

Preface

One of the most influential and oft cited theories of motivation is Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which suggests that all humans are motivated by needs and preferences that are fundamental and universal. The hierarchy is often portrayed in the shape of a pyramid with the most fundamental levels of needs at the bottom and the need for self-actualisation and self-transcendence at the top. It remains a popular framework in sociology, management, psychology and other disciplines (Taormina & Gao, 2013). While many studies have attested to the wide applicability and relevance of this theory, some other legitimate studies indicate that the theory is limited in terms of its universal applicability because of its ethnocentric (Anglo-Saxon), individualistic and hierarchical orientation (Kanfer & Chen, 2016). The needs and preferences of those in individualistic societies may be more self-centred, focusing on the self, with self-actualisation being the apex of individual preference. In collectivistic societies, the needs of acceptance and community may outweigh the needs of the self. Questions have also been raised about the ranking of needs that Maslow described or about the existence of a definite hierarchy at all.

In light of these differing points of view, this book investigates the extent to which Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is applicable to organisations in a Middle Eastern context. The empirical study was undertaken at two universities in Saudi Arabia. One of the universities has a devout religious orientation while the other is, relatively, moderately religious. The findings reveal a Hierarchy of Needs that prioritises social needs and is not the same as that proposed by Maslow. Furthermore, there are differences in the order of these needs across religious practice and gender. This book offers a refined order of such needs in the higher education sector in Saudi Arabia, reflecting contextual influences of religion, culture and gender.

Saudi culture is a blend of Islamic teachings and Arab traditions. Islam is the state religion, and Saudis, in general, give a lot of importance to religious practice. Islam calls for complete obedience and submission to the will of God (Allah) whose oneness (*tauhid*) is of paramount importance. Muslims refer to each other as brothers and sisters in faith, owing to the example of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) when he migrated from Mecca to Medina and declared that each of the immigrants from Mecca shall be accepted as a brother by one of the residents in Medina. The Islamic tradition and the Saudi culture are known to be collectivistic, and Islamic teachings enjoin individuals to be aware of and concerned about the needs of the people around them in domestic and communal settings.

In his study of cultures, Hofstede (1984, p. 152–153) categorised Saudi Arabia as a low individualist society alongside India, Turkey, Japan, Iran and Argentina. Among 40 countries ranging from a low individualism index of 12 (Venezuela) to a high index of 91 (USA), Saudi Arabia had an individualism index of 41.

The economy of Saudi Arabia and other oil-rich countries shot up with the oil boom of the early 1970s (Bjerke & Al-Meer, 1993). Today, the country has an oil-based economy with strong government control over major economic activities. It possesses 18% of the world's proven petroleum reserves and ranks as the largest exporter of petroleum (OPEC, 2017). In recent decades, the government has sought to transform the country into a modern economy, with a focus on industry, agriculture and construction, while maintaining the country's

traditional Islamic values and customs. About two-thirds of workers employed in the country are foreigners, most of whom work in the private sector (House, 2012). In 2014, the Saudi Government claimed it had doubled the number of Saudi citizens working in the private sector to 1.5 million. This compares to the 10 million foreign expatriates working in the kingdom (McDowall, 2014).

An in-depth knowledge of individuals and their environment can be advantageous to both local and foreign employers and managers. This also includes a recognition of contextual challenges. For example, a Saudi business student is generally taught management through American textbooks (Bjerke & Al-Meer, 1993). It is important to realise the pros and cons of using these books in an extremely dissimilar setting and taught through Western educated professors. With respect to human resource management, in particular, theories and models conceived and tested in the USA, including those related to employee motivation, may not be fully relevant or applicable in Saudi Arabia and other non-Western contexts. Accordingly, the focus of this book is on developing a contextual understanding of employee motivation in the higher education sector in Saudi Arabia.

This book is distinct in its effort to study employee motivation in the higher education sector in a unique cultural setting. While several studies have been conducted on the subject, few are contextualised and even fewer have a focus on non-western settings.

The book responds to the call for providing alternative conceptual and theoretical models, other than those devised in the Anglo-Saxon World, to investigate and explain employee motivation. In this case, the focus is on understanding motivations in a collectivistic, highly religious and conservative society of the Middle East, using two case studies of universities in Saudi Arabia. Taking into account the growing interest in that region of the world, associated to the development of higher education and research in oil-rich countries, and the interest of Western universities in establishing branch campuses there, this book may be particularly helpful to an international audience.

The alternative perspective on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs can open venues to a new conceptual understanding of needs and motivations in non-Western societies.

The prospective audience for this book include management practitioners and investors seeking to operate in the Middle Eastern economies, practitioners, scholars and research students interested in organisational psychology, policy-makers, motivation experts, higher education leaders and administrators including branch campus directors, and journalists.

This book could be used as a reference for undergraduate and master's level courses in human resource management, culture studies, globalisation studies, international management, cross-cultural management and work studies. This book could be used as a core-text or reference for such courses.

Research on human resource management and higher education is growing to the mounting challenges that a global world and competitive economies have been bringing. In terms of human resource management, it is increasing because managing, structuring, training and organising teams combining the global and the local are increasingly necessary and challenging at the same time. The complexity of it has to deal with a wide range of issues, including the legal, cultural, social, political, religious and economic. The focus from a higher education perspective will warrant probably even more interest because of the global demand for tertiary education and the associated growth in international faculty and student mobility.

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