

A SPIRITUAL PATH PARADIGM IN A HOLISTIC FRAMEWORK OF MOTIVATION

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EFFECTIVE management of a firm in a globally interdependent environment requires theories of motivation that are appropriate for a variety of cultures. Spirituality in the workplace has gained popularity in recent years. Starting with Maslow's model of the hierarchy of needs, this paper presents a framework for understanding motivation of an individual in a holistic way. To complement existing material self- and social self-focused motivation theories, this paper proposes a spiritual paradigm, based on Buddhist, Hindu and Jain traditions, which focuses on the spiritual self of an individual. Implications of cultural underpinnings and religious traditions on motivating an individual are discussed.

Introduction

Globalization of markets and economies has raised many questions about managing a firm. Are there any global principles of management? Is there convergence emerging in management theories and practices, which can apply to understanding human behavior across nations and cultures? The search for pan-cultural and global management is intensified as multinationals compete for growth and dominance through efficiency. Forming strategic alliances and mergers across the globe would simplify and accelerate if universal global management theories were applicable in coordinating the efforts of multinationals.

Motivation has been a subject of scientific inquiry and the center point of management in theory and practice. The effectiveness of management and the success of organizations depend heavily on motivated employees. However, research on motivation remains a set of interesting, useful, but partial effort to apprehend a body of phenomena too complex for any single theory yet to capture (Rainey, 1993). This paper presents a holistic approach to motivating a person by addressing three components of an individual, namely material, social and spiritual.

As global interdependence and competition become pervasive in every business and as corporations seek opportunities and talents with a multicultural staff, motivating employees becomes complex and challenging. The direct implication of the process of globalization is that cultural characteristics need to be taken into consideration when implementing managerial techniques. Increased attention to culture in recent motivation research reflects the growing acknowledgement of the importance of culture in management (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999). However, we are lacking a systematic approach for a more holistic investigation of cross-cultural motivation.

Perhaps the important and universal aspect of being human is that people in close proximity share a specific and often differentiating set of characteristics, such as lifestyle patterns, approaches to problem solving, values, worldviews, beliefs and norms of behavior. Thus they are shaped by their culture, which affects their behavior. Therefore, developing a theory of motivation in a specific cultural context is not only desirable, but also necessary for a number of reasons. First, the multinational and multicultural workforce has become a way of life in many organizations. It has added a dynamic dimension to the complexity of managing a firm. Second, current theories of motivation are not effective in all cultures (Haire, Ghisellian & Porter, 1966), and all management and professional development requires some global intercultural education and skill (Harris and Moran, 1996).

Finally, cultures and nations are not synonymous, since many nations, such as the United States of America, India and China, have a multicultural society. Hence, this paper will focus on cultural and religious traditions rather than national characteristics.

Although we may observe certain overt behavioral changes in a person from a particular culture, the fundamental deep-rooted values of that culture may change at a glacier pace over a long period of a society's evolution. Hence, ascribing an antecedent motivator to a specific behavior may be misleading if the cultural underpinnings, such as spiritual aspects of a way of life, are not taken into account. This paper presents a spiritual path paradigm based on Buddhist, Hindu and Jain traditions.

The fundamental underpinnings of a culture are deep-rooted beliefs, values and norms of behavior, which are shared by the people in that culture. Hence, an effective theory of motivation needs to incorporate these fundamental underpinnings of a person's culture and religious tradition when studying the behaviors of individuals in that culture. The models presented in this paper offer a window into understanding human motivation under different cultural settings.

Culture and the Individual

Each human being has a personal as well as a social self (James, 1890). So one would expect that a person's motivation would be affected by both of those selves. As James (1890) notes, everyone's personal self has three elements, namely material, psychological and spiritual, or body, mind and spirit. The social self has two components, namely interpersonal and cultural. Both selves and their components are symbiotically connected into a whole. However, it is the personal self that each individual is born with, while the social self is acquired through the environment. The personal self may also change as an individual learns from his or her environment and develops the social self. The culture surrounding the individual is a constant and powerful teacher that affects an individual's social self and personal self, especially the spiritual component of the personal self — i.e. a person's concept about reasons for being in this life. The motivations and affects associated with the spiritual component of the personal self may be primary and hierarchically above those associated with all other selves. Enhancement of the spiritual self may have a great deal more prepotency for human behavior than enhancement of all other selves. As James points out, the spiritual self is the "self of all the other selves" (1890). The spirituality and value system of a person's culture are intertwined at a deep, complex and profound level.

Given the importance of culture in the formation of the self, there is no meaningful way to speak about individuals abstracted from their particular communities or social contexts. Human beings are incomplete and therefore unable to function adequately unless embedded in a specific culture (Cushman, 1990). Culture refers to values and beliefs shared by individuals within a group or society. It consists of ideals, values, and assumptions about life that are widely shared among people and that guide specific behaviors. (Brislin, 1993). The enduring attachments and commitments to the social environment help define a person. Therefore, culture affects the behavior of a person and should be directly addressed in a motivation framework or theory.

The culture of a group may be described by the group's shared values and cognitive schemas (Triandis, 1989). Members of the group use similar criteria for evaluating a sense of self-worth. In an individualistic culture, the normative imperative is to become independent of others, self-reliant, and to discover and express one's unique attributes. It reinforces the formation of the independent self, whose behavior is organized and made meaningful primarily by reference to one's own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings, and actions of others. On the other hand, in a collectivist culture, the normative imperative is to become interdependent, harmonious, and reliable. It reinforces the formation of the interdependent self as part of an encompassing social relationship, recognizing that one's behavior is primarily determined, contingent on, and organized by what the person perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Culture, Values and Theories of Motivation

Present theories of motivation in general, and work motivation in particular, do not take cultural factors into direct consideration. Their emphasis has been on exogenous motivational factors that can be

manipulated by the organization, such as incentives, goal-setting techniques, and job redesign (Rainey, 1993). Endogenous factors that examine process or mediating variables and help explain motivation have been downplayed. However, numerous cross-cultural studies on work values and work motivation clearly demonstrate that there are significant differences among cultures (Hofstede, 1991). Motivational techniques that are congruent with the value system of a culture are positively evaluated and are most likely to facilitate behavior that leads to self-satisfaction (Erez & Earley, 1993). Therefore, culture needs to be directly addressed in models of motivation.

People in a culture share a set of values. According to Locke (1991), the complete motivational sequence consists of six steps: Needs- values- goals and intentions- performance- rewards- satisfaction. Values help transform needs into goals and intentions for specific situations. Values also determine what actions will be perceived to be personally rewarding and satisfying. Therefore, values of a culture ought to be the foundation in a theory of motivation.

Rokeach (1973) defines values as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. Values are motivational in two ways. Instrumental values are motivating because the idealized modes of conduct they are concerned with are perceived to be instrumental in attaining desired end-states. Terminal values are motivating because they represent the super goals beyond immediate, biologically urgent goals. Unlike the more immediate goals, these super goals do not seem to be periodic in nature; neither do they seem to satiate—we seem to be forever doomed to strive for those ultimate goals without quite ever reaching them. Terminal values may represent the ultimate purpose in life. Values also help us define and reinforce our sense of self. It is a fundamental irony that people behave in accordance with the dictates of their culture without, for the most part, recognizing the underpinnings that orient their conduct (Issac, 1993).

Individualist and collectivist values of a culture are extensively used as a foundation of research in international and intercultural studies (Erez & Earley, 1993; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, 1990). Collectivist values were found to be high in China, while individualist values were found to be highest in the USA (Hofstede, 1980). In China, serving society is highly valued relative to achieving personal gains. In the United States, personal achievement and material gains are highly valued. India was also found to have a relatively high individualist value score. However, India's predominantly Hindu culture emphasizes spiritual gain at an individual level over personal material gains. Nowhere else has the hunger for philosophy been so strong as in India (Durant, 1963). However, it should be recognized that people in each of the above cultural contexts have some elements of all three values, but with different emphasis and interpretations. People following the Hindu way of life value material gains and social contributions to some degree, people in China who are collectivists also value material and spiritual accomplishments to some degree, and, people in the USA who are individualists and pursue personal material gains also value social contributions and spirituality to some degree (Radhakrishnan, 1961). But the cultural underpinnings in each of these cultures emphasize a specific set of values.

The three values, individualist to gain personal material success; collective to serve society; and individualist to gain personal spiritual success offer three different cultural contexts for developing a framework of motivation of an individual in a holistic way.

A Framework of Motivation

Several theories of motivation (e.g. Herzberg, 1981; Maslow, 1970; McClelland, 1961; Vroom, 1964) are based on individual human need/want satisfaction. A need is defined as “an internal state of disequilibrium or deficiency which has the capacity to energize or trigger a behavioral response” (Steers & Porter, 1991). Extrinsic and intrinsic motivators; lower and higher level needs; and achievement, affiliation and power needs are bases of theories of motivation focused on self-interested and self-serving aspects of an individual. Goal setting is also an individually focused motivation theory. It demonstrates that specific and difficult goals lead to high performance levels if the individual accepts those goals, and if feedback is provided (Locke & Latham, 1990). Useful as the current theories of motivation are, they have limited effectiveness in understanding a person's behavior because they do not take the cultural heritage and values of an individual into consideration. For a

motivation theory to make sense of the varieties of human behavior, it must take into account the cultural context in which the behavior occurs (Munro, Schumaker & Carr, 1997).

Probably one of the most popular theories of motivation is Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1968). It assumes that all people in the world have the same needs and that there is a specific priority for each need (Maslow, 1970). This need hierarchy model holds that all human needs can be grouped into five categories: physiological, security, affiliation, self-esteem, and self-actualization. These needs vary in their relative prepotency or urgency for survival, arranging them in a sort of hierarchy. As the most pre-potent (lower level) needs such as physiological and security become reasonably satisfied, the less potent (higher level) needs such as self-esteem and self-actualization become increasingly important in causing a person's behavior.

The Individualistic – Materialistic Paradigm

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is based on the individualistic, middle-class values of the United States, which puts physiological needs at the lowest level and self-actualization and autonomy at the top in the rank order (Hofstede, 1984). In that cultural context, the theory emphasizes and directly focuses on material, psychological and interpersonal elements of a personal self. In addition, cross-cultural research has indicated that different cultures tend to have a different hierarchy of needs (Ambrose and Kulik, 1999). Thus, Maslow's individual-based theory does not seem to be universal. In fact, the global approach to motivation based on such a theory may be quite counter productive and ineffective in a multicultural global market place. However, Maslow's approach toward developing a theory of motivation does provide a valuable foundation for generating culture-specific theories of motivation. Although self-actualization may involve self-development and growth of a person, it does not explicitly and fully address social self and spiritual self components of an individual.

The Social Interaction Paradigm

Professors Gibson and Wu (1991) presented one such application of the cultural underpinning based theory of motivation. They used I-Ching ("the Book of Change") to formulate their Social Interaction Paradigm of Human Cooperative Behavior that provides a Chinese Culture specific model of motivation. The I-Ching philosophy emphasizes that humans are primarily social beings with social responsibilities throughout their lives. Unlike the individualistic foundation of Maslow's hierarchy that emphasizes the individual's needs, competitiveness and talents, Gibson and Wu's hierarchy emphasizes achieving the greatest good for social welfare through group effort and cooperation. Gibson and Wu have added four more levels of needs or stages to Maslow's theory of needs. These additional stages are social awareness, social contribution, social altruism, and finally, the multidimensional development stage. The social awareness stage involves learning about and understanding the needs of others in society. In the social contribution stage, a person applies what they have learned in the social awareness stage to fulfill other people's needs while pursuing personal growth. In the next stage of social altruism, there is no expectation of personal benefit while serving society's concerns. The final stage involves stepping aside to provide opportunities for others to serve the society and being glad to pass on the responsibility to others.

A Spiritual Path Paradigm

Each human being has a spiritual element to his or her personal self. Zaleski and Kaufman (1997) describe this component as the contemplative dimension, which embraces such practices as prayers, meditation and mindfulness as well as wordless absorption in the Creator's presence in the context of a particular culture. This spiritual element of personal self is not fully addressed in current theories of motivation.

In the USA, spirituality has been recognized as an important element in the workplace and has gained popularity in organizations (Dehler and Welsh, 1994). Multinational corporations and their executives would do well to draw upon spiritual principles and values from various religions (Jackson, 1999). However, one does not have to belong to an organized religion in order to be spiritual (Mitroff and Denton, 1999). Each of us is socialized into a culture, which is influenced by spiritual concepts reflected in a religious tradition or faith.

Smart (1988) groups the world's major religions into two divisions, the Western traditions and the Far Eastern traditions. Western religions- Judaism, Christianity and Islam- are called dualistic because they

see God “out there” and man “down here”. They are monotheist, dualistic, absolutistic and teleological. In the Western tradition, man is created in the image of God. Man has enormous responsibility to do God’s will. Obedient to the all-powerful God, man can live in His kingdom of heaven for eternity.

The Far Eastern tradition has two great strands, one includes Taoism and the philosophy of Confucius, and the other includes Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. They are pantheist, monistic, relativist and cyclical. In those traditions, there is no Supreme Being that will help you go to heaven, everything is in harmony, everything is relative to the situation, and life is circular through reincarnation. In Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism, purification of the soul and liberation from reincarnation are the ultimate purposes of life.

Toward the end of his life, Maslow seemed puzzled by the fact that in some societies and cultures where many people, whose lower level needs were satisfied, were not becoming self-actualized. In other cultures, many people, whose lower level needs were not satisfied, were indeed becoming self-actualized. Maslow’s notion that the self-actualized state was one of selflessness or egolessness indicated that his ideas about self-actualization were clearly influenced by Buddhism and Hinduism (Wilson, 1997). The Eastern philosophies of Jains and Buddhists emphasize practicing “Ahinsa” (not injuring any living thing with mind, words and actions), and reducing attachments to material things, ego and power as a way of life (Durant, 1963).

Current models of motivation do not fully address the spiritual self of a person. A culture’s religious traditions may influence the spiritual dimension of an individual’s motivation. Western traditions may focus on various aspects of the unwavering belief in and obedience to God affecting the spiritual self of an individual. The Far Eastern traditions may consider various aspects of liberating the soul to affect the spiritual self.

I propose a Spiritual Path Paradigm of human motivation based on Buddhist, Hindu and Jain traditions that leads to a different hierarchy of needs. It should be noted that a person who follows this tradition does not necessarily have to be a Buddhist, a Hindu, or a Jain.

Before describing the way of life based on the Far Eastern tradition, let me discuss the religious foundation that drives that way of life. In Buddhism as in Hinduism and Jainism, there is an ultimate value that the reason to be born as a human being is to purify the soul and to be free of reincarnation into the next physical body. Reincarnation is the process by which an individual soul passes through a sequence of bodies (Smith, 1989). The mechanism of “karma” determines the cycle of reincarnations for an individual. It is “the moral law of cause and effect” (Smith, 1989). “Karma” may be described as a special kind of extremely subtle atom of matter, which is created by the deeds of a person. Karma is bound with the soul, and may not separate from the soul even at the time when it leaves the present body (Parrinder, 1983). The present condition of each individual’s interior life- how happy he (representing both male and female genders) is, how confused or serene he is, how well he can perceive reality- is an exact product of what he has desired and what he received in the past; and equally, his present thoughts and behaviors will determine his future states. Each individual is wholly responsible for his present condition and will have exactly the future he is now creating. No Supreme Being or any one else can offer or guarantee salvation or heaven for his soul. Thus, the spiritual path is very individualistic. A person’s soul is liberated as it gradually relaxes attachment to physical objects and stimuli.

When the soul first enters a human body, “jiva” (soul plus body) desires nothing more than to taste widely of the sense of delights the body makes possible (Smith, 1989). With repetition, those sensory delights become monotonous; “jiva” turns to social conquests of wealth, fame and power. Finally, “jiva” seeks infinite and eternal realization. This spiritual path is individualistic in its nature, similar to Maslow’s model. However, Maslow’s hierarchy model focuses on an individual’s personal material gain rather than spiritual gain in explaining and understanding human behavior. For a person pursuing individual spiritual gain, the spiritual path paradigm (Figure 1) would add the following four stages to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and Gibson and Wu’s social interaction paradigm:

1. Spiritual Awareness or understanding the role and importance of one’s spiritual needs,
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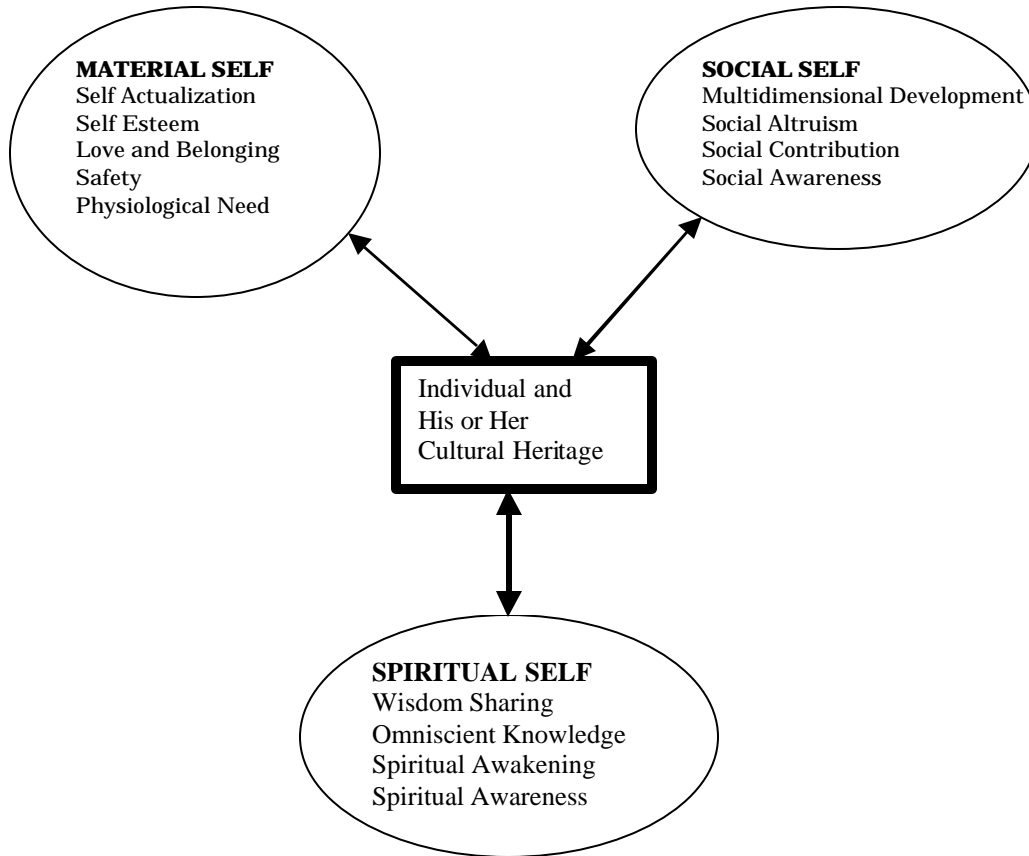


Figure 1: A Holistic Framework for Motivating an Individual

2. Spiritual Awakening or learning to get in touch with one's spirituality or soul,
3. Omniscient Knowledge or gaining ultimate knowledge about eternal life, and finally,
4. Wisdom Sharing or contributing to the spiritual growth of all the seekers of ultimate knowledge

A person's quest for a spiritual path begins when he or she becomes aware of the futility and impermanence of material accomplishments and misery and inner upheaval due to the ego and attachments to material things. Depending on the person's karmas over different reincarnations and that person's life, he or she will gain spiritual awareness of the importance of purifying his or her soul.

Once a person has become aware of the importance of one's spiritual needs, one seeks a path to learn about "who one is". Thus the search for the inner spiritual self begins. In the spiritual awakening stage, learning to get in touch with one's soul is the motivating force for behavior.

As one finds the path to spiritual awakening and practices it, one gets to know more about one's soul. As the soul progresses through ascending strata due to detachment from material things, the individual moves toward gaining omniscient knowledge, which only a pure soul can fully comprehend.

If and when a person has achieved omniscient knowledge, his or her motivator in life will be to share that knowledge and wisdom with other seekers of spiritual growth. That person is destined to live eternally as a pure soul that may merge with an ocean of pure souls with no need to suffer through reincarnation into a physical body.

External motivators, personal material gains, and personal ego satisfaction take a back seat to reducing needs and attachments to desires. Motivators are opportunities to move up the four steps of the spiritual path when a person follows the Hindu, the Buddhist or the Jain traditions.

A motivator for a person following the proposed spiritual path paradigm is not so much the desire to do good for its own sake, or to worship God without thought of self, but the desire to rise to attain a higher level in another life. It is said, "for family sacrifice the individual, for community the family, for country the community, and for soul the whole world" (Aloysius, 1979). When following this spiritual path, a person is much more than the custodian of the culture or protector of his or her country or the producer of wealth. Everyone is individually and personally responsible and able to affect the nature of his or her next life (if one is bound to be reborn). Therefore, it is expected that purifying the soul and ending the cycle of rebirth take priority over other achievements. For those who follow the Hindu, the Buddhist or the Jain way of life, this is a powerful internal motivator in the spiritual path paradigm model.

The implications of the spiritual path paradigm are that Maslow's theory is not appropriate for understanding behavior in all cultures, specifically understanding people who follow the Buddhist, the Hindu, or the Jain traditions in life. In fact, relying on Maslow's model may lead to misunderstood and misguided decisions. Assuming that individual material gains and individual recognition are the universal fundamental driving motivators may lead to unsuccessful personnel policies, organizational communications and strategic negotiations. If a manager wishes to motivate employees with diverse cultural and religious traditions, the spiritual path paradigm provides a framework for developing culture-specific management practices as opposed to globally standardized approaches to managing multinational firms.

A Holistic Framework of Motivation

This paper proposes a framework for addressing an individual's motivation in a holistic way as shown in Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Gibson and Wu's Social Interaction Paradigm, and the Spiritual Path Paradigm models address three different elements of an individual, the material, the social, and the spiritual selves. Each model focuses on a different personal self while focusing on different cultural underpinnings, the materialistic individualistic culture in Maslow's hierarchy, the cooperative social culture in I-Ching philosophy, and the individualistic spiritual culture in the Buddhist, the Hindu or the Jain traditions in the Spiritual Path Paradigm.

Discussion

Each paradigm in the proposed holistic framework of motivation emphasizes a different view of a human being. On the other hand, people in any culture have some elements of all the needs proposed in these three models, and perhaps many more. The framework presented in this paper offers a window into understanding human motivation under different cultural underpinnings. It offers an approach to directly address those underpinnings as a starting point of developing a framework rather than using culture to justify empirical findings of differences or anomalies in testing a theory of motivation based on a different cultural underpinning.

Although there are some universal characteristics for all human beings, culture has a direct and differential impact on understanding human behavior. Even when universal needs are concerned, cultural underpinnings may help us to understand what motivates or drives our behavior. For example, the physiological need of satisfying hunger is universal for all people. However, its importance and priority may be different for a person following the Buddhist, the Hindu or the Jain way of life from that of a person following Western traditions. In the former, people view the consumption of food as a necessity to keep their body healthy primarily for the pursuit of spiritual activities. In the latter case, people seek pleasure in eating food and delight in the variety and choices of food consumption. Cultural underpinnings of a motivation framework have the potential for deeper understanding of human behavior. In practical terms, managers with openness to various cultures and values could be imaginative by understanding and incorporating different prepotency of needs, goals and expectations. Accommodating, accepting and encouraging spiritual awareness in workplace and in the community may motivate a person following the Buddhist, Hindu or Jain traditions. Differing motivation patterns indicate that complexity in the workplace with employees from various cultures would require flexibility, empathy, patience and creativity in an organization.

While the spiritual path paradigm proposed in this paper is based specifically on the Buddhist, the Hindu or the Jain traditions, it offers a systemic approach for developing different spiritual path paradigms based on other philosophies and ways of life in different cultural and religious traditions. In addition, this approach does not address the considerable heterogeneity within a cultural viewpoint.

The framework of motivation presented in this paper addresses multiple dimensions of human beings, and may provoke alternative research inquiry into understanding an individual's motivation through the lenses of a holistic perspective. Future theoretical developments and research in this area can make significant contributions to our understanding of human motivation in the context of our rich human cultural diversity, and effectively managing the global workforce.

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