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A Critical Review of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Many scholars and practitioners (e.g. Appleby 2013; Grammatikopoulos et al. 2013) regard motivation as the most important factor in influencing individual and organisational success. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is often presented and used as the most popular and efficient theory to understand and influence employees' motivation at work. Maslow proposed a set of five universal needs that he claims to be the basis for the motivation of all employees. These needs, starting from the base, are physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualisation. Numerous empirical studies have validated this theory. A review of these studies also points towards a few significant criticisms. This chapter offers a critical review of the empirical evaluations of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

According to Maslow, these needs, which are arranged in a hierarchical order of importance, i.e. physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualisation, are universal and thus apply to all employees and workplaces (Adina and Medet 2012). However, the theory is criticised especially for some of its claims and propositions (Viorel et al. 2009). This chapter seeks to review these criticisms. The next section provides a discussion on the concept and importance of motivation.

Key categories, and early models, of motivation are then considered. Then, the theory's apparent influence and widespread applicability are discussed, followed by a discussion of criticisms.

The Concept of Motivation and Its Importance

Although the word motivation may mean many different things, the purpose of motivation is, in essence, to stimulate, influence, trigger or push (Carmen and Elena 2011; Manzoor 2012). The word's etymology is derived from the Latin word 'movere' which basically means to move, e.g. stimulate, trigger or influence the doing of something (Barikani et al. 2013; Qayyum 2012; Syed et al. 2012). There is, however, a huge diversity among theorists in their interpretation and definition of motivation (Çeliköz 2010).

According to Gorn and Kanungo (1980), Moch (1980) and Mol (1992), motivation is a form of total involvement. DeCenzo and Robbins (1996), Franco et al. (2002), Pouchová (2011), Robbins (1993) and Smithers and Walker (2000) suggest that motivation is about having willingness. Likert (1961) and Quijano and Navarro (1998) see motivation in terms of making an effort. For Kanfer et al. (1994), Kreitner (1995), Locke and Latham (2004), Middleton (1994) and Mitchell (1982), motivation is simply a psychological influence or process. Akbas and Kan (2007) and Bartol and Martin (1998) view motivation as power, while Berman et al. (2010), Higgins (1994), Mowday et al. (1979) and Ruthankoon and Ogunlana (2003) define motivation in terms of a drive. Finally, Armstrong (2001, 2006) and Vroom (1964) define it as a goal-intended behaviour.

The literature review indicates that there is no generally agreed-upon definition of motivation (Eliasa et al. 2012). While the concept of motivation has been defined in a number of ways and thus can be utilised in multiple ways, Haivas et al. (2014), Dye et al. (2005) and Stenmark and Lilja (2014) interpret motivation as a priority an employee attempts to fulfil and satisfy what influences employees' behaviour and actions and consequently influences their motivation.

Much has been written on motivation in recent decades, with motivation becoming 'ranked as the second most widely written about topic, after the topic of methodology' (Riyono et al. 2012, p. 232). The wide interest in the subject is because it is seen as essential for understanding and explaining the 'how' and 'why' of an employee (Bhat and Shah 2010), i.e. how employees can be motivated to perform their activities and why employees behave in certain ways (Bhat and Shah 2010; Lut 2012).

Among the scholars and practitioners who are notably interested in motivation are individuals from fields such as philosophy, sociology and psychology (Bouwma-Gearhart 2012; Odde 2011). In these fields, motivation has been subjected to rigorous analyses and debates based on 'what is needed' to motivate an employee, e.g. what makes an employee act efficiently, how an employee can be influenced to perform productively, what motivational framework works best for a given workforce, etc. (Bouwma-Gearhart 2012; Odde 2011).

In the fields of education, administration and social work, there is a long tradition of interest in motivation (Çeliköz 2010; Keleş 2012; Syed et al. 2012; Visser-Wijnveen et al. 2012). Scholars, as well as practitioners, in education and administration (Çeliköz 2010; Fisher 2009), regard motivation as the most significant factor in accomplishing work successfully through triggering employee productivity (Keleş 2012; Syed et al. 2012). Motivation massively contributes to employees' satisfaction and is therefore crucial to job commitment (Khan et al. 2011).

Scholars interested in work and organisational motivation have devoted efforts towards finding if 'there is any formula for motivation' (Stanislava 2010, p. 271). As such, the development of a 'master motivational formula' seems to be a vitally needed tool which scientists and practitioners can apply in organisations to motivate the workforce (Çınar et al. 2011).

A *motivational formula*, therefore, would entail various models, approaches and techniques to create motivation among employees in their workplace or organisation (Zaidi and Abbas 2011). The success or failure of any organisation rests on the *motivation formula*, i.e. the right technique, method and approach applied to its workforce (Aworemi et al. 2011).

However, the claim of having an understanding of the *right* motivational approach (Nasri and Charfeddine 2012) is indeed a contentious issue, with there being many varied opinions, views and explanations (Gelona 2011; Netotea-Suciu et al. 2012). Obviously, the fact that there exist a number of contrasting viewpoints of ‘what motivates employees’ (Guga 2012) would indicate that researchers and experts take diverse philosophical perspectives on this issue (Barbača and Zekan 2011; Nwagbara and Akanji 2012).

Many theories provide insights into motivation from different perspectives and are claimed to have applicability in contemporary workplaces or organisations (Frick and Drucker 2011; Gopalakrishnan 2012). The next section will discuss the concept of motivation in terms of its two major accepted classifications or categories.

Important Classifications and Models of Motivation

Content and Process Classifications

The concept of motivation has been addressed by numerous studies, and there exist many theories in the literature (Keleş 2012). Tuan (2011) suggests that these theories can be classified into two main categories. The first, known as ‘content or need theories’, holds the view that as long as an employee’s work contains enough content or needs such as physiological and security needs, the employee will be highly motivated and subsequently will be highly satisfied. The second category, known as ‘process theories’, suggests that motivation and subsequent satisfaction are not solely the result of needs fulfilment, but also depends on how employees analyse, evaluate and think of the pros and cons associated with a job.

The content theories attempt to deal with and explain the content of a given motivation. It proceeds with the assumption that employees have needs which motivate them at work. So, content theories strive to determine the exact motivational needs that an employee attempts to attain or satisfy (Udechukwu 2009). Due to the focus of content

theories on needs to explain what motivates a given employee, they are also known as need theories (Barikani et al. 2013).

The process theories, also known as cognitive theories, explain motivation through the cognitive or thinking processes that occur within a given employee's mind (Gopalakrishnan 2012). Process theories underline the psychological processes affecting an employee's motivation (Çınar et al. 2011). According to these theories, motivation is energised, initiated, directed and sustained due to psychological influence. This range of theories includes operant learning theory, Adam Smith's Equity Theory, Goal-Setting Theory, Reinforcement Theory, Vroom's Expectancy Theory and Kahler's Drivers (Jeans and Murphy 2009; Rowley 1996; Steyn 2002; Viorel et al. 2009).

Over the years, various theorists have attempted to create models on what needs motivate employees at the workplace. These content or need theorists, such as Frederick Herzberg, Douglas McGregor and Abraham Maslow, have developed important motivational models, although these models were all in fact built on the works of the early and existing models of motivation. In relation to this point, the next section will explore these early models of motivation which have helped the emergence of the need-based approach.

Models of Motivation

Over time, various models and approaches have been proposed by management theorists, with a common theme being their constant attempts to present an all-inclusive, general or universal model of motivation (Mawoli and Babandako 2011). The following discussion presents these early models and their influence on motivation researchers.

Scientific Management

Proposed by Frederick W. Taylor (1856–1915), the scientific management model argues that motivation can be obtained through financial incentive (the carrot) (Peters et al. 2010; Scott 1987; Daft and Marcic 2008). According to Taylor (1947), the financial incentive or the carrot

(e.g. higher wages or salaries, rapid promotions or advancements and generous premiums or bonuses, shorter hours of work or better working conditions) is an impelling approach for motivating employees (Rajput et al. 2011; Taylor 1967). He believed that for those who worked hard enough, there should be financial rewards (the carrot), but for those who did not, penalties (the stick) should be imposed.

Hawthorne Effect

Another breakthrough in the theory of motivation was the work of Elton Mayo (1880–1949) (Hunter 2012; John et al. 2012). Mayo conducted the Hawthorne Studies which gave new insights into how to better motivate employees (Khan et al. 2011). These studies concluded that the emphasis should be put on understanding and meeting the needs of employees to motivate them (Saefullah 2012). This conclusion further signalled a shift in the theories of motivation by treating the need of employees as an important issue (Çınar et al. 2011). The Hawthorne Studies revealed that while financial incentives are of concern for employees as per Taylor's scientific management approach, people would be much better motivated by having their needs met at work (Sandhya and Kumar 2011).

Having identified these early influential models of motivation, a consideration of some need theorists is now appropriate.

The Emerging Need Theories

The knowledge gained from the early studies shaped the thinking of motivational theorists (Hunter 2012). The content theories were developed to link worker motivation with needs satisfaction (Peters et al. 2010, p. 2). As the early studies argued to have given rise to the motivational need-based approach (Dwivedula and Bredillet 2010), need theorists (e.g. Herzberg, Alderfer, McGregor, McClelland and Maslow) embraced and built the need approach (Rajput et al. 2011).

For example, Frederick Herzberg (1923–2000) developed the Motivation-Hygiene theory, which proposes that the motivation of employees

tends to be influenced by specific sets of needs (Moore 1992). The theory argues that motivation is the result of two basic needs: lower level needs and higher level needs (Miner 2005). Higher level needs can lead to a positively motivated or satisfied motivation—these are termed motivators or satisfiers. Such needs which motivate employees may include the job itself, achievements and recognition for the achievements. Lower level needs produce negative motivation or dissatisfied motivation—these are termed as hygiene factors or dissatisfiers. These needs which dissatisfy individuals include a poor work environment and working conditions (e.g. lack of job security, low salary, poor lighting and ventilation) (Miner 2005; Taylor 1947).

Clayton Alderfer (1940–2015) suggests the ERG (existence, relatedness and growth) theory of motivation, which describes motivation as being derived from three needs—existence, relatedness and growth (Alderfer and Guzzo 1979). Existence needs include the basic human needs of existence, such as physiological and safety needs (Arnolds and Boshoff 2002). Thus, existence needs are mainly concerned with essential aspects, such as money, air, water and food (Alderfer and Guzzo 1979). Relatedness needs are concerned with interpersonal aspects, such as social acceptance, belongingness and status. Finally, growth needs are concerned with peoples' desires for an improved ecological setting, self-development, self-fulfilment and self-actualisation (Alderfer and Guzzo 1979; Arnolds and Boshoff 2002).

Douglas McGregor (1906–1964) offered another theory of motivation, called Theory *X* and Theory *Y*. He believed that an employee is motivated by two basic sets of needs (lower order *X* and higher order *Y*). Thus, there are two approaches for understanding and motivating employees. One approach is that of Theory *X* which sees the individual as indolent and lacking ambition, responsibility and direction (Carson 2005; McGregor 1960b). Motivation can then be obtained by the use of hard or strong motives, such as coercion, punishment and threats (McGregor 1960a; Taylor 1947). The basic argument of Theory *Y* is that an employee is by nature a responsible one and accepts responsibility, as well as being self-directed and seeks to accomplish things (Hofstede 1994; Taylor 1947). Motivation can, therefore, be obtained by the use of soft or weak motives, such as satisfying peoples' demands through money, training etc. (McGregor 1960a).

David McClelland's (1917–1998) principal theory of motivation postulates that an employee is motivated by the three basic needs: achievement, power and affiliation (Smits et al. 1993). According to him, the individual who is motivated by achievement aspires to advance his/her own personal development, improvement and excellence by taking difficult and competitive tasks and assignments (McClelland and Burnham 1976; Smits et al. 1993). Likewise, another individual may be inclined towards affiliation needs by being concerned with social interactions, i.e. affection, friendships, prestige, recognition, dialogue, etc. to further interpersonal relationships, as well as acceptance and approval of their own views by others (Fort 1996; Mata Toledo and Unger 1985). Similarly, an individual with a need for power desires to control, influence and lead. This need for power means that employees are potentially motivated when allowed to be in full control to lead, direct and control their own environment and destiny (Smits et al. 1993).

Khan et al. (2011) and Marques (2011) consider this theory to be the best known and most influential theory of motivation. Maslow's theory has, in fact, had an immense influence to the point that many believe 'most content-based motivation theories are based on Maslow's (1954a) Hierarchy of Needs...' (Barbuto JR and Story 2011, p. 25).

Maslow's Theory

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow argues that motivation is best understood in terms of a Hierarchy of Needs, which for him are physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-actualisation (Bagozzi et al. 2003).

Physiological Needs

The starting point for the Hierarchy of Needs model is the basic physiological needs, e.g. oxygen, food, shelter, water, rest, etc. (Netotea-Suciu et al. 2012). According to Maslow, physiological needs are the most

important to employees and without those, it is impossible to motivate and satisfy them (Khan et al. 2011).

Physiological needs are presumed to be igniting the process of satisfaction (Kenrick et al. 2010), with the other basic needs in the hierarchy being derived from the satisfaction of the physiological needs (Maslow 1954a). Thus, they 'serve as channels for all sorts of other needs as well' (Maslow 1943, p. 373). What this means is that the major motivation first and foremost would undoubtedly result from the physiological needs—the most prepotent of all human basic needs (Raus et al. 2012). All of the other needs such as getting out of danger (safety/security needs), affiliating with others and being accepted (belongingness and love needs), achieving, being competent and gaining approval and recognition (esteem needs), and problem-solving and personal growth (self-actualising needs) become secondary (Maslow 1943).

Maslow (1954a, p. 82) explained that 'a person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else' (Stoll and Ha-Brookshire 2012, p. 152). Maslow further claimed that:

The urge to write poetry, the desire to acquire an automobile, the interest in American history, the desire for a new pair of shoes is, in the extreme case, forgotten or become of secondary importance. For the man who is extremely and dangerously hungry, no other interests exist but food. He dreams food, he remembers food, he thinks about food, he emotes only about food, he perceives only food and he wants only food. The more subtle determinants that ordinarily fuse with the physiological drives in organising even feeding, drinking or sexual behaviour, may now be so completely overwhelmed as to allow us to speak at this time (but only at this time) of pure hunger drive and behaviour, with the one unqualified aim of relief. (Maslow 1943, pp. 373–374)

Employees have basic physiological needs that they seek to satisfy and are specifically necessary for their motivation at work. It is a fair statement to make that many employees 'suffer from serious physiological disorders that can be manifested by widespread poverty, hunger and malnutrition, diseases, deprivation, and even political disturbances and

instability' (Yawson et al. 2009, p. 953). In other words, an employing organisation incapable of tackling these physiological disorders for its employees won't succeed effectively in motivating its own employees, and thus, its survival is threatened (Yawson et al. 2009). In this sense, offering employees a place in their work environment that is stocked with food and drink, a place of higher standards of hygiene where employees can breathe clean fresh air and a competitive wage or salary to afford good accommodation and clothing helps employees meet their survival, i.e. of basic physiological needs (Pulasinghage 2010; Sadri and Bowen 2011).

Only when the physiological needs are fully satisfied do they become unimportant in motivating the employees at work. Thus, they cease to exist and they are no longer a determinant of the motivation of an employee (Maslow 1943). Under these circumstances, a new need emerges, namely safety needs. With these safety needs becoming the dominant motivation factor, every other need thereby becomes less important. In this sense, the motivation becomes the outcome of a non-satiated need that is wholly dominated by safety needs (ibid.).

Safety Needs

At this second level, security or safety is the major pursuit of needs, such as a fear of job instability (Aworemi et al. 2011; Khan et al. 2011). All other needs become less important, including the physiological ones given that they have now been satisfied (Maslow 1943).

The appearance of the safety needs (e.g. due to a risk or of being harshly or roughly treated at work by bosses, or a threat or danger of dropping out of work or of losing the job) is a key reason for any employee being motivated at work (Maslow 1943, 1954a). The need for safety, security and protection at work dominates, mobilises and motivates the employee as long as the individual worker feels persistently frightened—especially during bad economic situations (ibid.).

In order to work at their best, certainty becomes an inevitable safety need that an employee seeks to fulfil, and thus plays a significant role in driving the employee to their optimum performance level (ibid.).

The employee behaves as if a great work catastrophe (e.g. redundancy) is almost always inevitable or impending. Thus, the employee's motivation is based on the safety need until it becomes fully gratified, at which point a new set of needs will emerge—of love, affection and belongingness (Maslow 1943).

Social Needs

The absence of friendship, encouragement and support of fellow workers and managers makes the employee feel motivated, as never before, to attain this need with great intensity. So, love and belongingness become the paramount need for the employee at work. Further, this level of the Hierarchy of Need lays a greater emphasis on emotional and social support (Pulasinghage 2010).

According to Yawson et al. (2009), receiving help in dealing with work problems and pressures, support to cope with a work injury, advice and guidance on work performance, support during interpersonal conflicts and anxieties, financial support or general career advice and support for confidence building all primarily facilitate the desire of an employee in promoting and maintaining the optimal level of motivation in the work environment based on care, companionship and deeper relationships.

According to Maslow (1943, p. 378), 'also not to be overlooked, [is] the fact that the love needs involve both giving and receiving' for the employee. Dominated by these love needs, the employing company is a vital base for support, confidence, love, etc. as well as the maximisation of satisfaction for the employee by fulfilling not only their non-satiated security needs but also their non-satiated love and belongingness needs (Sadri and Bowen 2011).

In the situation of when the need for safety and security at work is more active and powerful, the employees forget about the need for friendship, understanding and affection (Maslow 1943). Once those former needs are met, there is then an emergence of a new need for better work arrangements in which kindness and empathy rule the motivation of the employee (Maslow 1954b). In this sense, the need for

quality work relations ‘more than anything else in the world’ (Maslow 1943, p. 381) becomes dominant until the gratification point is met. At that point, the next stage of the hierarchy is reached that of the needs of esteem.

Esteem Needs

Esteem needs indicate a need to respect one’s rights, appreciation of one’s ability and capacity, acknowledgement of one’s achievement and recognition of one’s autonomy and independence (Anyim et al. 2012; Stoll and Ha-Brookshire 2012). In this type of need, employees at work are driven by their need for prestige or reputation, attention, recognition, appreciation or importance (Maslow 1943; Mujah et al. 2011; Saefullah 2012). The employee motivation is shaped by those esteem needs (Maslow 1954b).

It is therefore highly significant for the organisation to recognise and meet the esteem needs of its employees (Netotea-Suciu et al. 2012). Indeed, not acknowledging such esteem needs of an employee on the part of the employing organisation could likely result in dissatisfaction, helplessness, discouragement, inferiority, weakness or inability, and thus a demotivated employee at work (Netotea-Suciu et al. 2012; Sandhya and Kumar 2011). The work environment is apparently a major source of need fulfilment for the employee in which they are able to achieve or accomplish things, such as obtaining financial rewards and societal recognitions (Benson and Dundis 2003; George and Sabapathy 2011).

The enhancement and strengthening of employee satisfaction could be assured through being rewarded, praised and recognised, or being presented with the opportunity to feel successful, accomplished and well-reputed (Benson and Dundis 2003; Sadri and Bowen 2011). Such an enhanced and strengthened satisfaction is created for assuring continued hard work by the employee (Sadri and Bowen 2011, p. 47). Indeed, the esteem needs, such as rewards, titles (e.g. employee of the month), promotions, etc., are the main reasons for joining, staying with or working for the employing organisation (Riyono et al. 2012; Sadri and Bowen 2011).

Thus, the employee at work is motivated and keen to satisfy the esteem (or self-esteem) needs which will give rise to their motivation in terms of boosting their self-confidence and morale, feeling of worth and usefulness, demonstrating their own capability and achievement of potential (Forbes 2011; Maslow 1943). Once the satisfaction of these needs is fulfilled, it in turn gives rise to the need for self-actualisation to be created and become dominant (Maslow 1943).

Self-actualisation Needs

Self-actualisation refers to the need for self-fulfilment, i.e. the need for an individual to reach their full potential, or be everything that a person is striving to be. Conditioned upon prior gratification and satiation of the physiological, safety, love and esteem needs, motivation at work will be mobilised and taken over by the need for self-actualisation (*ibid.*). Self-actualisation needs, according to Maslow, are the ultimate needs and the highest stage of any employee experience (Stoll and Ha-Brookshire 2012).

It is a condition whereby the employee at work seeks to satisfy her or his need to have a sense of professional maturity and career growth; the purpose of work remains fulfilled and the person ends up motivated at the workplace (George and Sabapathy 2011; Netotea-Suciu et al. 2012). The occurrence of satisfaction and fulfilment to an employee is possible through motivation by which they express or achieve the full potential of their ability (Benson and Dundis 2003; Forbes 2011; Kenrick et al. 2010).

Maslow claims that 'we shall call people, who are satisfied in these needs, basically satisfied people, and it is from these, that we may expect the fullest (and healthiest) creativeness' (Maslow 1943, p. 383). Sadri and Bowen (2011, p. 47) also agree with Maslow in making a similar claim that 'there is a sense that once these needs are engaged, they likely will become stronger as they are fed and satisfied. Therefore, this layer within the hierarchy is used to inspire employees and to help them perform at their highest levels'.

Most employees seek to express and exercise their exceptional talents and problem-solving skills, as well as show their creative work

performance approaches (Forbes 2011; Sandhya and Kumar 2011). This is only when, according to Benson and Dundis (2003), work becomes fulfilling and pleasurable where motivation is merged and satisfied with work.

Having said that, it must be emphasised that self-actualisation varies greatly from one employee to another. A musician would pursue music, an artist would pursue painting and a researcher would pursue knowledge in a specific area (Kenrick et al. 2010, p. 294).

It might be that a need for one person is to be the most competent employee to reap financial rewards, or for another, it will be the need to be the most creative worker and a logical candidate for promotion (Maslow 1943). More importantly, another motivation might be a need to devote the work to something that is considered precious for that given employee. This could be considered as a need to devote motivation at work to 'some calling or vocation in the old sense, the priestly sense' (Maslow 1975, p. 43). As such, this need becomes a major means of motivation and the essence of creating joy and satisfaction for an orthodox employee (Maslow 1975).

What this basically means is that the motivated employee is no longer concerned with the physiological, esteem, love and safety needs. Instead, the only thing that motivates an employee is to create a particular self-actualised human behaviour that 'comes to know what his destiny is' (Maslow 1943, 1975). This demonstrates that the higher self-actualisation towards full human growth, and doing what is meaningful and worthwhile, is as important as the person's lower needs (Maslow 1975). This higher need supplies the employee with what they want or need in order for them to be motivated (Maslow 1954b).

In considering the influence of the need hierarchy, the present research examines the applicability of Maslow's theory. Therefore, it is crucial to illustrate the widespread application and influence of this hierarchy in order to justify why this research has taken an interest in it as a theory of motivation. To this end, the following discussions will demonstrate this widespread application and influence through portraying how it influenced the development of other need theories, as well as portraying the popularity of the theory itself.

Maslow's Influence on Need Theorists

Various theories have been proposed as being universal for predicting and understanding the categories of the needs that employees strive for within their motivation (Mohan and Ahlemann 2011), and which they aspire to fulfil as an indicator of prepotency or priority within their jobs (Gomes 2011). The content theories include Motivation-Hygiene by Herzberg, ERG by Alderfer, *X* and *Y* by McGregor and the three needs by McClelland, as mentioned above. While these theorists apparently propose differing universal theories or models of needs, most of them are connected and share commonality in many ways to the Hierarchy of Needs theory (Chiu and Lin 2004; Steel and König 2006). This is attributed to the fact that these models tend to provide a similar content in their assessments of employee needs (*ibid.*), and which is because they were restated, adopted, developed or modified from Maslow's model (Brown and Cullen 2006). Thus, it is essential to analyse the similarities of these theories with Maslow's in order to have a clearer understanding.

Herzberg's Model

Sandhya and Kumar (2011) note that Herzberg's model reveals a strong relation and similarity to that of Maslow's. Indeed, some of the needs identified by Herzberg indicate an obvious parallel with those identified by Maslow (Vránová 2011). For example, the hygiene needs in Herzberg correspond to Maslow's lower order needs. Likewise, the motivator needs in Herzberg represent the higher order needs in Maslow's model (Sahoo et al. 2011).

So, specifically, it cannot be said that the motivator needs that Herzberg identified in his model (e.g. recognition, achievement and growth) are compatible with the higher order needs in Maslow (e.g. esteem and self-actualisation) (Marques 2011). However, while Maslow's model was developed horizontally, Herzberg worked and extended Maslow's model vertically (Hunter 2012; Marques 2011). Such identified parallelism between the two models indicates the strong

influence of Maslow on Herzberg's model, given the connection and similarity between the two proposed frameworks (Carrigan 2010).

Alderfer's Need Theory

Another model that bears resemblance to that of Maslow in its critique, development and description of needs is Alderfer's (Alderfer 1977; Alderfer and Guzzo 1979). By collapsing Maslow's model of five needs into three (Gopalakrishnan 2012), Alderfer rearranged the concepts as ERG: *E* for existence, *R* for relatedness and *G* for growth (Jindal-Snape and Snape 2006).

Existence needs, such as air, money and hunger, are the equivalent of Maslow's physiological and safety needs. Relatedness needs, such as affiliation and friendships, correspond to Maslow's love and belongingness needs (Pettijohn II et al. 2012; Sahoo et al. 2011). Growth needs, such as the need to be creative and to attain full potential, represent Maslow's self-actualisation needs (Anyim et al. 2012; Sahoo et al. 2011).

Thus, Alderfer's need theory follows Maslow's need theory in its development by attempting to regroup the latter's model (Ajang 2001; Anyim et al. 2012; Sahoo et al. 2011).

Douglas McGregor Theory of *X* and *Y*

Douglas McGregor's Theory *X* and *Y* proposes another model of need that alludes to similarities with that of Maslow (Harell and Daim 2010; Hunter 2012). For instance, the 'lower order *X*' motive of McGregor proposes an approach similar to that of Maslow, which can be obtained by the deprivation of safety (security) needs (Maslow 1969; Taylor 1947). The Theory *X* assumes the lower order needs in Maslow's model are dominant among the employees (Barbača and Zekan 2011). Likewise, the 'higher order *Y*' motive can be achieved through recognising the esteem needs that employees strive to fulfil as per Maslow, such as the need to be treated responsibly and to accomplish things (Hofstede 1994; Taylor 1947). The Theory *Y*, therefore, assumes the higher order needs in Maslow's model are dominant among employees (Barbača and Zekan 2011).

McClelland's Need Theory

Finally, the model of needs which David McClelland offered to explain employee motivation seems to be consistent with, and similar to, that of Maslow (Taormina and Lao 2007). McClelland seems to have built on Maslow's work because his theorised need for affiliation could be characterised as Maslow's need for belonging and love (Jindal-Snape and Snape 2006; Mobbs and McFarland 2010; Yang 2011). Furthermore, McClelland's need for achievement could be viewed in a number of ways as a need that is to do with self-esteem or self-actualisation (Van Raaij and Wandwossen 1978). This is why scholars state that McClelland's need theory is another model that was influenced strongly by Maslow (Hunter 2012).

The discussion and examination of the suggested models of need have revealed that they tend to relate, to a large extent, to the need model proposed by Maslow (Gee and Burke 2001; Jindal-Snape and Snape 2006; Sahoo et al. 2011). This suggests that Maslow's hierarchy is a highly influential model of employee motivation. As such, it is a rationale for why the present book focuses on critical applicability of Maslow's theory.

The next section discusses and sheds light on the contribution, popularity and application of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in the fields of social sciences and management.

Maslow's Popularity in Social Sciences

A review of Maslow's works reveals extensive contributions in social sciences (Cooke et al. 2005) including studies that are most often referenced (Puttick 1997). Indeed, his contributions, particularly the Hierarchy of Needs, have informed and pervaded a wide range of literature, concerning developments (Bailey 2005), dispute resolutions (Duffy and Thomson 1992), terrorism (Schwing 2002), migration (Nicholson-Lord 2004), cross-cultural issues (Kickul et al. 2004), corporate reputations (Berens and von Riel 2004) and corrections among recidivists (Jones 2004). The model is applied in scholarly and media

publications (Dye and Weatherbee 2005; Porat 1977; Seeley 1992). It has been referred to in a wide range of publications from *Public Administration Review*, the *Journal of Research in Personality*, *Operations Research* and *Engineering Management Journal* to the *Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes* as well as *Sports Illustrated* (Strickland and Vaughan 2008).

The popularity and use of Maslow's model to numerous social topics has resulted in it being adopted within numerous diversified branches of knowledge such as psychology (Oleson 2004; Puttick 1997; Saeednia 2011; Trigg 2004; Yount 2009), education (Chew et al. 2008; Puttick 1997; Saeednia 2011) and economics (Oleson 2004; Trigg 2004). The upcoming discussion highlights Maslow's particular popularity across the field of business management.

Maslow's Popularity in Business Management

Maslow's model has gained particular interest in the field of business management. It has been part of many studies related to business ethics (Hatwick 1986), moral developments (Huang 2004), management of information technology (Coffee 2002; Pisello 2003), customer relations (Gentle 2003), managerial perspectives (Lucey et al. 2004), manufacturing and material practices of industrial societies (Luke 2004), management of health caring (Bardwell 2004), marketing decisions (Pincus 2004; Ritson 2004), allocation of organisational resources (Ivashchenko and Novikov 2006) and organisational behaviour (Cullen and Gotell 2002; Johns and Saks 2005; McShane 2004; Robbins and Langton 2003).

The model has been used to investigate issues of motivation across a wide spectrum. For example, among information technology professionals, the model was used to demonstrate that money itself is not sufficient motivator for IT professionals and thus their motivation can be highly improved and perfected by the provision of those needs advocated by Maslow and in particular the self-esteem need (Santossus 2004).

It was also used to explain motivational differences to analyse work satisfaction among IT personnel with regard to key characteristics (e.g. as age, marital status and annual salary) (Kuo and Chen 2004).

As Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs proposes a powerful means to motivation in which higher level needs, such as esteem and self-actualisation, can be designed and implemented for motivation, it was additionally employed to devise motivational mechanics for CEOs, seniors and directors of management corporations (Senter 2004). Again, Maslow's hierarchy has been seen as highly useful in offering a motivational framework that will get the Generation-Y workers to perform enthusiastically and deliver their best efforts, and it was similar to the study of Senter (2004) used to facilitate the motivation of a specific generation of employees (Focus 2004).

The discussion and examination of the model reveal its immense popularity (Aworemi et al. 2011). A review of the literature gives a strong indication of the *apparent face-validity* (Rausch et al. 2002) and testimony to the applicability and pervasiveness of this model into multi-disciplinary research fields such as psychology, public administration and business management (Dye and Weatherbee 2005; Strickland and Vaughan 2008). Many articles in the social science disciplines indicate, and are testimony to, the wide acceptance and strong validity of Maslow's model of need (Benson and Dundis 2003; Kenrick et al. 2010).

Due to such recognition and acceptance of Maslow's work, many researchers and practitioners have maintained and applied the model on the grounds that it provides a universal theory of motivation (Nwagbara and Akanji 2012; Matheson 2012). However, despite its wide acceptance, the theory has some limitations which are presented in the next section.

Criticisms of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The wide popularity and applicability of Maslow's theory is attributed to its simplicity and ease of application. However, counter-evidence paved the way for criticisms. Thus, this section aims to shed light on some of these limitations, namely:

1. deprivation/domination,
2. gratification/activation, and
3. self-actualisation.

Deprivation/Domination

A key criticism directed at Maslow's proposition is regarding deprivation/domination (Berl et al. 1984; Wahba and Bridwell 1976; Wicker et al. 1993). This proposition states that a greater or increased deprivation would lead to a greater or increased strength in a need. With this proposition in mind, there is an implicit claim that deficient needs will have dominance as long as they have not been satiated (Rajagopal and Abraham 2009; Van Raaij and Wandwossen 1978; Wicker et al. 1993).

However, many reviewers of this proposition could not find evidence of it (Berl et al. 1984; Wahba and Bridwell 1976). For example, some studies conducted between 1966 and 1973 attempted to test this proposition. Their findings showed that the deprivation/dominance concept either only enjoys partial support (i.e. when self-actualisation was treated as the central level of need) or no support (when applied to the other needs of security, social and esteem) (Berl et al. 1984; Wahba and Bridwell 1976).

The Need Strength Operationalisation

Studies on 'need strength operationalisation' in respect of the deprivation/dominance proposition attempted to measure the strength of a need through importance or intention (e.g. Alderfer 1969; Graham and Balloun 1973). The studies of Alderfer (1969) and Graham and Balloun (1973) particularly sought to illustrate the measure of the strength of a need through desire.

Alderfer's study attempted to test the needs theory of motivation (ERG theory) against Maslow's proposition (Alderfer 1969; Wahba and Bridwell 1976). Both Alderfer and Graham and Balloun used correlation to measure the strength or the satisfaction of a given need, with the former using cross-lagged correlations that yielded a significant indirect relation. Though the correlations were in the right direction, there was more support for the ERG theory of Alderfer than of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (ibid.). In contrast, the study conducted by Graham and Balloun indicated a minor support for the proposition that if there

is greater satisfaction of a need, the strength of that need becomes declines.

Hall and Nougaim (1968) attempted to test the strength of a need through a rating of importance to reduce the likelihood of measuring satisfaction. Therefore, they performed a study that utilised a longitudinal approach on a group of 49 trainee managers of AT&T (an American-based corporation), through interviewing them annually for a period of five years (Hall and Nougaim 1968; Wahba and Bridwell 1976). They found no strong evidence for the stated proposition of Maslow of there being a positive correlation between the satisfaction of a need and the importance of a need (Berl et al. 1984; Wahba and Bridwell 1976).

In addition, Hall and Nougaim's study attempted to test longitudinal changes concerning the satisfaction and importance of Maslow's five needs, with the expectation that the need satisfaction increases year-on-year and with a decrease in the importance of the need. However, they could not find support for this claim.

The longitudinal study of Lawler III and Suttle (1972), to test and validate the stated proposition of Maslow, was an attempt to address shortcomings in the study of Hall and Nougaim (1968). Their study attempted a causality test of correlation by administering Porter's Need Satisfaction Questionnaire to 187 managers in two corporations, so as to measure their need satisfaction and level of importance. This was a larger sample size than that used by Hall and Nougaim. The managers were split into two groups, and with the questionnaire being administered in two phases. It was applied to the first group at the beginning and then 6 months later, and to the second group at the beginning but then 12 months later.

Bearing in mind this study of Lawler III and Suttle was a longitudinal one, it was able to successfully compute both static and dynamic correlations, as well as cross-lagged correlation analysis. Overall, it showed no support for the stated proposition of Maslow (Berl et al. 1984; Lawler III and Suttle 1972; Wahba and Bridwell 1976).

Wicker et al. (1993) criticised studies such as those of Alderfer (1969) and Graham and Balloun (1973) for their utilisation of the measure of importance. According to Wicker et al. (1993), the findings

of those studies did not provide clear-cut results supporting the proposition that a need becomes stronger with increased deprivation due to some problematic methodological issues, which decreased and limited the significance and findings of those studies. To overcome such limitations, Wicker utilised different measures with the intention of testing the strength of a need via other appropriate measurements, such as the rating of intention rather than just solely relying on the traditional rating of importance. So the relationship between the strength of a need and the satisfaction of that need was measured and intended, e.g. to contrast ratings of importance with other ratings to find either correlations or partial correlations in support of the stated proposition. To do so, deprivation was measured inversely through ratings criteria of attainment, and the need strength or domination was represented directly by ratings criteria of importance, intention, concern and urgency.

The findings showed support for the stated proposition of Maslow in relation to the use of a measure of an intention rating. Thus, this contradicted the above studies that had concluded there was no strong empirical evidence for Maslow's theory of motivation. However, as the support was exclusive to the utilisation of intention ratings not importance ratings, Wicker et al. (1993) warned against the certainty of the findings. Importantly, they did draw attention to some of the methodological issues that they had encountered in their study, such as in relation to bias to ratings for being based on self-reported data.

The above discussion explained the first limitation on the need strength operationalisation. The following section focuses on the lack of establishing causality.

Causality

According to Wahba and Bridwell (1976), the assessment of the deprivation/dominance is one of causality. However, the studies discussed above, of Alderfer (1969), Graham and Balloun (1972), Hall and Nougaim (1968) and Lawler III and Suttle (1972), used correlation-type analyses, with limited validity.

With this limitation in mind, Wicker and Wiehe (1999) attempted a study based on an experimental approach to find support for the deprivation/dominance proposition. For their research, they formed forty students into two groups. The students in the first group each wrote an essay describing a past event in which they felt close to another individual. For the second group, the task was to write an essay that described a period of time in which each student wanted to get close to some individuals but was unsuccessful in doing so. For testing the effect of the essays on these students' needs, three measures were used, namely prior attainment, intention and importance. The results of this experimental study did indeed show support for Maslow's stated proposition.

Gratification/Activation

The First Operationalisation of the Gratification/Activation Proposition

Another proposition that Maslow made is that of gratification/activation, which indicates that a satisfied or gratified need would prompt the activation of the next need (Van Raaij and Wandwossen 1978; Wahba and Bridwell 1976). The operationalisation of this proposition was hypothesised in two ways. First, the greater or increased is the satisfaction with a given need, then the lesser is the importance and, second, the greater or increased is the level of importance of the next need (Berl et al. 1984).

However, studies that used this operationalisation yielded inconclusive results (Berl et al. 1984; Wahba and Bridwell 1976). The longitudinal research of Hall and Nougaim (1968) and of Lawler III and Suttle (1972) found no correlation between the gratification of a certain lower need and the strength of the other need.

As previously mentioned, Hall and Nougaim studied a group of managers for a period of five years. Changes in the need satisfaction of the subjects were measured on a yearly basis. The approach followed was a correlation of the current year's change with the succeeding year's

change (i.e. from one given year to the next one) pertaining to the need satisfaction and the strength of the next level of need in the same time frame (Berl et al. 1984; Wahba and Bridwell 1976). This study revealed that there was a low correlation, which indicated that there was no evidence for the greater or increased need satisfaction or for the greater or increased strength of need for the next level. Therefore, Hall and Nougaim rejected Maslow's proposition of gratification/activation. However, given that their study was of a small size, and that the interview was not specifically designed to test Maslow's assumptions, their findings should be interpreted in the light of these shortcomings (Berl et al. 1984; Wahba and Bridwell 1976).

Lawler III and Suttle (1972) hypothesised that the increase in need satisfaction at a given time that is in one period should lead to a decrease in the importance of that need in another period, together with an increase in the need importance for the next higher level of need. But the findings were not significant and they, along with Hall and Nougaim, ultimately concluded that there was no support for the gratification/activation proposition (Berl et al. 1984; Wahba and Bridwell 1976).

The Second Operationalisation of the Gratification/Activation Proposition

The second operationalisation of the gratification/activation proposition based on the review of 23 studies from 1962 to 1973 found that a move upwards on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs would be associated with a decrease in need satisfaction (Berl et al. 1984). They found that security and self-actualisation emerged as the least satiated needs, while the social one emerged as the most gratified need. The extent of the satisfaction of the other needs varied. On the basis of this variability, the results indicated no pattern. Consequently, they concluded that the findings are not consistent with Maslow's proposition of gratification/activation (Wahba and Bridwell 1976).

Thus, the gratification/activation proposition is not supported, with there being no evidence to support the theory that an increased need

satisfaction should lead to an increase in need strength in the next higher level of need. Berl et al. (1984) also argued strongly that care must be taken when considering the findings of the above studies.

The first caution surrounds the fact that gratification/activation operationalisation is not an accurate measure of the Hierarchy of Needs, since such an operationalisation was not made by Maslow. The second caution relates to the Porter's NSQ survey. This survey was intended primarily to measure the difference in the perceived deficiency in need fulfilments. According to Berl et al. (1984), this approach undermines validating Maslow's theory of motivation. With these limitations in mind, the focus of the next section is to discuss the issue of the existence of a distinct Hierarchy of Needs.

The Self-actualisation Need Complex

There seems to be confusion and criticism surrounding the motivational suitability of the self-actualisation need. The first doubt relates to concern that the concept is ill-defined and based on sheer wishful thinking on what an employee should be like. Part of this doubt is, in fact, illustrated in Maslow's own statement as follows:

In actual fact, most members of our society who are normal are partially satisfied in all their basic needs and partially unsatisfied in all their basic needs at the same time. A more realistic description of the hierarchy would in terms of decreasing percentages of satisfaction as we go up the hierarchy of prepotency. For instance, if I may assign arbitrary figures for the sake of illustration, it is as if the average citizen is satisfied perhaps 85 per cent in his physiological needs, 70 per cent in his safety needs, 50 per cent in his love needs, 40 per cent in his self-esteem needs, and 10 per cent in his self-actualisation needs. (Maslow 1970, pp. 53–54)

This confusion and doubt led to the criticism of the concept of self-actualisation. There was nothing normal in Maslow's approach in the selection of self-actualisers, let alone the slim and hard to reach 10% of actualisation (Robert et al. 1984). An obvious interpretation of Maslow's statement is that self-actualisation is an exclusive concept and

only applicable to the highly privileged who are perceived to be capable, theoretically, of self-actualising. Indeed, the approach of Maslow is a testimony to the ill definition, i.e. that of exclusiveness.

The definition of self-actualisation according to Maslow means maximising one's potential, capabilities and talents (Buttle 1989). Self-actualisation is to be everything a person is capable of becoming. The self-actualiser has a perfect understanding of reality and does not have further needs. It is something that every individual would want to be and believe in. Though in applying the concept of self-actualisation to the work environment, Maslow never gave any justification of why he had selected highly evolved figures to explain what they understood by such a concept (Buttle 1989; Gibson and Teasley 1973).

With respect to the selection of self-actualisers, Maslow chose individuals who happened to be exceptionally fulfilled and were achievers with creativity. Such a selection includes figures like Abraham Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt, Einstein and Spinoza (Littrell 2011; Neher 1991). Obviously, the selection of self-actualisers was predetermined and limited to a favoured proportion of the American population on the basis of their distinguished traits (*ibid.*). This predetermined and favoured selection, according to Neher (1991), has had a bearing on the concept of self-actualisation and has undermined its suitability.

While the selection of the highly fulfilled individuals was predetermined and biased, from a methodological perspective nothing was scientific in terms of investigating these individuals with the aim of the formulation of the concept of self-actualisation. Maslow's illustrations of self-actualising persons were based on talking to, and reading the biographies of, a few famous and highly educated figures (e.g. Abraham Lincoln and Eleanor Roosevelt). There can also be concern about the small sample size. For the critics, there is nothing scientific about the validity of self-actualisation (Littrell 2011; Neher 1991). Thus, Wahba and Bridwell (1976) refer to Maslow's theory as a derived one.

Finally, many are critical of the shape of the Hierarchy of Needs with self-actualisation being described as the apex of the hierarchy. This chosen hierarchy is a clear demonstration of those individuals who embrace individualist perspectives (Hofstede 1984; Kenrick et al. 2010; Pearson

and Podeschi 1999). Indeed, only individuals raised in individualistic societies would regard the need of self-actualisation as an ultimate need. The excessive individualism would make such a hierarchy largely only relevant to individualistic societies, particularly the USA where Maslow was born and where he carried out his research, and other societies such as the UK (ibid.). Consequently, critics often see the Hierarchy of Needs as something representing Western cultural values and that may be in conflict with non-Western ones, i.e. Eastern cultural values. This is indeed a highly decisive factor in undermining the Hierarchy of Needs (Hofstede 1984).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has offered a critical review of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory and its various limitations. Among the numerous theories of motivation, it has shown that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has received a great deal of acknowledgement and acceptance. The hierarchy assumes that employees have needs at work and attempt to satisfy them. As a consequence of this, the motivation of an employee is dependent on the satisfaction of the needs (Travieso 2014).

According to Maslow, the needs are arranged in a hierarchical order of importance (physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualisation). Maslow further makes the claim that these needs are universal (Noltemeyer et al. 2012; Tay and Diener 2011). In addition, there are certain propositions and claims about the needs such as deprivation/domination, gratification/activation and of the apex being self-actualisation.

Wahba and Bridwell's (1976) review of the results of 10 studies, with the purpose of empirically testing the proposition of deprivation/domination, found largely no empirical evidence for the claim that the need with the utmost deficiency tends to be the need with the utmost domination (Berl et al. 1984).

However, when self-actualisation was treated as the central and important need, partial support for Maslow's theory was obtained. In

turn, the end results yielded an uncritical acceptance of the deprivation/ domination concept when applied to some of the needs of Maslow's Hierarchy (i.e. of esteem, social and security) (Berl et al. 1984; Wahba and Bridwell 1976).

In addition to reviewing those studies, Wahba and Bridwell (1976) reviewed Maslow's actual proposition of gratification/activation, which was operationalised in two different ways. With respect to the first operationalisation, i.e. that a satisfied need decreased in its importance and causing an increase in importance of the next need, their results indicated that there is no correlation between the satisfaction of a certain need and the increase in the importance of the next (Berl et al. 1984). With the second operationalisation, i.e. that moving towards a higher level of need on Maslow's Hierarchy would result in a decrease in the mean level of need satisfaction, the results again were not in agreement with the gratification/activation proposition as no pattern was detected due to variations in the satisfaction of the needs (Berl et al. 1984; Wahba and Bridwell 1976).

Finally, for many critics, self-actualisation is nothing but wishful thinking. For Neher (1991), Maslow has endorsed self-actualisation as something that everybody should aspire for simply because it is worthy of attainment. The type of self-actualised people Maslow cited in his sample indicates strongly the exclusiveness of the concept to elitist and highly individualistic cultures. Thus, due to this exclusivity, many people have raised questions about the suitability of this motivator as well as the existence of five universal needs that are ordered in a hierarchical manner (Van Raaij and Wandwossen 1978; Wahba and Bridwell 1976).

These studies suggest that at least a few of Maslow's propositions do not have sufficient empirical grounding. As such, his Hierarchy of Needs has been challenged on various fronts, not in the least because it just reflects a Western-oriented point of view. Despite this, Maslow's model seems to be hugely popular in academic texts and managerial practice and has considerable influence on need theories and social sciences. Due to lack of critical contextual investigations, it is also popular and influential in Arab states. In fact, there is a lack of critical evaluation of this model in Arabic literature. The present research addresses this gap.

Indeed, it is the limited empirical evidence of the universality of Maslow's model which should be of particular concern to researchers of motivation. Satisfaction is a relative concept which differs from person to person and context to context. Therefore, it is imperative that such researchers undertake empirical verification of Maslow's hierarchical order of needs in diverse national, industrial and organisational contexts. This is important given that the majority of the empirical studies on Maslow, which have actually been undertaken, have been done in Western organisations and contexts. Therefore, it would be beneficial for there to be a future focus on organisations which are located in developing and underdeveloped countries.

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