



Ethnic Differences and Motivation Based on Maslow's Theory on Iranian Employees

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Abstract

Background: The aim of this study was to assess the levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory had been fulfilled and to compare the Maslow's hierarchy of needs among Iranian different ethnic groups at Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS).

Methods: This research was a descriptive-analytical study which conducted among administrative employees of Tehran University of Medical Sciences; Tehran, Iran. The structured questionnaire consisted of 20 questions and demographic details. Each question had 4 parts to measure Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The questionnaire was distributed randomly among 133 employees to fill-up the demographic details and the other questions. Data was collected and analyzed by SPSS software, and One Way ANOVA, T-test, Spearman and Mann Whitney statistical methods.

Results: TUMS ethnic groups of the employees placed most importance on Basic, Self-esteem and Self-actualization. In addition, we found that Persians, Mazandaranians, and Turks ethnic groups, scored the most mean for Maslow's hierarchical needs compared to the other ethnic groups.

Conclusion: Basic needs and safety needs is available amongst the different ethnic groups in Iran. As though, self-actualization needs are ultimate human goal, Iranian employees' ethnic groups pay emphasis on these needs. We believe that new structures and work practices such as prevailing cultural values and beliefs of the society or the organizations must be explored if Iranian-based organizations want to remain responsive to the needs of the workplace.

Keywords: Maslow's theory, Motivation, Iranian employees, Ethnicity groups

Introduction

Maslow's hierarchy of human needs theory that is highest levels of self-actualization and excellence in their nature, may be one of his most important roles in study of human behavior and motivation (1). Maslow's hierarchy theory can be used to explain the kinds of people seek the levels of development (2). Maslow's theory explains what people need to do when they need to enjoy themselves (3). This theory stated that all of people have 5 different classified needs that managers need to respect and follow in daily work (4). By these needs, employees will be more efficient and

effective in their work and can be motivated by managers if they look for Maslow's theory (5). Managers developed employees' motivation when they applied useful guidelines (6,7).

There were more differentiations on the relations between culture, ethnicity, and motivation (8). More theories that are specific are needed to explain differential effects of ethnic minority groups of caregivers (9). Moreover, Bryant and Graham reviewed contemporary research on achievement motivation in ethnic minority youth (10). However, Postiglione focused the expectancy-value of

motivation, as a model that defined the crucial constructs, including ability beliefs, expectancies for success, and the components of subjective task values (11). Iran is an ethnically diverse country, and interethnic relations and generally amicable. The main ethno-linguistic minority groups in Iran are the Persians, Azerys (Turks), Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, Turkmen, Mazandarani and Gilaki. Ethnicity/race in Iran breaks down as follows; Persian 51%, Azeri 24%, Gilaki and Mazandarani 8%, Kurds 7%, Arab 3%, Lur 2%, Baluch 2%, Turkmen 2%, and others 1% (12). The historical background and anthropological origin of these groups have been subjects of numerous research works. The above groups have specific history, culture, customs, and language (13).

This research was aimed to assess the levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and compare the needs of Iranian different ethnic groups at Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) mainly the Persian, Kurds, Turks, Lurs, Turkmen, Baluch, Gilaki and Mazandarani people in Iran.

Methods

The research design for this study employed a descriptive-analytical method. The target population of this study included administrative employees at TUMS, in Tehran, Iran. Employees in this study were of different categories, i.e. different ages, gender, degrees, responsibilities, and years of experiences. The structured questionnaire consisted of 20 questions in total and demographic information. Each question had 4 parts to measure Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The scoring for each set of the five (needs) motives range from 1 to 5 points. The most important or relevant response for the employees scored 5 marks, whilst the least important or least relevant response scored 1 mark. With reference to Maslow's theory, different questions assessed basic physiological needs, safety/security needs, social needs, self-esteem needs and self-actualization needs.

The standardized questionnaire distributed by stratified randomly method among 133 employees that calculated by Cochran formula and were collected after a week. The respondents were asked

to fill-up the demographic details and the other questions. Data was collected and analyzed by SPSS software, and one-way ANOVA, *t*-test, Spearman and Mann-Whitney statistical methods.

Results

Totally, 104 (78.2%) questionnaires were filled up by female employees and 29 (21.8%) filled up by males. 35.3% of these employees were 30-39 years old, and most of them had BSc. Degree. Further, 63 (47.4%) of questionnaires were filled-up by Persian, 35(26.3%) by Turks, 13(9.8) by Gilak, 8(6%) by Lurs and Mazandarani and 6 (4.5%) were filled-up by Kurds ethnic people (Fig. 1). Amongst TUMS headquarters employees without regards to ethnicity, placed most emphasis on the Basic needs, Self-esteem needs and less emphasis on the Self-actualization needs (Table 1). Amongst the Persians and Mazandarani ethnic groups, placed most emphasis on the basic needs (mean 9.59, 9.25) (Fig. 2). Amongst the Lurs and Mazandarani ethnic groups, placed most important on Security/Safety needs (mean 8.75) (Fig. 3). The Mazandarani in this research gave the highest score and importance (mean 8.62) to Social needs (Fig. 4). Even though, the Persians paid emphasis on Self-esteem (mean 9.59) (Fig. 5). However, Mazandarani ethnic group felt that self-actualization needs were most important (mean 7.62) (Fig. 6).

Table 1: Mean scores of Maslow's needs in TUMS employees

Type of need	Number	Mean	Min	Max	SD
Basic	133	9	-10	12	2.9
Safety/security	133	8	-10	12	2.97
Social	133	8	-8	12	3.3
Self-esteem	133	10	-10	12	3.41
Self-actualization	133	6	-6	12	3.63

It is a point of importance that Gilak ethnicity scored the lowest mean for Maslow's hierarchical needs compared to the other Iranian ethnic groups.

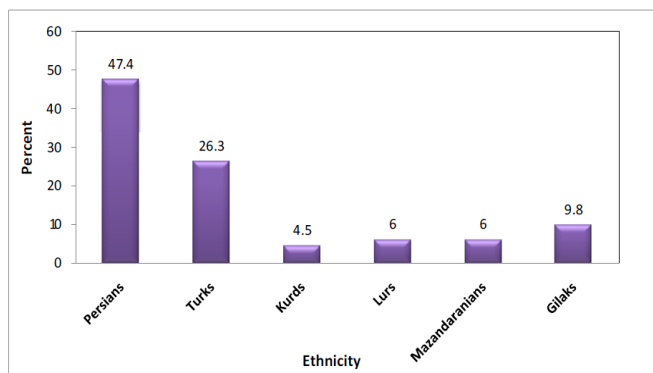


Fig. 1: Relative frequency of TUMS employees' different ethnic groups

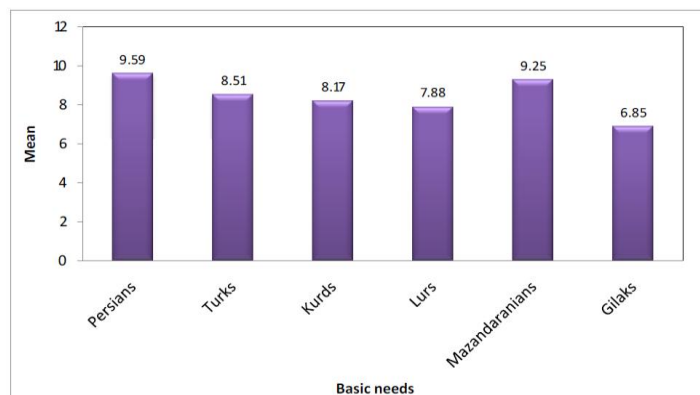


Fig. 2: Mean scores of the Maslow's Basic need of ethnic groups in TUMS employees

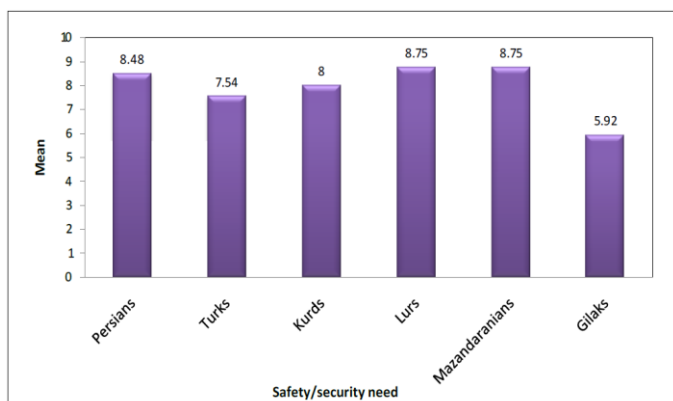


Fig. 3: Mean scores of the Maslow's Safety/security need of different ethnic groups in TUMS employees

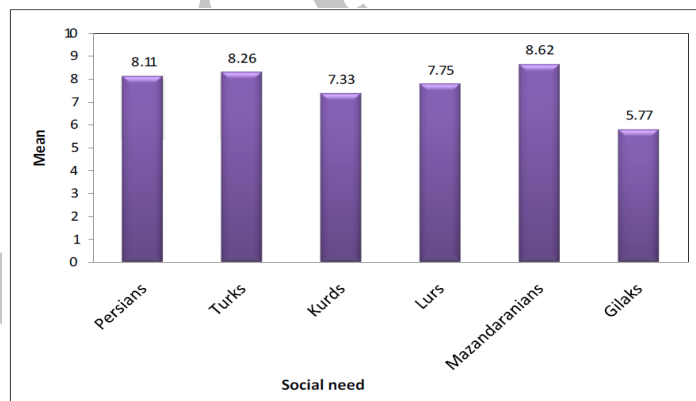


Fig. 4: Mean scores of the Maslow's Social need of different ethnic groups in TUMS employees

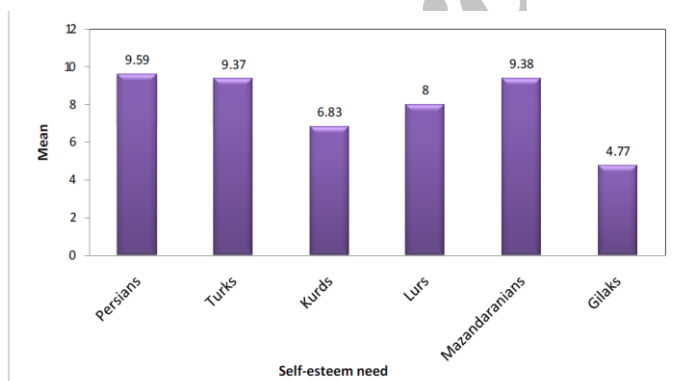


Fig. 5: Mean scores of the Maslow's Self-esteem of different ethnic groups in TUMS employees

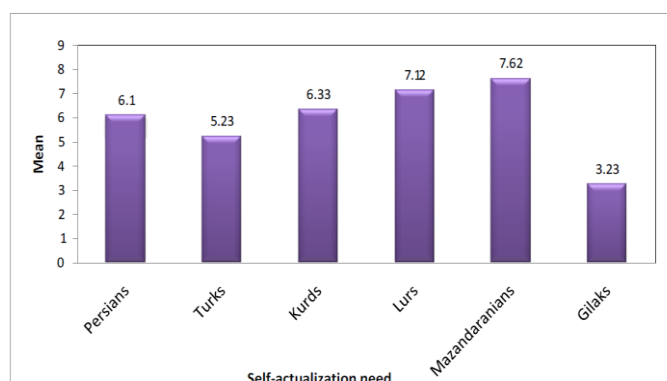


Fig. 6: Mean scores of the Maslow's Self-actualization need of different ethnic groups in TUMS employees

Among the Iranian ethnic groups, Persians, Mazandaranians, and Turks scored the most mean for Maslow's hierarchical needs compared to the other ethnic groups.

There was significant correlation between Basic, Security, Self-esteem and Self-actualization needs with degrees levels among Iranian ethnic groups. Therefore, among the Persians, Basic and Security needs decreased with increased of degrees level ($P=0.003$) and advancement of job responsibility ($P=0.011$). Moreover, among the Turks, Self-actualization need decreased with increased of degrees level ($P=0.003$). In addition, among the Mazandaranians, Self-esteem need decreased with increased of age ($P=0.012$).

Discussion

All over the world, organizations need to know which factors motivate their employees and which does not. Of all the functions that a manager performs, motivating employees is very probably the most important function (14). The key to motivating employees is what motivates them and which kind of motivation program is available based on those needs (15).

In the late 1960's, Abraham Maslow suggested a hierarchical theory of human needs that focused on human potential believing that humans strive to reach the highest levels of their capabilities (16). His theory of human needs and motivation found that people fulfilled Physical, Security, Social, Esteem, and Self-actualization needs in an orderly ascending fashion, supported that individuals may never satisfy all of their needs, especially needs at the highest level (17). It is important to note that as we move from one culture to another, we observe systematic differences, which may be viewed as important factors for effective motivation (18). There are significant clues to the widening gap between Iranian ethnic groups' communities. Therefore, in Iran, many things depend on the value-system and culture for individuals to be motivated (19). A career choice in working had a great deal to do with the level of achievement an individual wanted in motivation (20).

We showed that amongst Iranian different ethnic groups, placed most importance on Basic, Self-esteem and Self-actualization of Maslow's hierarchical needs theory. Previous data sets have not had sufficient power to test these development trends among countries (21). There is no clear evidence for Maslow's deprivation/domination proposition except with regard to Self-actualization (22). Analysis for two factors resulted in separation of the security needs from the higher needs in public and private organizations across Canada (23).

In addition, we found that amongst the Persians ethnic group placed most emphasis on the Basic needs and Self-esteem. Mazandaranians paid emphasis on Basic needs, Security/Safety needs, and Self-actualization. As the employees advance; their need for safety decreases, and the need for Esteem and Self-actualization increase (24). We also found in our study that safety needs decreased with advancement of headquarters employees' responsibility among Persians ethnic group.

Changes in Maslow's hierarchy of needs related to age differences (25). This was compatible with our study that showed Self-esteem need decreased with increased of age. Although, some research instruments have been provided to measure needs in Maslow's hierarchy, either most of them deal exclusively with one component or they do not measure all of the Basic needs (26).

A study by Sing and Abdullah discussed how different ethnic groups demonstrated motivational behaviors, and reported motivation has been linked to the sharing of common values, so that employees are inspired, empowered and committed to organizational vision and mission (27).

Iranian employees placed less emphasis on the Self-actualization needs without regard to ethnicity differences, but amongst the ethnic groups of these employees, placed most importance on Self-actualization needs. It is important to note, the levels that received the highest scores, are the most important needs identified by the employees at TUMS. The lowest scores show that these needs have been relatively well satisfied. It could however also mean that the needs with the lower

scores are those need that ore de-emphasized by the employees during the time of the survey.

In Iran, Basic needs are available to most of population and Safety needs is seen through racial harmony amongst the different ethnic groups. Social needs, in fact, form a core for the existence of the majority of the Iranian employees. These needs are mostly fulfilled. Self-actualization, according to Maslow's theory, is the ultimate human goal. Even though, Iranian employees ethnic groups paid emphasis on the Self-actualization needs, they however felt that Basic needs were equally important which comes as surprise as in Iran and are available to most of the population. To meet the strategic challenges of the vision Iran 2025, many areas and values of importance have been identified. Briefly, among the more frequency stated are as follows: quality, productivity, innovativeness, integrity, accountability, professionalism, training of employees, discipline, management responsibility and adequate quality system. Therefore, human resource development plays a very important role in training. It indirectly motivates employees and improves the organizations and country's future to achieve its mission and goals. Even though, local values play an important role in determining the corporate culture, but it is widely believed that the behavior of senior managers and leaders in an organization determines the corporate culture and value system of that organization.

Conclusion

We believe that new ways of getting things done must be explored if Iranian-based organizations want to remain responsive to the needs of the workplace. However, one needs to bear in mind that some of these new structures and work practices may run counter to the prevailing cultural values and beliefs of the society or the organization.

Limitation of the study

One of the main limitations of the present study is that, it was conducted at one specific time. A longitudinal study would be useful, although li-

imited resources make it difficult. Second, the employees were conducted by questionnaire. Although, it is possible that this information collection process is convenient for the present research, but it might have introduced into the results of the research.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication or falsification, double publication, redundancy, etc. have been completely observed by author.

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