demographic variables, namely, age, gender, exposure through travel, national origin and position in the organisation influence an executive's perception of globalisation?

5 Research design

This is an exploratory study and it departs from previous studies of attitudes to globalisation in two distinct ways. First, we take a comprehensive view instead of narrowly examining particular aspects of globalisation such as the economic or cultural dimensions alone. Second, we collected data from business executives who are most impacted by the influence of globalisation on the environment in which they operate.

Instrument: data were collected by means of a questionnaire which was developed in two stages. Initially, a questionnaire with 60 statements was used to collect data from students in France and India in a pilot study. This was then revised and the final questionnaire used in this study contained 24 statements. A majority of the statements were drawn from previous research (Adler and Mittelman, 2004; Arora et al., 2004; Gupta and Govindarajan, 2002; Nummela et al., 2004; Suh and Kwon, 2002; Zdravkovic, 2007) and the remaining developed by us based on a reading of the literature. The survey also included questions on demographic details, including work experience, organisational position and extent of travel.

Four statements each represented the five domains (namely, economic, political, business, social and physical), and four more were stated as reflecting a general attitude towards globalisation as they captured a sentiment that could not be uniquely anchored to one domain. Interval scales were used, ranging from '(very) strongly agree' to '(very) strongly disagree'. Most of the statements were on a five-point scale, with a few on seven point scales, and two statements were reversed, with the intent of preventing monotonous response behaviour by the respondents.

Since the targeted respondents are comfortable with computers, we used the web based survey site, Survey Monkey, to collect responses and invited participation through university alumni associations, and members of chambers of commerce/management associations.

Table 1 Profile of the respondents

Nationality	Eight nations in the sample. (Main: US65%; India 21%)
Gender	66% male; 34% female
Age	20–29 years: 4 %; 30–39: 26%; 40–49: 27 %; 50–59: 25%; 60 + : 18%
Work experience	< 10 years – 13 %; 11–20 yrs. – 27%; > 20 yrs. – 59%
Organisational position	Junior – 14%; Middle – 40%; Senior – 45%
How many countries have you travelled	Less than 3: 24%; 4-6: 30%; more than 7: 46%

Profile: 658 individuals responded to the survey. Respondents with more than three missing values were removed reducing the data to 599 individuals. Then, once we ensured that missing data were random and not linked to any voluntary behaviour we replaced missing values according to the following process. First, respondents were grouped in six clusters of similar profiles of answers. Second, the missing values in each group were replaced row by row by the mean of the other look-alike respondents. Finally, respondents who did not answer the question about their origin were dropped as they could not be classified for the purpose of the coming analysis. Hence the final sample was comprised of 569 individuals (Table 1 provides a profile).

Table 2 Inter-correlations of the variables

Column 1	Bcogrow	Bstdpnt	Fensvis	Fpoopnat	Fdisglo	Fiecadv	Anatbou	Aidecul	Afutsam	EgloFin	Emkfor	Eecogap	Eirade	Sundcul	Srelval	Svalbel	Sinmed	Pgoypol	Pintiss	Pdempri	Pgoycor
Bcogrow	1																				
Bstdpnt	0.15	1																			
Fensvis	0.08	0.11	1																		
Fpoopnat	0.05	0	0.08	1																	
Fdisglo	-0.01	0.05	0.04	0.15	1																
Fiecadv	0.14	0.23	0.21	-0.04	-0.06	1															
Anatbou	0.27	0.17	0.06	0.08	0.02	0.14	1														
Aidecul	0.12	0.07	0.19	0.13	0.03	0.13	0.31	1													
Afutsam	-0.01	0	0.09	0.19	0.01	0.03	-0.06	0.04	1												
EgloFin	0.13	0.11	0.19	-0.02	0.04	0.17	-0.03	0.03	-0.02	1											
Emkfor	0.25	0.08	0.12	-0.01	0.01	0.17	0.09	0.11	0.04	0.08	1										
Eecogap	0	0.03	-0.06	0.2	0.13	-0.05	0.09	0.14	0.07	-0.18	-0.12	1									
Eirade	0.22	0.22	0.15	0.1	0.05	0.21	0.25	0.19	0.04	0.19	0.14	-0.01	1								
Sundcul	0.12	0.01	0.23	0.05	0.04	0.15	0	0.05	-0.01	0.18	0.13	-0.06	0.11	1							
Srelval	0.06	0.04	-0.02	0.12	0.12	-0.01	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.12	0.11	0.02	0.03	1						
Svalbel	0.19	0.13	0.28	0.18	0.12	0.19	0.17	0.19	0.09	0.1	0.18	-0.06	0.21	0.22	0.04	1					
Sinmed	0.1	0.17	0.23	0.19	0.15	0.14	0.16	0.15	0.08	0.1	0.06	0.1	0.28	0.2	-0.05	0.28	1				
Pgoypol	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.11	0.08	0	0	0.07	-0.01	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.16	-0.01	0.07	0.11	0.09	1			
Pintiss	-0.05	0.06	0.02	0.17	0.06	0.01	-0.09	0.09	0.26	-0.03	0.05	0.1	0.12	-0.04	0.1	0.09	0.07	0.18	1		
Pdempri	0.17	0.11	0.28	0.02	0.01	0.27	0.1	0.11	0.02	0.21	0.14	-0.08	0.2	0.16	-0.07	0.301	0.19	-0.03	-0.04	1	
Pgoycor	0.17	0.18	0.28	0.01	0.02	0.28	0.16	0.05	-0.01	0.24	0.05	-0.09	0.19	0.19	-0.07	0.21	0.21	-0.08	-0.08	0.36	1

6 Results

Based on a review of the normality, one variable was dropped as the kurtosis and the skewness values were out of acceptable range. Table 2 provides the inter-correlations. We then undertook an exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation of the remaining 23 variables. Two items were dropped due to significant cross-loading leaving 21 variables, shown in Table 3. Six factors emerged accounting for 47.97 % of the variance.

Table 3 Factor analysis of attitudes

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Factor 1</i>	<i>Factor 2</i>	<i>Factor 3</i>	<i>Factor 4</i>	<i>Factor 5</i>	<i>Factor 6</i>
Pgovcor	0.632					
Pdempri	0.630					
Fenvsus	0.643					
Ftecadv	0.395					
Eglofin	0.400					
Sundcul	0.530					
Svalbel	0.513					
Sintmed	0.445					
Pintiss		0.725				
Afutsam		0.715				
Anatbou			0.730			
Aidecul			0.635			
Emktfor				0.738		
Srelval				0.529		
Bcogrow				0.489		
Fdisglo					0.701	
Fpopnat					0.497	
Eecogap					0.417	
Bstdprd						0.610
Pgovpol						0.614
Etrade						0.480
Alpha	0.689	0.408	0.477	0.334	0.366	0.317
% variance	12.073	7.204	7.735	6.606	6.982	7.368

A Cronbach alpha test for reliability shows values ranging from 0.70 to 0.30 for the six factors. A value of 0.5 and above is recommended for preliminary research; lower standards of reliability can be tolerated for preliminary efforts of construct-related measures, especially when the scales are not used for making decisions about individuals (Nunnally, 1967). The lower reliability scores are due to the low inter-correlation scores among the items (Table 2) and reflect the variety of belief structures that make up the different domains represented by the statements. One researcher described the effort to analyse the effects of all these factors as an 'extreme undertaking' [Zdravkovic, (2007), p.91]. We concur, but make a start with this study.

Table 4 Factors and comprising statements

1	Transformationists	<p>*Increasingly, governments are following democratic principles by giving their people a voice in their country's affairs. (Pdempri)</p> <p>*Governments around the world are taking actions to reduce corruption in their administrations. (Pgovcor)</p> <p>*Increasingly, countries are aware of the need to pursue environmental sustainability. (Fenvsus)</p> <p>*Increased exposure to foreign influences is changing people's values and beliefs. (Svalbel)</p> <p>*Sharing of technological advances is growing among nations. (Ftecadv)</p> <p>*Central banks of many countries are working together to maintain global financial stability. (Eglofin)</p> <p>*People are making an effort to understand other cultures. (Sundcul)</p> <p>*International media is raising the global awareness of people everywhere (Sintmed)</p>
2	Sceptics	<p>*Some countries impact international issues more strongly than others. (Pintiss)</p> <p>*In the next ten years, I think the world will be the same as it is today (R) (Afutsam)</p>
3	Hyper-globalisers	<p>*In this interconnected world of ours, I think national boundaries are meaningless (Anatbou)</p> <p>*I am equally open to ideas from other countries and cultures as I am to those of my own country and culture. (Aidecul)</p>
4	Global markets	<p>*Successful countries rely on market forces to guide their economies. (Emktfor)</p> <p>*I think a company's growth can be achieved mainly through global expansion (Bcogrow)</p> <p>*Increasingly religious values are shaping the behaviour of their followers across the world. (Srelval)</p>
5	Anti-globalisers	<p>*Diseases are spreading more quickly through global interconnectedness. (Fdisglo)</p> <p>*The economic gap between rich and poor countries is increasing. (Ecogap)</p> <p>*Rising global population is putting pressure on scarce natural resources. (Fpopnat)</p>
6	Economic globalisation	<p>*Trade is increasing worldwide. (Etrade)</p> <p>*Companies are standardizing their products across the world. (Bstdprd)</p> <p>*Many governments are pursuing policies that promote national interests, even if they conflict with global objectives. (Pgovpol)</p>

Table 4 lists the factors along with the variables/statements that they represent. Since these factors represent the various dimensions of a globalised environment as perceived by the executives, they are henceforth referred to as dimensions. The first three dimensions can be interpreted according to the Held et al. (1999) categorisation of globalisation and are named accordingly.

- 1 *Dimension 1: Transformationists*: This dimension contained statements that represented the political, physical, social and economic domains and reveals a positive attitude towards several changes taking place in a complex environment.
- 2 *Dimension 2: Sceptics*. This dimension contained two statements that suggest that there were no major changes taking place in the environment.
- 3 *Dimension 3: Hyperglobalisers*. This dimension represented a strong view of 'oneness' and commonality. In addition, three other dimensions emerged, as below:
- 4 *Dimension 4: Global markets*. This dimension suggested to us a perception of global markets as they were evolving for businesses.
- 5 *Dimension 5: Anti-globalisers*. This dimension had a very negative orientation and represented a view that perhaps globalisation trends were harmful.
- 6 *Dimension 6: Economic globalisation*. This dimension represented the common perception of globalisation in economic terms and saw a contradiction in the action of governments too.

The mix of statements from different domains represented in five of the six dimensions answers our RQ 1 that the executive perception is not uniquely dominated by one domain and does represent a complex mix of different domains. To examine RQ2, we undertook an ANOVA of the demographic variables on dimensions 1 and 3 (which have reliabilities >0.5). Nationality, work experience and age were significant for both dimensions. Gender, organisational position and travel did not show any significance. Thus, our results support Edwards (2006) with regard to gender, the Pew Surveys about the differences due to nationalities, and Arora et al.'s (2004) finding on managerial position.

Table 5 ANOVA of attitude factors by demographics

<i>Social representation</i>	<i>ANOVA (F values and significance)</i>					
	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Work exp.</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Org. position</i>	<i>Travel</i>
Dimension 1:	NS	21.23***	7.76***	10.19***	NS	NS
Dimension 3:	NS	12.80***	8.50***	10.05***	NS	NS

Notes: ***Significant at .01; **significant at .05; *significant at .10.

7 Discussion

Our exploratory study takes a comprehensive view of globalisation and suggests that executives perceive globalisation in complex ways. We found empirical support for the three 'accounts' of globalisation as perceived by Held et al. (1999) and by providing additional dimensions, we also support the arguments of critics (such as Michael, 2003) that there are fine distinctions to be made. The popular perspective of international trade and business interests as driving forces of globalisation is reflected in one of the dimensions but it is not the dominant one. In addition, our study also shows how perceptions of different domains combine in distinct manners to shape the attitude.

In our earlier review, the global mindset, or the "cognitive capabilities of key decision makers" [Levy et al., (2007), p.231] amongst executives was presented as necessary for the success of the enterprise as it competes globally. Begley and Boyd (2003) describe

this mindset as the ability of the executives and the organisation to appropriately mediate between global consistency and local responsiveness. Based on their study of HR executives, they argued that organisations have moved from a core managerial group with a global mentality enunciating policies to a broader base of managers who share in global decision making. Taking this argument further, our study would warn that these managers may have widely divergent attitudes to globalisation. It is therefore important for the organisation to recognise this divergence and prepare for it.

The range of conceptualisation provided by our six dimensions suggests that it may be risky for an organisation to assume that a consensus on the opportunities that emerge from globalisation exists within the organisation. Different executives may have widely divergent perceptions of the opportunities and threats in globalisation, and this is irrespective of the managerial position. Since these attitudes influence their decision making, while an organisation may want to cultivate a global mindset, our study would caution that the organisation must also be clear about what kind of a mindset it wants to achieve. Unless the organisation can clearly enunciate its position with regard to the global environment and communicate it effectively to its executives, it may suffer from differential efforts applied by the executives, driven by their perceptions. The variables representing different domains that interact and help shape the executives' views of the globalisation environment would support Weick's (1979) view that managers need to approach events from multiple perspectives, which can generate competing interpretations, and resultant interactive effects.

The above argument is also relevant for chambers of commerce who actively encourage their members to go international. Indeed, they ought to work on building a comprehensive and positive image of globalisation for managers. Firms see global opportunities, whether or not they are already operating as a multinational. 'Think global' is a popular corporate slogan. But this can mean different things to different executives. It would help organisations to engage in an internal discussion and help their executives develop a common perspective so they support, and not distract, the organisation's efforts through their decision making.

The public debate on globalisation has sometimes led to a fear of standardisation of values and attitudes across the world. Corporate global strategies certainly benefit from the kind of standardisation envisaged by Levitt (1983) who argued in favour of a force of convergence across the world that leads to global markets for standardised consumer products. Yet, as Giddens (2003) argued, cultural standardisation has been superficial and can even be said to have produced greater local diversity. The global versus local categorisation has had a dominant place in the business literature. Two of our dimensions showed significant variation on account of nationality suggesting fundamental differences in how executives of these nations perceive the same globalisation trends, supporting the findings of the Pew surveys (2007). Outsourcing is one issue often highlighted as revealing the divergence between the developed world's concerns about job loss and the developing world's welcoming of the job creation. Our study shows that the influence of nationality on executives' attitudes goes beyond outsourcing, and the popular perception that the corporate world has uniformly welcomed globalisation may be too simplistic.

While Arora et al. (2004), find no relationship between global mindset and tenure, job category or managerial position, we find that work experience has a significant link with two dimensions. We believe our fine grained dimensions of the globalisation

environment may have helped bring out the impact of work experience that their study did not.

There is a great need for more studies to validate this comprehensive view of globalisation, and that arises from the limitations of this study. Our non-random method of data collection raises issues of common method variance. Also, the low Cronbach alpha values suggest the need for further refinement of the scales. However, since our development of the dimensions was not for the purpose of further use in testing hypothesis, we feel the analysis served our purpose of highlighting the multi-dimensional perspective to globalisation. Previous studies, by sampling students (e.g., Peng and Shin, 2008) or experts (Czinkota and Ronkainen, 2005) were early contributors to this stream of trying to understand how people view the important environmental phenomenon. By using data from executives, an important constituency for business research, we are making a contribution to the literature.

To conclude, our exploratory study makes a contribution to building a comprehensive understanding of globalisation. The systems framework which suggests that different domains interact was supported in the executives' attitudes and can contribute to a more complete framing of globalisation in further research. In particular, we believe that our results support the Levy et al.'s (2007) view of the global mindset as an individual-level cognitive structure which is integrated across multiple domains.

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