CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

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IN LARGE ORGANISATIONS IN THE ARABIC GULF REGION BY
LEVERAGING NATIONAL CULTURE

SCHOOL OF AEROSPACE, TRANSPORT AND
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PhD
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(NB. This section can be removed if the award of the degree is based solely on examination of the thesis)

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to develop and validate a framework for large organisations in the Arab Gulf Region, especially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in order to improve employee engagement and thus improve business performance. This research is completed in three phases. First, a detailed literature review summarises what is known about employee engagement and national culture in the GCC region. Second, an industrial field study then asks experienced leaders in the region to comment on the key enablers and inhibitors of employee engagement to better understand the region-specific factors affecting employee engagement, and their relationship to local culture. The results of the industrial field study suggest a number of changes are required to customise the employee engagement literature beyond the extant literature to meet the needs of employees in the GCC region, including actions such as engaging leaders developing a personal relationship with their employees. These changes are brought together to create a revised framework for employee engagement in large organisations in the GCC. In the third phase of the research, these results are tested in two validation studies. The first is a survey with a large sample of employees in the region confirming that these revised enablers of employee engagement predict feelings of employee engagement, and perceptions of performance. The second is an industrial field experiment in which a treatment group reported feeling greater levels of engagement after changes were implemented by a company. This research finds support for a framework of employee engagement that is both consistent with existing literature confirming the importance of key enablers such as providing opportunities for employees to learn and grow, but also additions to the literature with more region-specific ideas such as accommodating Islamic practicalities. This research contributes to the literature on employee engagement in documenting differences in different regions, specifically in this case the GCC region. This is also the first study to link specific aspects of national culture (e.g., power distance) to employee engagement, as well as to specify the distinctions between the enablers, behaviours, and feelings of employee engagement.

Keywords:

Gulf Cooperation Council, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IT   Information Technology

EE   Employee Engagement

GCC   Gulf Cooperation Council

KSA   Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

OCB   Organisational Citizenship Behaviours

x

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Countries in the Arabic Gulf Region/Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have become major economic powers and play important roles in the world economy. As a result, a number of high profile scholars have identified the need to understand the region, especially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) better, given its size and influence on the world stage (Brett, Behfar, & Kern, 2006; Distefano & Maznevski, 2000; van Knippenberg, 2011). However, there is surprisingly little data actually published about organisations in the Middle East (Dedoussis, 2004). For example, Robertson, et al. (2001) reviewed all articles from the Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS) from 1990 to 1999 focussing on the number that included data from a Muslim country in the Middle East. Less than 1% of the 236 articles published in that decade included data from that region, suggesting that the region is understudied and not well understood academically. A more recent review done by Aldhuwaihi (2013) looked at the JIBS for the period from 2000 to 2013 and found that this had not improved in the intervening years. Only 3 articles out of 300+ (i.e., less than 1%) were published in the subsequent 13 years. Of those three articles, two included Turkish data (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006; Wasti & Wasti, 2008) while the third was conducted on a sample of Iranian and U.S. female employees (Newburry, Belkin, & Ansari, 2008). Clearly, more research is needed on the Middle East region generally, and the KSA specifically.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has become a major economy at $745 billion gross annual GDP, and is amongst the top 20 economies in the world by size (Central Department of Statistics & Information, 2015). Therefore, this PhD research is contributing to improving employee engagement in large organisations in the GCC by leveraging aspects of national culture in order to enhance employee productivity and thus business performance.

1.2 Problem Statement

This study is about employee engagement in large organisations in the Arabic Gulf Region/Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), especially in the KSA. Employee engagement itself is defined as a workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organisation's goals and values, motivated to contribute to organisational success, and are able at the same time to enhance their own sense of well-being (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009). This study looks at employee engagement because employees who feel engaged are 50% more productive and 33% more profitable on average, as well as achieving 56% higher customer loyalty scores and being 44% more likely to stay in their jobs from year to year – all leading to great gains in productivity over the long run (Koloc, 2013). Thus, no matter where they may be located, companies that wish to be competitive clearly need to take employee engagement seriously.

This study looks at employee engagement because employee turnover in many large organisations in the Gulf Region including the KSA is high (Mercer, 2014). Employee productivity in these countries is not at developed-world standards (International Monetary Fund, 2012). This is a problem throughout the Gulf Region where the job market is promising, particularly for young professionals, and turnover is very high and rising, as young, educated citizens have many opportunities around the Gulf Region (Mercer, 2014). For example, young educated Saudi Nationals have many opportunities in the KSA in part because the government of the KSA is setting targets for Saudi employees (i.e., Saudisation) rather than foreign nationals, which makes the demand for local talent all the more competitive. These young professionals oftentimes move for money – a recent survey of Saudi nationals by Mercer (2014) found that over 43% of respondents listed "rewards and benefits" as one of the key drivers of employee engagement and increased likelihood of staying at a particular employer. Importantly, however, 32% of respondents felt that the work culture and values are a factor in engagement and employee retention. Even more promising, another recent survey of the Saudi working population suggests that people "are not picking their next job based on the size of the pay check; they are instead looking for a worthwhile mission and promising team to join" (HR Leaders

Saudi, 2015). This suggests that there is room for Saudi organisations to reduce turnover and retain more of their Saudi talent, if they can engage them more effectively.

1.3 Research Questions

1.   Which aspects of national culture (e.g. power distance, Islamic practice, etc.) will enhance or inhibit employee engagement in large organisations in the Arabic Gulf Region/Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)?

2.   How similar or different is employee engagement in the GCC compared to existing (Western) research? Are there any unique aspects of employee engagement in the GCC?

3.   Can any differences in enablers or inhibitors of employee engagement in the GCC be reliably measured and used to enhance employee performance?

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to develop a framework for improving employee engagement in large organisations in the GCC by leveraging aspects of national culture in order to enhance business performance.

Research objectives has been set as follow:

1.   To evaluate the literature on the effects of national culture on employee engagement in order to identify the behaviours that enhance employee engagement, and thus business performance.

2.   To identify the importance of employee engagement and key outcomes of employee engagement (e.g., employee productivity, reduced turnover, profitability, and customer loyalty).

3.   To determine the cultural enablers and inhibitors of employee engagement in large organisations in the GCC, especially the KSA through expert interviews.

4. To use the results from the expert interviews in an industrial field study to develop a framework to improve employee engagement in large organisations in the GCC to enhance business performance.

5. To validate the employee engagement framework via survey, expert judgment and industrial field experiment in the GCC.

1.5 Structure of the Report

Chapter 2 is a discussion and selection of research methodology. Chapter 3 is a literature review looking at employee engagement and national culture, as well as the impact of national culture on employee engagement. Chapter 4 is results from the industrial field study. Chapter 5 validates the proposed framework in two studies. Chapter 6 contains discussion, conclusion, and future work.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The choice of a research method begins with how the researcher understands knowledge. It "signals to the reader, how the research was conducted and what philosophical assumptions underpin the research" (Quinlan, 2011: 177). The researcher must start by understanding her or his own perspective on knowledge and then choose research methods in accordance with that philosophy. The Oxford English Dictionary defines philosophy as the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence (Oxford, 2015). In other words, it explains the basis or evidence on which a researcher's knowledge rests (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

2.1 Research Philosophy

In order to reduce complexity, Guba and Lincoln (1994) grouped research philosophies and suggested three groups: 1) ontology, 2) epistemology, and 3) methodology. Ontology is considered to be the characteristics of the reality that are tested in the research investigation; epistemology is concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge that leads to ideas such as truth, belief, and justification; methodology is defined as the tools that are used by the researcher

to gather and validate data to answer the research questions. Similar definitions were introduced by Myers (1997) and Creswell (2009).

Ways of understanding knowledge are typically understood as lying on a continuum from positivism to phenomenology or social constructivism (Chia, 2002). Positivism suggests that knowledge is based on natural and knowable laws, those that can be determined through research using structured sensory experience, interpreted through reason and logic. Phenomenology, or social constructivism, on the other hand, suggests that all knowledge is socially derived. Meaning is created through people sense-making, rather than through objective experience. This perspective suggests knowledge is created through people sharing their experiences, successful and unsuccessful, with others. Mingers (2003) described this continuum as having three schools of thought, including positivism, interpretivism, and critical research. Others, such as Chia (2002), describe those three paradigms as positivism, realism, and phenomenology. Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggest an extended approach whereby they introduce four distinct schools of thought along the continuum between positivism and phenomenology to explain the three philosophical approaches (i.e., ontology, epistemology, and methodology). Those distinct schools of thought are described as positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivism (i.e., phenomenology).

Positivism: The word positivism has its root in Latin word of poistum, the supine from pono, which means put, set, place, or lay. Therefore, if something "is put, set, placed or laid; this something is given facts or data, and the one they lie in front of is the researcher" (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). This school of thought argues that knowledge is value-free and objectively "right" or "wrong" (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Post-positivism: This approach emphasizes the view that a researcher cannot hold a positive sentiment about the research knowledge when researching human behaviour. This approach is similar to the positivist approach, including the notion that social phenomena are independent of social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The key variation arises in the method of inquiry, where it also

focuses on falsifying the theoretical assumptions or hypotheses rather than solely focusing on proving cause-law effect.

Critical Theory: First proposed by Roy Bhaskar, and in part inspired by the Marxist view of science, this approach considers both positivism and social constructivism as too superficial and atheoretical in their approach to doing research (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). Scholars who follow this school of thought believe that science should aim not only to explain the world, but should aim to change it. The key philosophical assumption is that social phenomena and social actors are not independent from each other, and that social phenomena tend to vary depending on the social actor's view of reality (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This school of thought uses observations and interviews as the data-gathering method and aims to test a hypothesis that is formed based on a theoretical concept (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Social Constructivism: Has its root in phenomenology but also has been associated with postmodernism (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). It is a school of thought that is based on the assumption that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being created by social actors rather than having objective truth (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This school of thought promotes similar beliefs to critical theory, where assumptions are based on subjectivism. The difference is that constructivism believes that reality is the output of social interactions that are formed by groups of people. The postmodernism/constructivism school of thought tends to use qualitative interviews as its preferred data-gathering method (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Klein & Myers, 1999).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), positivism and post-positivism hold opposite views to critical theory and constructivism on methods because they rely on the "hypothetico-deductive method". In positivism and post-positivism, variables are used to build a hypothesis that is tested using numerical data gathered through quantitative research (Creswell, 2009). Reciprocally, critical theory and constructivism promote subjectivism and interpretivism, as detailed by Mertens (1998), who advocates the use of qualitative and interviews as sources

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of data because they need to reflect people's social construction of reality (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Creswell, 2009). These opposing perspectives suggest different methods as reflected in Table 4.

Table 2-1 Differences between quantitative and qualitative research methods

RESEARCH METHODS	
POSITIVISM and POSTPOSITIVISM: **QUANTITATIVE METHODS**	**CRITICAL THEORY and SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM:** **QUALITATIVE METHODS**
Emphasis on testing and verification	Emphasis on understanding
Focus on facts and/or reasons of social phenomena	Focus on understanding from respondent/informant point of view
Logical and critical approach	Interpretation and rational approach
Controlled measurement	Observation and measurement in natural settings
Objective 'outsider view' which assumes distance from data	Subjective 'insider view' which assumes closeness to data
Hypothetical-deductive focus on hypothesis testing	Explorative orientation
Results-oriented	Process-oriented
Particularistic and analytical perspective	Holistic perspective
Generalisation by population membership	Generalisation by comparison of properties and contexts of an individual organism

Advocates of social constructivism have criticised positivism, primarily in the social sciences including management research, because they believe that the social world created in management is too complex to have simple natural laws in the same way that the natural and physical world has such laws (Saunders, Thornhill, & Lewis, 2009). The phenomenologists suggest that the emphasis should be on what people think and feel in order to fully understand how the social world works, and why there might be different experiences in different groups, organisations, or national cultures.

2.1.1 Selection of Positivist Research Approach

Based on the research problems that are being addressed and extensive existing literature in this area, a positivist approach has been taken. This is in keeping with other influential work in this area, where the positivist paradigm is favoured by scholars such as Deal and Kennedy (1982), Denison et al. (2003), Ouchi (1981), and Peters and Waterman (1982) in organisational studies, as well as all of the studies on employee engagement reviewed by Harter et al. (2002). After examining the conceptual model of this study and proposing hypotheses relating to organisational culture, employee engagement, and organisational effectiveness, the relationships amongst them were explored. The positivist method identifies reasons for a problem based on a deductive process (Hirschheim & Klein, 1992). Taking a positivist/deductive approach requires 1) the creation of hypotheses and models, 2) the need to identify objective and value-free information, and 3) the use of quantitative methods (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Creswell, 2009). In addition, the purpose of the research should be understood to analyse the relationship between variables using quantitative measures while deploying hypothesis testing on a particular sample to generalize to a larger population (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). The main aim of this study is to develop a framework for large organisations in the GCC, especially the KSA to improve employee engagement by leveraging aspects of national culture. Since investigating cultural factors are included in the study, a positivist approach is recommended. As Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) have argued, the researcher's duty in conducting research using the positivistic ontology is to identify the objective physical and social reality by means of utilizing proper tools that will identify those specific aspects of reality that are being investigated by the researcher.

2.2 Research Methodology of the Study

The research has three phases, as shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**.

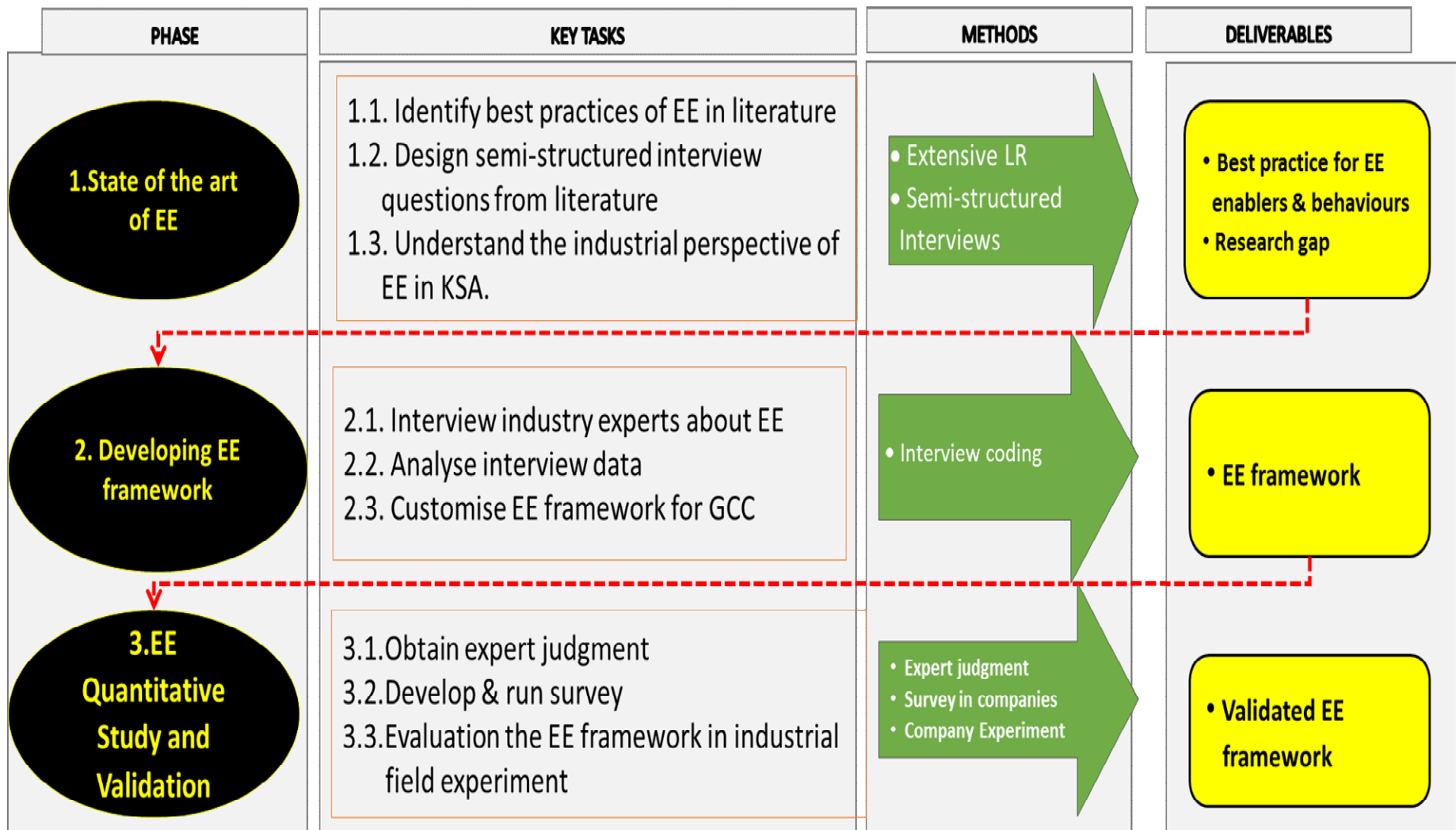| PHASE	KEY TASKS	METHODS	DELIVERABLES
1. State of the art of EE	1.1. Identify best practices of EE in literature 1.2. Design semi-structured interview questions from literature 1.3. Understand the industrial perspective of EE in KSA.	• Extensive LR • Semi-structured Interviews	• Best practice for EE enablers & behaviours • Research gap
2. Developing EE framework	2.1. Interview industry experts about EE 2.2. Analyse interview data 2.3. Customise EE framework for GCC	• Interview coding	• EE framework
3. EE Quantitative Study and Validation	3.1. Obtain expert judgment 3.2. Develop & run survey 3.3. Evaluation the EE framework in industrial field experiment	• Expert judgment • Survey in companies • Company Experiment	• Validated EE framework

Figure 2-1 Research Methodology

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Phase 1: State of the Art of Employee Engagement

In the first phase of this research the goal is to identify best practice for engaging employees in the GCC region. To achieve this the literature is first reviewed to understand what we already know about employee engagement generally, then understand where the gap is in understanding how existing research applies in the GCC region, and then interview industry experts in the region to understand how Specific tasks include:

1.1. Identifying the best practices of how Employee Engagement is practiced in the literature.

1.2. To design semi-structured interviews to determine the cultural enablers and inhibitors of employee engagement in Arab gulf region GCC, especially the KSA.

1.3. Understand the industrial perspective of employee engagement in the Arab Gulf Region, the GCC especially KSA.

Phase 2: Developing the employee engagement framework

For phase two the goal is to develop a framework for employee engagement in the GCC region, especially KSA. Specific tasks include:

2.1 Conduct a pilot study and then interview business leaders in the region with a semi-structured interview process (i.e., Study 1).

2.2 Analyse the interview data to determine the cultural enablers and inhibitors of employee engagement in Arab gulf region / GCC, especially KSA.

2.3 Customise a framework to improve employee engagement in large organisations in Arab gulf region GCC, especially KSA.

Phase 3: Quantitative Tests

In phase three, the goal is to quantitatively test the framework developed in Phase two (i.e., Study 1). Specific tasks include:

3.1. Create and run questionnaire data with employees in large organisations in Arab gulf region GCC, especially KSA.

3.2. Evaluation the employee engagement framework in a company by experiment

3.3. Obtaining expert judgment opinions on the revised framework.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to examine both the importance of employee engagement for improving employee performance, as well as the impact of national culture on employee engagement. The intent is to identify the cultural enablers and inhibitors of employee engagement in the GCC in order to build the foundations of a framework for improving employee engagement in the Arabic Gulf region or GCC.

3.1 Employee Engagement

The section reviews employee engagement in five ways. The first addresses definitions of employee engagement. The second explores why employee engagement is important for improving organisational performance. The third reviews known enablers of employee engagement. The fourth looks at the behaviours employees who feel engaged display (i.e.., how do you know an engaged employee when you see one?). The fifth reviews known enablers of employee engagement.

3.1.1 Definitions of Employee Engagement

Organisations have spent a great deal of time and effort on employee engagement over the past decade. Employee engagement has overlap in meaning with a broad set of related concepts such as employee commitment, satisfaction, involvement, motivation, and extra-role performance. This has created a wide variety of approaches to understanding and defining engagement. The result has meant that Employee Engagement is also sometimes criticised for being no more than 'old shoes in a new box' (Jeung, 2011). However, most scholars argue that employee engagement is distinct from, but builds on, these related ideas (Harter, et al., 2002). Some scholars define engagement as being about improving employee behaviours and actions, while others see it as being more about employee attitude towards their work. As Purcell (2010) explains, "engagement is a combination of attitude and behaviour. The attitude is 'commitment', and the behaviour is 'going the extra mile'" (Purcell, 2010: p 3). Others see engagement in terms of an employer's actions; an approach to

working with employees or something that is "done to" employees (Alfes, Truss, Soane, Rees, & Gatenby, 2010: 4). The most influential work on employee engagement is the MacLeod (2009) report to the British government, which describes engagement as: "A workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organisation's goals and values, motivated to contribute towards organisational success, and are able at the same time to enhance their own sense of well-being" (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009: 9).

Alternatively, many of the global consultancies have also done scholarly work on employee engagement. According to Mercer (2014), "Employee engagement refers to a psychological state where employees feel a vested interest in the company's success and perform to a high standard that may exceed the stated requirements of the job" (www.mercerHR.com). Another firm, Hewitt, argues that "Engaged employees consistently demonstrate three general behaviours. They: (1) Say – consistently speak positively about the organization to co-workers, potential employees, and customers; (2) Stay – have an intense desire to be a member of the organization despite opportunities to work elsewhere; (3) Strive – exert extra time, effort, and initiative to contribute to business success" (www.hewittassociates.com). Finally, for Towers Perrin, engagement reflects employees' "personal satisfaction and a sense of inspiration and affirmation they get from work and being a part of the organization" (www.towersperrin.com).

Shuck (2010) searched all relevant Human Resources Management, education, psychology, and management sources to systematically understand scholarly and practitioner definitions of engagement. He identified four major approaches to defining employee engagement: 1) Kahn's (1990) need-satisfying approach, 2) Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter's (2001) burnout-antithesis approach, 3) Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes' (2002) satisfaction engagement approach, and 4) Saks's (2006) multidimensional approach. Any definition or measure of employee engagement should include all four perspectives (see the overall framework, which takes this form with four questions measuring employee engagement). None of these approaches dominates, but Kahn's (1990: 694) original approach is probably the most influential. For Kahn (1990), employee engagement is

defined as the "harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles: in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, emotionally, and mentally during role performances."

Reading across the entire employee engagement literature, there are a wide range of definitions of employee engagement – almost as many as there are publications on the subject. This is probably a reflection of how the construct has developed, starting life as a consulting idea and later academics picking it up to try and sharpen and refine it (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Cowardin-Lee & Soyalp, 2011). This range of definitions from both academic and consulting practices is reflected in

Table 3-1. However, no academic study identified has yet fully validated the full range of these definitions.

Table 3-1 Representative Definitions of Employee Engagement

Definition	Source
The simultaneous employment and expression of a person's preferred self in task behaviours that promote connections to work and others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active full role performances.	Kahn (1990)
A workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organisation's goals and values, motivated to contribute towards organisational success, and are able at the same time to enhance their own sense of well-being.	MacLeod and Clarke (2009)
Psychological presence including attention, or "cognitive availability and the amount of time one spends thinking about a role" and absorption, meaning "being engrossed in a role and refers to the intensity of one's focus on a role."	Rothbard (2001)
Engagement is a combination of attitude and behaviour. The attitude is 'commitment', and the behaviour is 'going the extra mile'.	Purcell (2010)
Opposite of burnout; a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption.	Schaufeli et al. (2002)
An individual's involvement and satisfaction with, as well as enthusiasm for, their work.	Harter et al. (2002)
When employees feel positive emotions toward their work, find their work to be personally meaningful, consider their work-load to be manageable, and have hope about the future of their work.	Nelson and Simmons (2003)
Employees' willingness and ability to help their company succeed, largely by providing discretionary effort on a sustainable basis.	Towers Perrin's Global Workforce Study (2003)
A positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its value(…)requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee.	Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday (2004)
The measure of an employee's emotional and intellectual commitment to their organization and its success	Hewitt Associates (2004)
A measureable degree of an employee's positive or negative emotional attachment to their job, colleagues and organization, which profoundly influences their willingness to learn and perform at work.	Vaijayanthi et al. (2011)

3.1.2 The Importance of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is gaining increasing attention in organisations in recent years, both private companies and in the public sector. According to Tim Beasley, the UK economist: "there is an increasing understanding that people are the source of productive gain, which can give you competitive advantage" (cited in MacLeod & Clarke, 2009: 5). At the macroeconomic level, in times of global competition this is vital for private businesses. Koloc (2013) finds that engaged employees are 50% more productive, create 56% higher customer loyalty scores, are 44% more likely to stay in their jobs from year to year, leading to great gains in productivity over the long run, and thus on average 33% more profitable than employees who are not engaged. The point being that engagement is not just nice to have for businesses, it results in objective and measureable outcomes that lead to customer satisfaction and business profitability.

Figure 3-1 Outcomes of Employee Engagement (Customer Thermometer)

It is not just managers in for-profit organisations who are focused on employee engagement. For example, in Canada the entire human resource profession now considers employee engagement one of the key focus areas. "For the first time in the history of management, it is the human mind that is the primary creator of value. The quality of people and their engagement will be critical factors in corporate vitality and survival." (Ulrich, 2004: p 1). This focus on employee

engagement is driven by labour shortages, particularly in the professional ranks, which result in the need to attract and retain employees while continuing to improve performance and profitability. "Hiring top talent is one thing; keeping talent and getting its full engagement is another thing. Talent is mobile, and fully 58% of Canadian employees in Canada are open to move to other organisations" (Ulrich, 2004: p 2). Employers who engage their employees are able to simultaneously increase output as well as retain those employees for longer. In short, to be fully competitive "organisations must capture a bigger portion of the employee mindshare" (Ulrich, 2004: p 2). By 'mindshare' it means getting employees to bring their whole selves to work and spend some of their discretionary time engaged in their work. The most productive organisations get people to spend more time at work, and make those extra hours productive.

There are a number of studies on the effects of employee engagement. For example, in a study looking at 16 insurance agencies Davenport and Harding (2012) report a 0.63 correlation between manager performance and engagement, demonstrating a strong connection between manager performance, employee engagement measures, and financial results. The National Workforce Programme (NWP) in the UK conducted a study within the NHS and found support for a number of enablers of employee engagement, including an enjoyable workplace and employee voice and control (Concours Group, 2007).

Some researchers have concluded that the manner in which new employees are selected and inducted into an organisation is also of significance in engaging employees. Martin and Bourke (2010) stress the importance of a strategic process known as "on-boarding" in attracting and engaging new employees and characterise this process as "re-affirming" new employees' decision to join an organisation. Empirical work by Cable, Gino, and Staats (2013) demonstrates this notion (also see Cable, 2018).

Looking at it from the opposite angle of employee disengagement, it is likely to be an important cause of poor corporate performance and profitability. "Lack of engagement is endemic and is causing large and small organizations all over the world to incur excess costs, under-perform on critical tasks, and create

widespread customer dissatisfaction" (Rampersad, 2008: p 1). One key study of this is the Gallup Management Journal survey conducted in 2005 (as cited in Rampersad, 2008: 12) which found "of all U.S. workers 18 or older, about 19.2 million or roughly 14% are actively disengaged. Gallup estimates that the lower productivity of disengaged workers cost the U.S. economy about $300 billion." This study clearly shows that disengagement of workers is associated with low worker productivity and reduced organisational profitability. Moreover, recent research done by the Corporate Leadership Council (2004: p 14) demonstrates that those employees with high levels of engagement were "significantly less likely to leave."

3.1.3 The Enablers of Employee Engagement

Differing measures and definitions of employee engagement make understanding enablers of employee engagement challenging. Enablers that are most often reported in the literature (Table 3-2 below), include, 1) employee voice/control, 2) opportunities to learn and grow, and 3) enjoyable workplace.

Table 3-2 Enablers of Employee Engagement in the literature

	MacLeod & Clarke (2009)	Gallup (2012)	National Workforce Programme (2007)	Robertson-Smith & Markwick (2009)	Mercer (2014)	Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday (2004)	
1) Strategic Narrative/Personal Meaning	✓		✓				2
2) Engaging Managers/Leaders	✓	✓	✓				3
3) Employee Voice/Control	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	5
4) Clear Directions for Work		✓					1
5) Necessary Materials		✓					1
6) Clear Purpose for Organisation		✓		✓			2
7) Opportunities to Learn and Grow		✓		✓	✓	✓	4
8) Enjoyable Workplace		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
9) Variable Pay/Good Benefits				✓	✓		2
10) Job Security				✓	✓		2
	3	7	4	6	4	3	

As you can see in Table 3-2, the most commonly cited enablers of employee engagement in the (Western) literature are: 1) employee voice and control (i.e., I want to make decisions myself and work with the boss to decide what we work on), 2) opportunities to learn and grow (e.g., training, coaching, new opportunities, conference),and 3) enjoyable workplace (e.g., nice furniture, nice light, luxury office, coffee shop). Beyond these three enablers of employee engagement highlighted in Table 3-2, many recent studies particularly suggest that managers who engage in many of these enablers at once and are "engaging managers." MacLeod and Clarke (2009) define engaging managers as: "managers who offer clarity, appreciation of employees' effort and contribution, who treat their people as individuals and who ensure that work is organised efficiently and effectively so that employees feel they are valued, and equipped and supported to do their job." In short, the line manager has a significant role to play in creating an environment where workers experience a culture of engagement. Engaging managers help employees to make their work engaging through fair treatment of employees, job design and content, and high levels of trust (Clegg & Spencer, 2007). Engaging managers also embrace "employee voice" where employers listen to what workers say, encouraging the employees to share their true beliefs (i.e., not get punished for being critical), and act positively on those thoughts. This requires employers to be able to not only allow, but also positively encourage employees to speak openly and challenge when and where appropriate.

Having engaging mangers who encourage voice and redesign jobs around individuals directly implicates the relationship between mangers and their employees – the relationship is different when managers engage their employees in these ways (Sutton, 2009). Having these types of managers is also then indirectly linked to organisational performance through its effects of employee engagement (Fleming, Coffman, & Harter, 2005). Not only does first-line management predict employee engagement, but organisational performance is also strongly predicted by the quality of first-line management (Wallace & Trinka, 2009). Confirming this, Fleming et al (2005) argue that it is "nonetheless the

single most important factor in local group performance." They go on to suggest that "the company may need to look at how it selects employees, promotes people into management, does performance appraisals, approaches succession planning, and recognizes performance" (Fleming, Coffman, & Harter, 2005: p. 114).

3.1.4 Behaviours Associated with Employee Engagement

Employees that feel engaged should act in distinctive ways. As you can see in Table 3-3, the most commonly cited behaviours associated with engaged employees in the extant (Western) research are: 1) reduced employee turnover (i.e., employees stay with their employers for longer), 2) positive emotional expression at work (e.g., engaging cheerfully with employees because they are genuinely engaged in their work), and 3) being proactive in problem solving (e.g., looking for and resolving problems before management highlight them

Table 3-3 Behaviours Associated with Engaged Employess

References / Behaviours of EE	MacLeod & Clarke (2009)	Kahn (1990)	Shuck (2010)	Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter (2001)	Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes (2002) Gallup (2012)	Soieb, Othman, & D'Silva (2013)	Eseleni, Mclaughlin, Al Ashaab, & Rashid (2016)	Alkhalaf (2017)	
1) Creativity/ Innovation/ New Ideas	✓	✓				✓			3
2) Genuine positive affect at work./ Cheerful at work	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	5
3) Non-defensive communication	✓	✓							2
4) Playfulness/ Pleasure seeking in work		✓	✓						2
5) Reduced turnover/Come to work	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	6
6) Help others/ Organisational Citizenship Behaviours	✓		✓			✓			3
7) Fewer grievances	✓		✓						2
8) Being proactive (solving problems without being told)			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	5
9) Absorption in work				✓				✓	2
10) Teamwork/ Work well with others/ Cooperation						✓	✓		2
11) Achieve job objectives	✓		✓		✓			✓	4
	7	5	6	3	3	6	1	5	

Here are the formal definitions of the clusters of behaviours most often associated with engaged employees in the extant (Western) literature on employee engagement: 1) Creativity/ Innovation/ New Ideas: to be creative or innovative is to suggest a new method, idea, product, etc. for your work; 2) Emotional expression/ Cheerful at work/ Positive affect at work: refers to the extent to which an individual experiences positive moods such as joy, happiness, interest, and alertness. People who express positive emotion at work smile, react positively to requests from others, and try to help others; 3) Non-defensive communication: is defined as that behaviour which occurs when an individual does not perceive threat or anticipate threat from others. In other words, when someone is critical about something at work, other people focus on solving the problem and not on defending themselves or their reputation. For example, if the boss is concerned about how something got lost, the rest of the team tries to find the item rather than saying that it was not them who took the item; 4) Playfulness/ Pleasure seeking in work: is the quality of being fun and lively, to laugh and not be too serious. To be playful one needs to not feel threatened, and is more likely to find new and creative ways to solve problems.; 5) Reduced turnover/Come to work: refers to the number or percentage of workers who leave an organization and are replaced by new employees. Engaged employees come to work more days, take fewer sick days, and stay with their employer longer; 6) Help others/ Organisational Citizenship Behaviours: is a person's voluntary commitment within an organisation or company that is not part of their regular job. They help their colleagues to do a better job; 7) Fewer grievances: refers to a formal complaint about the way you are being treated at work. For example, if you believe you have earned a promotion and the organisation/boss does not give it to you, one option is to file a formal complaint against your boss with a higher authority. Or if you feel harassed at work, one option is to file a formal complaint with a union or with the police; 8) Being proactive/ Vigour at work: refers to identifying and solving problems without waiting for the supervisor to tell you to solve the problem; 9) Absorption in work: is defined as the process when one thing becomes part of another thing. For example, you get so involved in your work that you miss

lunch, or go home later than planned; 10) Teamwork/ Work well with others/ Cooperation: The process of working collaboratively with a group of people in order to achieve a goal.; and 11) Achieve job objectives: Always completing the tasks or short-term goals that have been assigned to you by someone else in the organisation, typically your immediate boss or supervisor. To achieve job objectives one needs to be compliant with the requests of your boss to achieve what s/he asks of you.

3.1.5 Measuring Employee Engagement

According to Haid and Sims (2009: 7), "Engagement can be complex to measure" and there are many different kinds of research studies that each have a different focus, especially quantitative versus qualitative. Some quantitative studies compare multiple organisations, sectors, or countries and rely mainly on statistical comparison using regression analysis to find relations between variables. And oftentimes there is confusion between employee engagement behaviours, the feelings of engagement, and tangible business outcomes of employee engagement. For example, you can see above that the literature identifies reduced absenteeism and turnover as a behaviour, but it could equally be considered an outcome of employee engagement.

The most widely used measure of employee engagement is the 12 questions used by the Gallup organisation (Gallup, 2012). This approach typically focuses on identifying enablers of employee engagement. Robertson-Smith and Markwick (2009: p 55) observe that, "research to date on employee engagement has utilised a survey methodology, with the intention of aggregating the individual scores into overall trends." Another method sometimes used is a case study approach that looks at a particular organisation or sector. These rely primarily on qualitative data, including semi-structured interviews (for example, Kahn 1990, 1992). Case studies tend to focus on one element of engagement, such as factors relating to emotion or behaviour. Sometimes, there are mixed-methods used. These tend to focus on different performance outcomes such as employee retention and productivity, customer service, and organisational performance.

Looking at employee engagement measures, there are three important points. First, there are many different types of research with various methodologies and diverse definitions of employee engagement, making it difficult to easily compare between studies. Second, any serious definition of employee engagement should have elements that represent the four ways of thinking about employee engagement. Third, this research looks at large organisation in the GCC Gulf Region, so it is important to know if ideas and measures of engagement can be generalised across different cultural contexts. Where possible, studies from the Arabic Gulf Region will be highlighted in addition to the majority of the literature which comes from Western and overwhelmingly English language sources such as the UK, Canada, and the USA.

3.2 National Culture

National culture plays a significant role in how organisations function and how employees feel about their work, and what is likely to engage them (Smith, Fischer, & Sale, 2001). The history of research on national culture begins with anthropology, where researchers are concerned about how and why a group of people behave the way they do (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Schein, 1992). Interest in national culture then moved beyond anthropology to psychology, sociology, and eventually management (e.g., Hofstede, 1998; House et al., 2004; Mallehi, 2007; Pothukitchi et al., 2002; Schein, 2004; Tayeb, 2005; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2000). The topic of national culture has remained a mainstream topic of research for decades. More recent trends towards globalisation have only intensified this interest as it demands a deep understanding of national culture and its influence on employees and organisations (Kalliny, Cruthirds, & Minor, 2006; Klein, Waxin, & Radnell, 2009). This review considers definitions of national culture from a broad range of scholars, the effects of culture on employee behaviour, models of national culture, and then a number of differences in national culture that may affect employee engagement.

3.2.1 Definitions of National Culture

Scholars have defined national culture in various ways and from different perspectives over time. One of the highly influential scholars working in this field,

Geert Hofstede (2001: 9) defines culture as: "…the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another." He also argues that national culture should be distinguished from organisational culture. The idea of culture is consistent, but while national culture distinguishes one national group from another, organisational culture distinguishes an employee of one organisation from another. Because national culture is broader and involves greater numbers, it tends to be more basic in being defined by basic values, beliefs, and practices that are shared by a vast majority of people belonging to a specific nation (Hofstede, 2001). By giving direction to how things happen within a nation, national culture also determines the social rules for people from outside of that nation who are living and working within that nation (Hofstede, 2001; Kirkman & Shapiro, 2001). According to Francesco and Gold (1998), culture is the "most useful tool in identifying and explaining differences in how people behave."

3.2.2 Model of National Culture

Researchers have created many models of national culture, including Kluckhohn and Strodbeck (1961) and Trompenaars and Hempden-Turner (2000). Arguably the most influential model of national culture is Hofstede's Model of Cultural Dimensions (Adler, 2007; Askery, Pounder, & Yazdifar, 2008; Bass, 1990; Fougere & Moulettes, 2006; Oshlyansky et al., 2006; Triandis, 2004). Hofstede's dimensions were created by doing surveys of work-related values by over 116,000 employees of the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) in 64 countries. In his book Culture's Consequences, Hofstede (1980) presented his five dimensions as well as their implications for organisations.
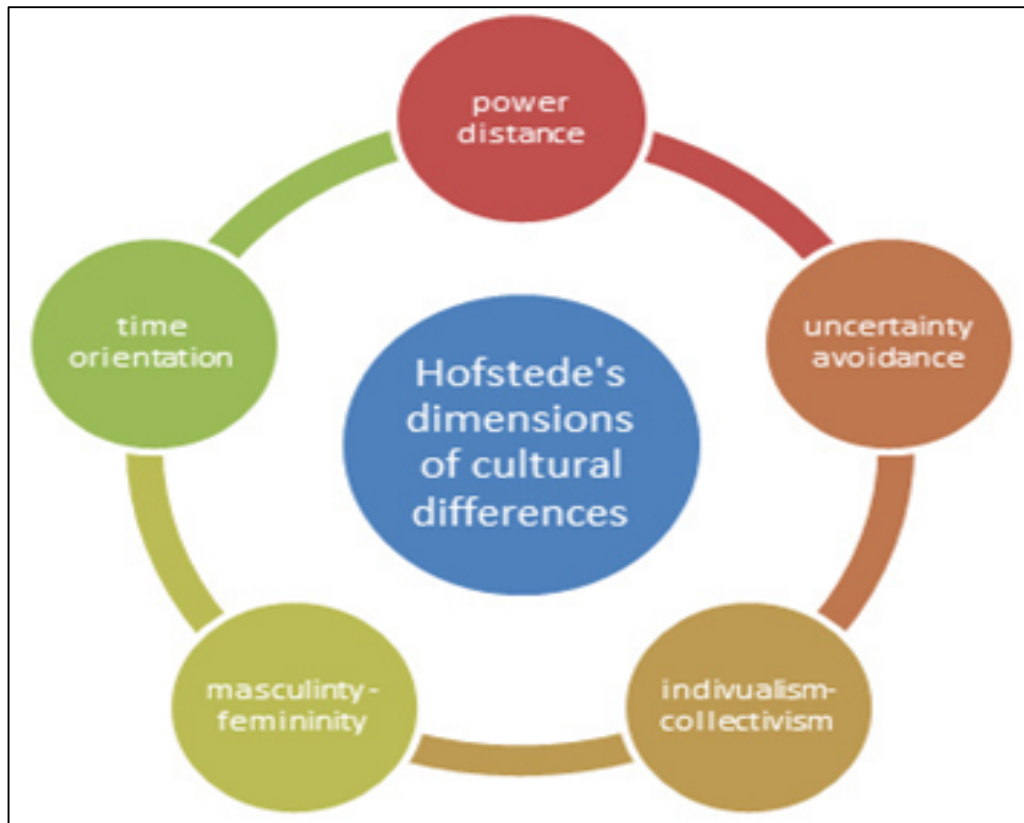
Figure 3-2 Hofstede (2001) Model of National Culture

A) Power Distance: is about whether people expect different people to have different levels of power and status. This cultural dimension refers to the degree that a society accepts inequality in the distribution of power within the society (Hofstede, 2001; Hoppe, 1990). "I respect my boss because he is the boss" is high power distance. In low power distance cultures, "I respect my boss because he is a good and effective boss, not just because he is my boss." As Hofstede (2016) argues, "power distance affects managerial styles, delegation and empowerment, decision-making styles, and organisational design, which in turn collectively impact an organisation's productivity and efficiency." See Table 3-4 for existing measures of Power Distance in the literature.

B) Uncertainty Avoidance: is about whether people are happy with or avoid uncertainty (i.e., uncertainty is when the boss says "I do not know the answer to

your question"). Cultures that are low on uncertainty avoidance want clear answers to questions and are uncomfortable with ambiguity.

C) Masculinity-Femininity: is whether male or female values are most important – male values are competition and winning, female values are working together and looking after each other.

D) Individualism-Collectivism: is about whether you see other people as individuals or as members of a group/tribe.

E) Time Orientation: is about how long the perspective of history is – is it about what happened in the last 10 years versus last 1,000 years. Long-term orientation is about keeping connection with the past through time-honoured traditions whereas short-term orientation is more about being pragmatic and getting on in life right now.

3.2.3 Differences Between the GCC and the UK

There are many differences between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom that could affect Employee Engagement. For example, the predominate religious histories of the two regions are different: Islam versus Christianity. As custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in Mecca and Medina, Saudis take their religious obligations very seriously. Islam is more than a religion; it can be described as a way of life and a moral code. The majority of Saudis subscribe to a version of Islam that is interpreted much more strictly than most others. As a result, Islam directly influences employee engagement through the structuring of daily life and the need for employers to follow these structure (Ahmad & Aldakhil , 2012).

Second is relationships, trust and 'wasta.' Saudis and other countries in the region place a lot of importance on relationships on many levels. Religious sect, family and tribe are all important elements in determining one's status in Saudi society. Wasta, which roughly translates as connections, networking and understanding who knows who (and in what capacity), is the main catalyst in getting things done. Saudis pay a lot of attention to your job title, professional qualifications, and who you know (HR ZONE, 2013). For employee engagement

this means that employees want a personal relationship with their boss and other leaders in the organisation, and value it much more than employees in the UK.

Third is the mismatch between education and employment needs. The quality of education in KSA (i.e., and indeed throughout the region) has been consistently criticized. Outcomes oftentimes do not match the needs of the national labour market, and some of them lack good English knowledge and the required technical background. Combined with legal arrangements that make it more difficult to terminate Saudis, it make some employers reluctant to employ Saudis because they will need more training and may not work out (HR ZONE, 2013). From an employee engagement point of view, it makes on-the-job training particularly important for the Saudis that are employed. Whereas in the UK training is oftentimes seen more as a signal that a company is investing in you, in Saudi Arabia it can be essential to ensuring employees have the necessary skills to do their job, as well as a signal of support. Training is essential in Saudi Arabia for engage employees, while it is only desirable in the UK context (Ahmad & Aldakhil , 2012).

Fourth and finally is the tradition of hospitality, generosity and formality. Hospitality and generosity are important values throughout the Middle East and GCC region, including Saudi Arabia. Warm greetings, good manners, and a genuine welcome are characteristics amongst Saudis as well as guests (HR ZONE, 2013). Formalities are considered more than good form; they are also an obligation, recognising status and showing respect. This is all part of high power distance and formality in society (Hofstede 2001). For employee engagement that means that employees appreciate voice and consultation, but do not expect control in the workplace like UK workers. It also means bosses need to show an extraordinarily clear career pathway and promotion criteria for employees to feel comfortable – of the kind that UK employees would consider hand-holding and micro-management.

This formality and power distance also leads to perceived social stigma for blue collar roles. Some young Saudis with high school diploma or less are reluctant to accept blue-collar jobs (such as truck drivers, plumbers, carpenters, etc.) to avoid offensive comments by their communities. They may continue looking for clerical

jobs or even stay at home, but will not accept any blue-collar job that may be offered to them. For employee engagement this means that job status is very important, more important than for most UK employees.

Looking across many descriptions of culture of the regions, especially Hofstede, the key broad difference is this notion of power distance, which is defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of organisations and institutions (like the family) expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede & Peterson, 2000: 403). Power Distance has proven to be a highly robust dimension of national culture. A number of scholars have continued to develop the ideas behind power distance, notably Earley and Erez (1997), but also Brockner, et al. (2001).

Table 3-4 shows how researchers have measured power distance in surveys. You will see that they all share the common idea that some people should have more power than others. And particularly that bosses should have power over their employees and employees should not question their boss.

Table 3-4 Measure of Power Distance

POWER DISTANCE – Earley and Erez (1997)
In most situations, managers should make decisions without consulting their subordinates.
In work-related matters, managers have a right to expect obedience from their subordinates.
Employees who often question authority sometimes keep their managers from being effective.
Once a top-level executive makes a decision people working for the company should not question it.
Employees should not express disagreements with their managers.
Managers should be able to make the right decisions without consulting with others.
Managers who let their employees participate in decisions lose power.
A company's rules should not be broken-not even when the employee thinks it is in the company's best interest.
POWER DISTANCE – Hofstede dimensions as in Yoo, Donthu, & Lenartowicz (2011)
People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions.
People in higher positions should not ask the opinions of people in lower positions too frequently.
People in higher positions should avoid social interactions with people in lower positions.
People in lower positions should not disagree with decisions by people in higher positions.
People in higher positions should not delegate important tasks to people in lower positions.
POWER DISTANCE – Brockner, et al. (2001) JESP
There should be established ranks in society with everyone occupying their rightful place regardless of whether that place is high or low in the ranking.
Even if an employee may feel he deserves a salary increase, it would be disrespectful to ask his manager for it.
People are better off not questioning the decisions of those in authority.
Communications with superiors should always be done using formally established procedures.

Power distance is widely seen as critical for understanding the relationship between manager and employee (Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006), and thus is likely to be important for understanding employee engagement. More importantly, many studies have shown that there are strong differences between the GCC/ Arabic Gulf Region and the West on power distance. For example, Hofstede (2012) reports the KSA at 95/100 and Kuwait and the UAE at 80/100, versus the UK at 35/100 and the USA at 40/100 respectively. This is very important for understanding employee engagement and how it might work differently in the Gulf Region. For example, Employee Voice/Control is a key enabler of employee engagement in the West, but employees in the Gulf Region would not expect to have control in the workplace where the boss/leader is expected to take control and power over the employee. Thus, employees in the Arabic Gulf Region tend to do as their boss suggests without question and with little expectation for being engaged in the ways that many Western employees expect to be engaged, for example with employee voice/control strategies. This is in contrast to the existing (Western–derived) literature on employee engagement which suggests that employees are engaged when jobs are redesigned to give them greater voice and control. In a high power distance culture there is some risk that the employees will see employee voice and control as the line manager not taking sufficient responsibility. This is likely to be the case in the GCC Region where employees generally expect bosses to step forward and take charge without asking many questions.

3.3 The Effect of National Culture on Employee Engagement and Behaviour

Many researchers have demonstrated the influence of national culture on organisational practices (Smith, Fischer, & Sale, 2001). For example, in a study among employees from New Zealand (individualistic culture) versus Indonesia (collectivist culture), Thomas and Pekerti (2003) found that job satisfaction had different levels of influence on turnover intention. Job satisfaction was more important for how hard people work in New Zealand than for those in Indonesia because in individualistic societies like New Zealand people's work behaviours

are determined by individual causes like individual work attitudes while in more collectivistic societies like Indonesia people's work behaviours are more determined by culturally defined norms and duties. Agarwal (1993) also found a similar effect of national culture in a study of employees from the United States (individualistic culture) and India (collectivist culture). In this study, the negative relationship between organisational commitment and job turnover was significantly stronger in the United States than in India. Agarwal theorised that Indian employees are less motivated by personal needs than their American counterparts due to the more collectivistic nature of their culture.

It is clear that national culture is a key factor in gaining an insight into differences in how people behave as well as their preferences, attitudes, values, and beliefs (Briscoe & Schuler, 1995; Hofstede, 2007; House et al., 2004; Javidan et al., 2006). National culture will also necessarily affect how people behave in an organisational setting (Bhaskaran & Sukumaran, 2007; Klein, Waxin, & Radnell, 2009). According to Karine (2006: 2), "in overt and subtle ways, the deep elements of national culture influence every area of business relationships, systems, processes and work interactions across cultural boundaries". National culture thus may be perceived to be "the invisible force behind the tangibles and observable in any organisation" (Kirkman & Shapiro, 2001).

All employees, whether expatriates or local employees, bring their national culture to work with them every day. In traditional work settings, where the organisation and the employees share the same culture, it hardly seems to matter. However, when cultures mix that cultural differences become the most obvious (Adler, 2007; Pothukuchi et al., 2002). People of different cultures will react differently to the same managerial and organisational issues and behave differently in the same environmental conditions (Hofstede, 2001). Kanter (1994) noted that companies are often surprised by "the breadth and depth of differences" demonstrated by their expatriate managers.

3.4 The Enablers of Employee Engagement in the GCC

Most of the existing research on employee engagement in the region has been conducted by consultants rather than scholars. The enablers that are most often reported in that literature (Table 3-5 below), include those that are consistent with Western employee engagement literature (see Table 3-2), 1) opportunities to learn and grow (most cited in extant literature), but also those that are not included in the extant literature including, 2) Islam/local culture, and 3) personal relationship with the boss, families, network. This suggests both continuity with existing research in the West on opportunities to learn and grow as a top enabler, but difference as enjoyable workplace and employee voice and control were in the top three rather than here where personal relationships with the boss and respecting Islam round-out the top three enablers of employee engagement.

Table 3-5 Employee Engagement in GCC (*=also in Table 3-2 Enablers of EE in literature)

References / E.E in GCC	HR ZONE (2013)	Oxford Strategic Consulting (2013)	Gallup (2016)	Ahmad & Aldakhil (2012)	Mercer (2014)	
1) Islam/local culture	✓	✓		✓		3
2) Relationship with boss, families /Networks	✓		✓	✓		3
3) Employee Voice/ Dialogue *			✓	✓		2
4) Clear Directions for Work *			✓	✓		2
5) Hospitality and Generosity	✓					1
6) Status of the Job (role and company reputation)		✓	✓			2
7) Opportunities to Learn and Grow *	✓	✓	✓		✓	4
8) Enjoyable Workplace *			✓		✓	2
9) Variable Pay/Good Benefits *			✓		✓	2
10) Shared Purpose *			✓	✓		2
11) Job Security *		✓			✓	2
	4	4	8	5	4	

Here are the formal definitions of each of the enablers of employee engagement in the GCC: 1) Islam/Local Culture. As custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in Mecca and Medina, Saudis take their religious obligations very seriously. Islam is more than a religion; it can be described as a way of life and a moral code. The majority of Saudis subscribe to a version of Islam that is interpreted much more strictly than most others. As a result, Islam directly influences employee engagement through the structuring of daily life and the need for employers to follow these structures (Ahmad & Aldakhil , 2012; HR ZONE, 2013; Oxford Strategic Consulting, 2013). 2) Employee Voice/Dialogue. Employees expect to be consulted about important decisions, but not always to have influence and be heard. When bosses communicate with employees regularly, this is engaging. (Ahmad & Aldakhil; 2012, Gallup, 2016). 3) Clear Directions for Work. People in the GCC score highly on ambiguity reduction and power distance, according to Hofstede (2012). They prefer strong leaders who take control and provide clear direction. (Ahmad & Aldakhil; 2012, Gallup, 2016). 4) Networks/Relationship with boss and important families. Saudis place a lot of importance on relationships on many level (Ahmad & Aldakhil , 2012). Religious sect, family and tribe are all important elements in determining one's status in Saudi society. Wasta, which roughly translates as connections, networking and understanding who knows who (and in what capacity), is the main catalyst in getting things done. Saudis pay a lot of attention to your job title, professional qualifications, and who you know (HR ZONE, 2013).

 For employee engagement this means that employees want a personal relationship with their boss, other leaders in the organisation, and relationships with important families, and value those relationships much more than employees in the UK (Gallup, 2016); 1) Hospitality and Generosity. Hospitality and generosity are important values throughout the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia. Warm greetings, good manners, and a genuine welcome are characteristics amongst Saudis as well as guests. Formalities are considered more than good form; they are also an obligation, recognising status and showing respect (HR ZONE, 2013). This is all part of high power distance and formality in society. For employee engagement that means that employees appreciate voice and consultation, but

do not expect control in the workplace like UK workers. It also means bosses need to show an extraordinarily clear career pathway and promotion criteria for employees to feel comfortable – of the kind that UK employees would consider hand-holding and micro-management; 2) Opportunities to Learn and Grow. The quality of education in KSA has been consistently criticized. Outcomes oftentimes do not match the needs of the national labour market, and some of them lack good English knowledge and the required technical background. Combined with legal arrangements that make it more difficult to terminate Saudis, it make some employers reluctant to employ Saudis because they will need more training and support. For employees, the opportunity to learn marketable skills in the workplace is highly engaging (Ahmad & Aldakhil , 2012; HR ZONE, 2013; Oxford Strategic Consulting, 2013; Mercer, 2014); 3). Status of the Job (role and company reputation) matters in the GCC. Status and power distance leads to perceived social stigma for blue collar roles. Some young Saudis with high school diploma or less are reluctant to accept blue-collar jobs (such as truck drivers, plumbers, carpenters, etc.) to avoid offensive comments by their communities. They may continue looking for clerical jobs or even stay at home, but will not accept any blue-collar job that may be offered to them. For employee engagement this means that job and firm status is very important, more important than for most UK employees (Oxford Strategic Consulting, 2013; Gallup, 2016).

3.5 Research Gaps

Based on the literature review, the research gap has been identified as:

1)   There is a lack of rigorous academic research looking at the effects of national culture on employee engagement in the GCC/Arabic Gulf Region, including the KSA in particular.

2)   There is a lack of studies comparing the impact of culture on employee engagement between organisations in the Arabic Gulf Region versus Western companies.

3)   No one has looked at whether enablers or inhibitors of employee engagement in the literature apply to workers in the GCC.

This research is required in order to understand how to better engage employees in the GCC. This is critically important because although countries in the Arabic Gulf Region/Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have become major economic powers and play very important roles in the world economy (Brett, Behfar, & Kern, 2006; Distefano & Maznevski, 2000; van Knippenberg, 2011), they do not operate at world-class standards. This study will address the research gap by elucidating best practice in the GCC region and comparing it to existing best practice and research in the West.

4 INDUSTRIAL FIELD STUDY: DEVELOPING THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the industrial perspectives of employee engagement in large organisations in the GCC, especially in the KSA. Section 4.1 explains the semi-structured interviews that were developed from the literature review. Detailed data collection and analyses are explained in Section 4.2. Finally, this chapter is summarised in Section 4.3 and a proposed framework for employee engagement in the GCC region is presented.

4.1 Interview Questions and Participants

The semi-structured interview key questions are listed below and in full in Appendix 1. They are derived from the literature review and are written to shed light on the research gaps to enquire about enablers and inhibitors of employee engagement specifically in the GCC region – where there is a distinct lack of academic research on employee engagement in the GCC. The interviews were conducted in large organisations in the GCC, primarily in the KSA. The company names are included, but for confidentiality reasons, the names have been removed. Table 4 shows a list of position and years of experience of the respondents for the semi-structured interviews in the companies. A total of 15 respondents were involved in the data collection and were interviewed one-by-one, taking approximately 60 minutes per respondent. The questions were as follows:

1) How to engage employees in this region. In your experience, what are some successful ways to engage employees? By employee engagement I mean 'commitment' or 'motivation.'

2) Enablers of employee engagement in the KSA. Which of these items are likely to motivate people in YOUR workplace and make them more engaged if you can give it to them (based on the literature review, see Tables 2 and 5)?

3) Inhibitors of employee engagement in the KSA. What in your experience reduces employee engagement? Which of these items are likely to de-motivate people in YOUR workplace and make them less engaged if it happened to them?

4) Is there anything else you think I should know about how employee engagement works in Saudi Arabia. And what you think are the best ways to achieve it?

These questions were asked because they directly seek best practice in the region as outlined in the research gap, and enable answers provided to be compared with the existing literature on employee engagement in the West. Similar questions were asked in the early literature on employee engagement to establish a starting point for understanding employee engagement (Harter et al., 2002).

4.1.1 Data Collection and Results

Research Participants and the Companies

The research involved interviewing 15 senior managers in the region. Each of the managers had to be actively managing a group in the KSA, be originally from the region, and largely be educated in the region. All of the interviewees had at least a bachelors education and were interviewed in Arabic to ensure they were able to communicate detail and nuance. Companies represented included STC, Dallah Group, Saudi Airline, SEDCO, and Arriyadh Development Authority. The research employed a snowballing technique where researchers ask respondents to suggest additional potential interviewees until there is sufficient depth of understanding and experience. Each interview took approximately 60 minutes and were audio recorded, transcribed, and then translated into English for analysis. Early interviewees offered thoughts on how the existing group of enablers could be enhanced to reflect workers and local culture in the GCC and the KSA. After the first 5 interviews the research was paused, added those suggestions to the interview protocol, returned to all of the initial interviewees, as well as then ten additional interviewees with the new suggestions incorporated.

The research continued to add interviews until saturation where the answers were largely being repeated and there were no longer additional suggestions to add to the list of enablers.

Table 4-1 Participants in industrial field study

NO.	Position	Years of Experience	Company	Type of Organisation
1	Marketing Risk Management	11	SEDCO capital	Private Wealth Management
2	Senior organisation development	9	Saudi Telecoms Company	State-Owned Telecom
3	Legal regulatory Director	22	Saudi Telecom Company	State-Owned Telecom
4	Legal regulatory specialist	6.5	Saudi Telecom Company	State-Owned Telecom
5	Planning director	8	Saudi Telecom Company	State-Owned Telecom
6	Senior financial analyst	14	Saudi Aramco	State-Owned Oil
7	Finance management	5	Dallah Group	Private Conglomerate
8	Wholesale regulation section managers	7	Saudi Airline	State-Owned Airline

9	Consultant engineering	12	Arriyadh Development Authority	Government
10	IT business	6	Saudi Embassy	Government
11	Supervisor	11	High school	Government
12	Sovereign Wealth Manager	8	Abu Dhabi Ministry of Economy, UAE	Government
13	Chief Executive Officer	20	Abu Dhabi University Knowledge Group	State-Owned Higher Education
14	Chief Executive Officer	12	Consulting	Private Business
15	Founder	9	Urban Design Consulting	Private Business

Question 1: How to engage employees. In your experience, what are some successful ways to engage employees? By employee engagement I mean 'commitment' or 'motivation.' In your experience, what are some successful ways to engage employees?

    a.   What do you think are the main challenges of leading a group of people?

Below are the themes coming from the answers to this question. Each are listed as equal because the point was to understand what the challenges that

executives are, rather than to order or prioritise them: a) to gain member trust, b) to clearly communicate the goal of the team, c) to motivate individual members, d) to understand each individual employee's needs, e) to balance the needs of the individuals with the needs of the company, and f) to motivate members to engage and buy-into the team.

> b. In your experience, what are some successful ways to engage employees? By employee engagement, I mean 'commitment' or 'motivation.'

The themes coming from answers to this question are: a) by telling employees the full truth and working closely with them, b) developing the members through learning at the job, c) knowing the individual employee's personalities, d) empowering employees, e) create new opportunities for employees, and f) encouraging employees to be their authentic selves at work.

Question 2: Enablers of employee engagement. Which of these items are likely to motivate people in YOUR workplace and make them more engaged if you can give it to them? Yes or no…

In Figure 4-1 you can see the summary results of the interviews. Most of the interviewees agreed with most of the enablers in the extant (Western) literature on employee engagement.
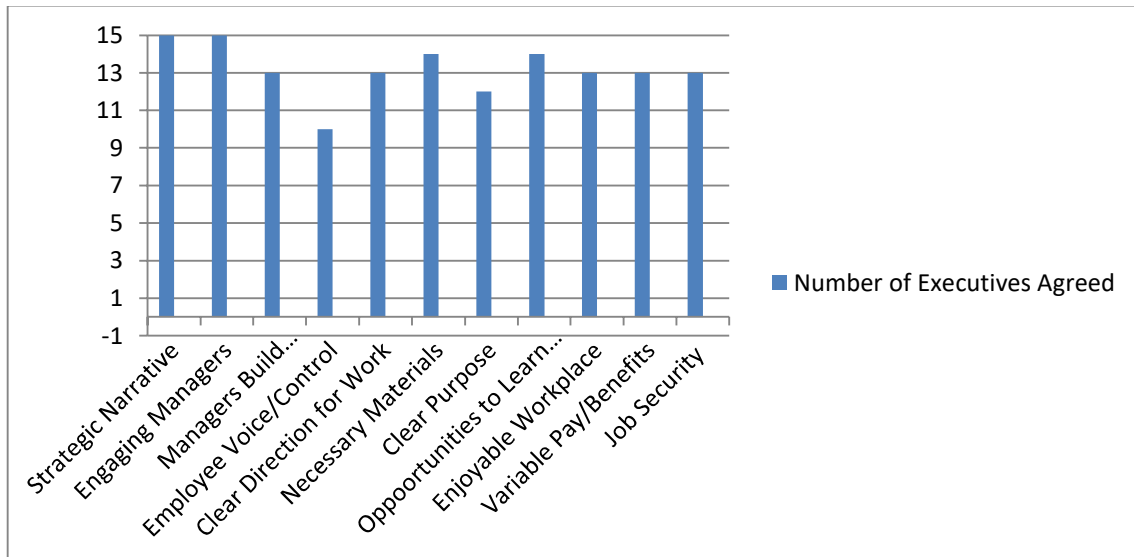
Figure 4-1 Summary in-depth interviews with executives in GCC

Question 3: Inhibitors of employee engagement" What in your experience reduces employee engagement. Which of these items are likely to de-motivate people in YOUR workplace and make them less engaged if it happened to them? All of the interviewees agreed with the inhibitors of employee engagement, including: a) a poor working relationship with their boss (e.g., their boss shouts at them); b) feeling their work environment is not physically safe; c) unfair hiring and pay decisions (e.g., boss' favourites get paid more); and d) not being consulted on important decisions in the workplace.

Question 4: Is there anything else you think I should know about how employee engagement works in Saudi Arabia. And what you think are the best ways to achieve it?

Taken as a whole, the answers to this question suggested a number of clarifications to the existing employee engagement framework to tailor it to the Gulf Region.

1) Engaging leaders needs to include a personal relationship with the boss and/or higher ups in the organisation.

2) Employee voice and control includes employee consultation but not necessarily control.

3) Job security needs to include a clear career pathway and promotion criteria

4) A new criterion would be for managers to accommodate the personal life of employees including things like prayer times, accident and illness for family members, and family obligations.

You can see these changes in Figure 4-2 and Table 4-2 below.
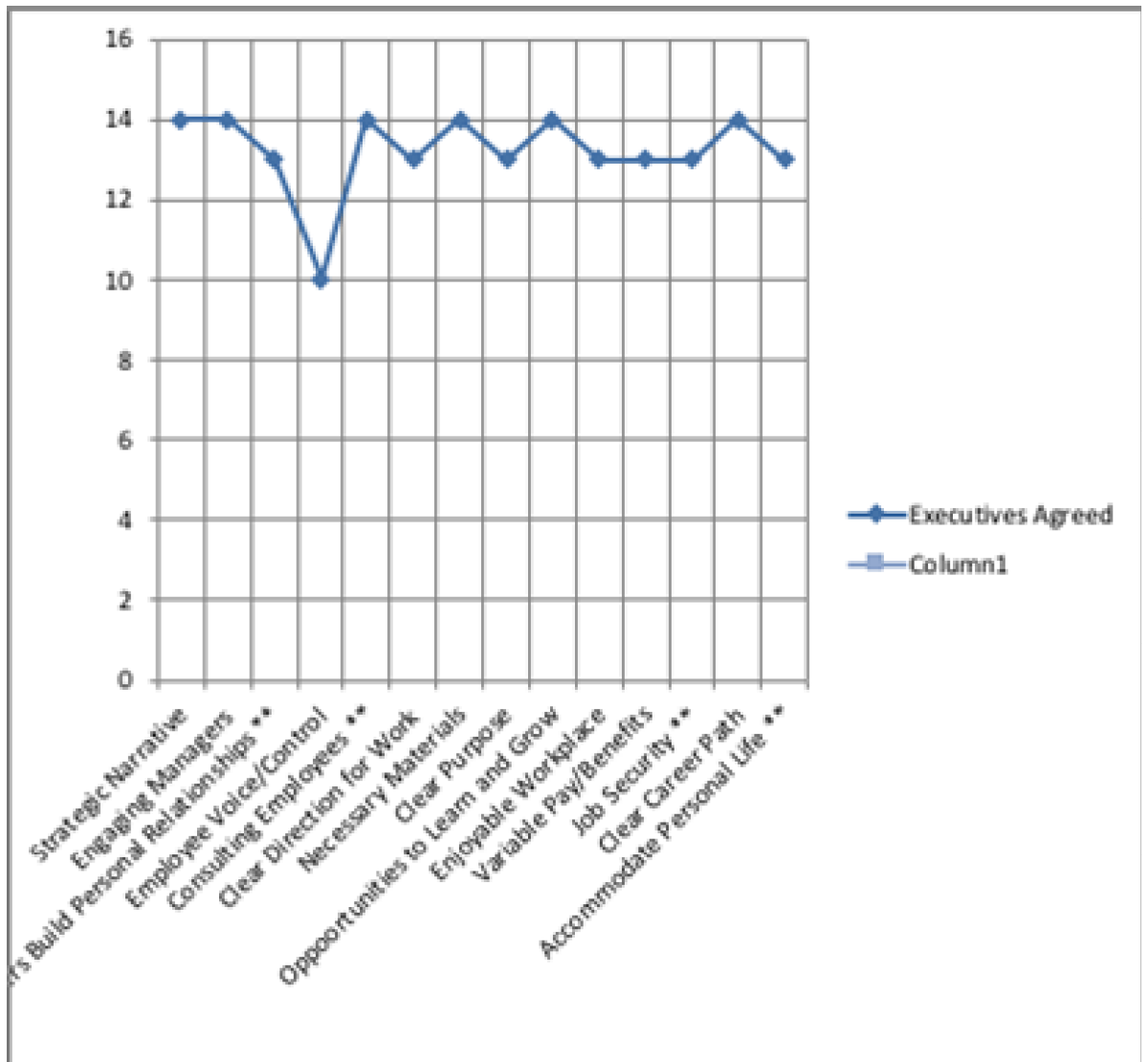
Figure 4-2 Number of Executives Interviewed Who Agreed with Revised Enablers of Employee Engagement in the GCC

Table 4-2 Enablers of Employee Engagement (Revised after Executive Interviews). Blue highlight - particularly important

	MacLeod & Clarke (2009)	Gallup (2012)	National Workforce Programme (2007)	Robertson-Smith & Markwick (2009)	Mercer (2014)	Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday (2004)	
1) Strategic Narrative Personal Meaning	✓		✓				2
2) Engaging Managers 2a) Leaders	✓	✓	✓				3
3) Employee 3a) Voice/Control	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	5
4) Clear Directions for Work		✓					1
5) Necessary Materials		✓					1
6) Clear Purpose for Organisation		✓		✓			2
7) Opportunities to Learn and Grow		✓		✓	✓	✓	4
8) Enjoyable Workplace		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
9) Variable Pay/Good Benefits				✓	✓		2
10) Job Security/Clear 10a) Career Path				✓	✓		2
11) Accommodate Personal Life and Islam							
12) Personal Relationship with the Boss, Families, Network							

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Starting with Table 3-2, Enablers of employee engagement in the literature, the table is updated here to reflect the results of the executive interviews. The recommended revisions to the enablers of employee engagement are:

1) Strategic Narrative/Personal Meaning – a clear personal narrative about how employee work makes a difference.

2) Engaging Manager/Leaders – managers who appreciate employees' effort and contribution, offer praise and support, and who treat their people as individuals.

2a) Engaging Manager/Leaders – managers who develop a personal relationship with their employees.

3) Employee Voice/Control – employees get to make decisions themselves and work with the boss to decide what we work on.

3a) Employee Voice – managers consult employees on important decisions.

4) Clear Directions for Work – managers who offer clarity and ensure that work is organised efficiently and effectively.

5) Necessary Materials – ensuring that employees have everything they need to complete their work (e.g., equipment, budget, etc.).

6) Clear Purpose for Organisation – a clear purpose and mission for the organisation to help employees feel their job is important.

7) Opportunities to Learn and Grow – ensuring employees feel the organisation is investing in their capabilities, including training and development activities.

8) Enjoyable Workplace – a comfortable place to work that makes work as enjoyable and easy as possible.

9) Variable Pay/Good Benefits – competitive pay, variable pay for overtime, and good benefits.

10) Job Security – confidence in the stability of employment, not being fired for a mistake, etc.

10a) Job Security – a clear career pathway and promotion criteria.

11) Accommodate Personal Life and Islam – give time for personal things like prayer times, accident and illness for family members, and family obligations.

12) Personal Relationship with the Boss, Families, Network – personal connections with the boss, important families and people with status matters for retaining and engaging employees –if they feel connected they feel influential and safe.

Enablers 11 and 12 are additions to the framework. All a) marked items are significant local interpretation differences from the literature. Item 3a is specifically to be deleted from the framework. The highlighted rows are those enablers that are deemed particular important in the executive interviews.

4.2 Revised Employee Engagement Framework

The results of the interviews used to adapt the enablers of employee engagement were combined with the results from the literature review including those summarised in Table 3-3 behaviours associated with engaged employees, as well as section 3.2.3 differences between the GCC and the UK, 3.1.1 definitions of employee engagement, and 3.1.2 the importance of employee engagement (i.e., outcomes of employee engagement). They were combined to create a unique and comprehensive framework for employee engagement in the GCC as represented in Figure 4-3 Employee engagement framework for large organisations in the GCC.
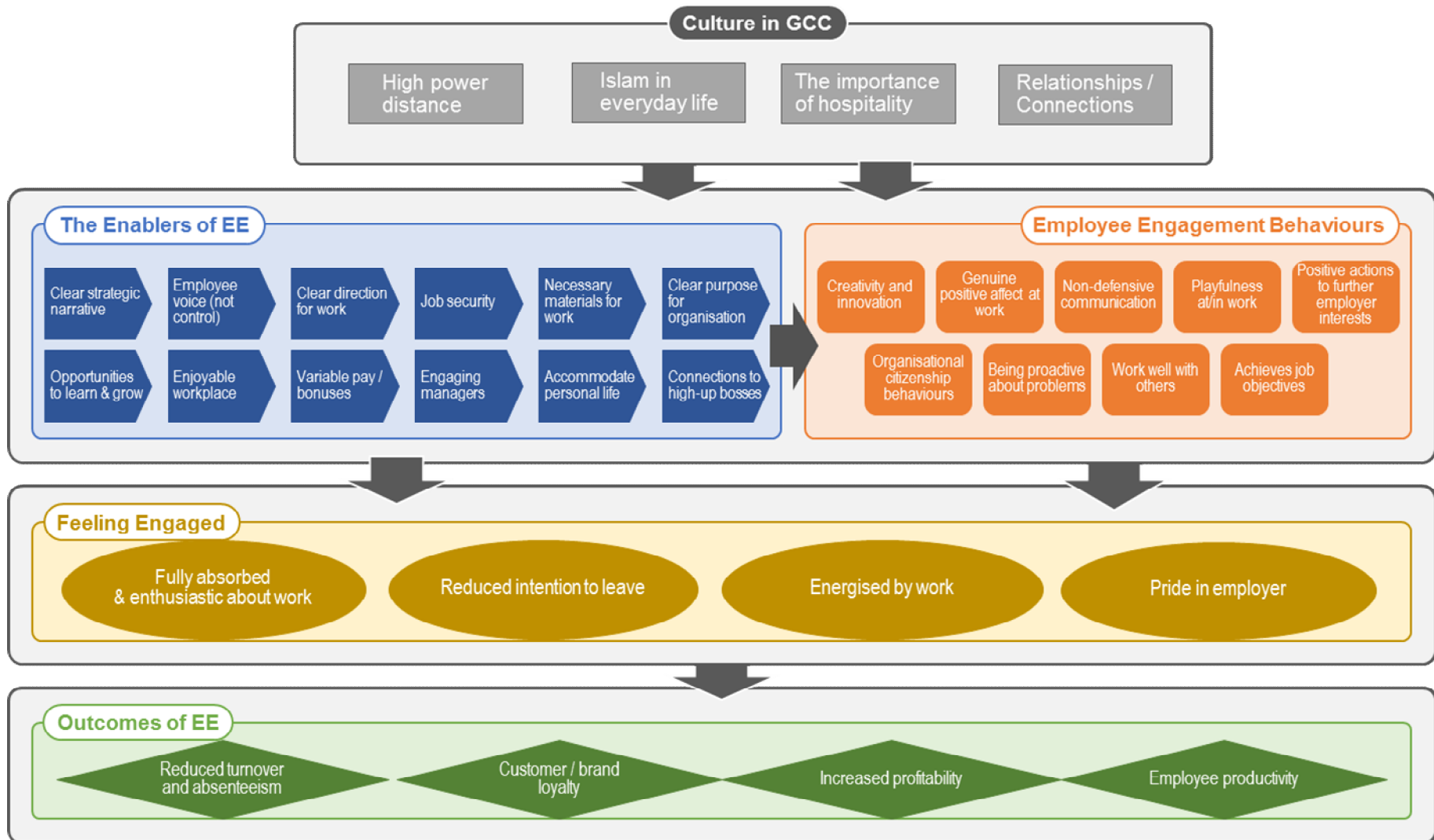
Figure 4-3 Employee Engagement Framework for Large Organisations in the GCC

4.3 Summary

These results from the industrial field study are largely consistent with the research on employee engagement, as well as the literature on national and regional cultural differences in the GCC. The interviews reveal that leader/member relations operate in a distinctive way, for example, in highlighting things such as engaging employees through providing 'clear directions', engaging high level people in the organization, and accommodating the practicalities and practice of Islam. The industrial field study was primarily inductive and idea generating to compare the thoughts of these local experts with the literatures on Arab culture and employee engagement. Taken together, they suggest a framework for engaging employees in the GCC region that can be summarised as shown in Figure 4-3.

5 FRAMEWORK VALIDATION STUDIES

This chapter presents two validation studies designed to assess the usefulness and predictive validity of the framework. The first is a questionnaire-based study designed to test the revised framework quantitatively for employee engagement in the GCC, especially in the KSA. The second is a field experiment in a company in the KSA where employees at one location where management used the framework in an attempt to boost employee engagement and compared it to a similar second location where no changes were made. Section 5.1 explains the questionnaire study, and Section 5.2 explains the field experiment. Finally, this chapter is summarised in Section 5.3.

4.4 Expert Judgment to Evaluate the Framework

The first part of evaluating and validating the framework involved the use of expert judgment to understand how applicable, useable, and useful the framework is or not. The experts were selected based on accessibility and expertise. The experts were from a mix of professional and practitioner backgrounds, including consultancy and senior managers (see section 5.3 on validation Study 2 for how it was used by a manager to improve employee engagement). All five experts all have depth of knowledge in employee engagement research, as well as in understanding local culture in the GCC. The expert judgment part of the validation proceeded by sending the experts all the research outputs with a brief explanatory summary. Each reviewed the material without presentation or discussion and then completed a response to a few questions asking whether they believed they understood it, whether they believed managers could pick it up and use it. Feedback was received in writing over email and spoken. The feedback was entirely positive, and so the next stage of validation was started.

4.5 Framework Validation Study 1

This first framework validation study looked to assess whether the revised employee engagement items accurately predict feelings of engagement and reported work behaviours that reflect work productivity with employees actually working in the GCC. A questionnaire was chosen as the preferred method to be able to engage a large number of workers/employees in and from the GCC to see if workers also connect engagement

enablers to feelings of engagement and productivity in the same way as the work leaders we interviewed in the previous study.

In this questionnaire study, the questions included a four-item measure of employee engagement, derived from the formal definition of employee engagement. The items were: "I am fully absorbed and enthusiastic about my work"; "At work, I take positive action to further my employer's reputation and interests."; "I am exhausted by my work." (reversed); and "I have plans to leave my current job." (reversed). The enablers of employee engagement included the 12 standard items from Gallup (2012), as well as some additional items based on the results of the industrial field study just reported where new enablers of employee engagement in the GCC emerged: "My supervisor consults me about important decisions", "I have a personal relationship with my supervisor", "My career pathway and promotion criteria are clear", and "My supervisor accommodates my personal life (e.g., family events, religious holidays, etc.)." The power distance scale included 17 items, including all items from the three most widely used measures of power distance (i.e., Brockner, et al., 2001; Earley and Erez, 1997, and Yoo, Donthu, & Lenartowicz, 2011). Group performance is measured from Conger, Kanugo, & Menon 2000). All of the items were scored on a 1-7 Likert scale, with one being "never/none/not at all" and seven being "constantly/always/totally." All scales had acceptable reliability. The means, standard deviations, alphas, and correlations amongst these variables are provided in Table 0-1.

4.5.1 Participants and Results

Three executives in three large organisations (STC, Dallah Group, and ARAMCO) in the KSA agreed to ask their immediate employees to complete a survey. The link went to 225 employees, six responses were removed because they were not GCC citizens, and the remainder completed at least part of the survey. Not every question was completed by every respondent, however, thus the actual number in each analysis depends on the specific questions. There are 112 respondents who completed every question, so that is the minimum in every analysis. The sample is thus 100% GCC/Arab and the respondents are 93% male. This research looks at a number of demographic variables and there is no significant pattern of those who completed all of the questions versus those who did not.

Table 0-1 Correlations Among Questionnaire Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Alpha	1	2	3	4
1. National Culture (i.e., Power Distance)	3.52	1.19	.91				
2. Enablers of EE	4.82	1.00	.87	.39*			
3. Employee Engagement (EE Behaviours and Feeling Engaged)	5.61	1.39	.77	.15	.36*		
4. Outcomes of EE (Group Performance)	5.19	1.31	.91	.19*	.54*	.46*	

Note. Sample size ranged from 112 to 130 groups because of missing data. Scales are 1-7, *p < .05.

To test the model as presented in Figure 6 we first looked at the descriptive statistics (mean or average, as well as standard deviation), and then looked at a measure reliability – so all of the items hang together and consistently measure the construct in question. Alpha is a standard measure, anything above .7 is considered a reliable measure. All measures passed the reliability test. The key analysis is to look at whether enablers of employee engagement mediates the relationship between power distance and employee engagement Hayes's (2013) PROCESS macro for SPSS was used to estimate a sequential mediation model. This technique investigates the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable through a series of mediating variables that are assumed to be causally related to one another. In the analysis, it used 5,000 bootstrap estimates to construct 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effect. The bootstrap analysis revealed that the mediation is significant, as the 95% confidence interval does not cross zero (.15, 95% CI: .031 to .312). Therefore, individuals who endorsed more of the items on the power distance scales were more likely to have the group of enablers work for them, which led to greater employee engagement. Table 6 shows that employee engagement is also a significant predictor of group performance.
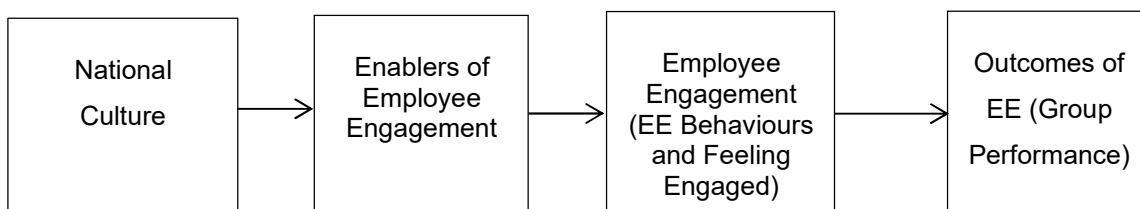
Figure 0-1 Core Concepts in Framework for Employee Engagement in GCC

This research also tests each individual item on the enablers list to see which items best predicted employee engagement. Individually, most of the enablers predicted employee engagement with the exception of "In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work;" "At work, my opinions seem to count" I have a personal relationship with my boss, "and " My career pathway and promotion criteria are clear."

4.6 Framework Validation Study 2

This second study was a field experiment designed to test whether a management team could use the framework to enhance employee engagement in their own organization. It involved identifying a distinctive group of 40+ employees in the organization that could be isolated from the rest to be able to change some significant aspect of management in line with the framework in an effort to enhance employee engagement. A management experiment is particularly interesting because if well executed will show a causal link between management behaviours and employees reporting that they feel engaged in the workplace.

The management inspected the framework and chose to make changes to make the workplace more engaging and enjoyable by providing a range of ethnic foods in the workplace, sports after hours, and by providing cars to take workers back and forth to their homes if they stayed late. The managers reported an immediate response from the workplace of increased organizational citizenship behaviours and proactive approaches to problems. After two weeks, employees were surveyed with an anonymous survey link asking about their level of engagement (4 questions), and perceived productivity. These results were compared with the survey results of a similar group of employees in another location within the same company.

4.6.1 Participants and Results

The employees were sent anonymous survey links in the two locations, being asked about their level of feeling engagement, outcomes of employee engagement, OCBs and self-rated workplace performance. The employee

engagement questions came from the final framework document. The first three were the same as the ones used in the questionnaire, 1) I am fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about my work; 2) At work, I take positive action to further my employer's reputation and interests; 3) I feel exhausted by my work (reversed); and 4) I have plans to leave my current job (reversed). Again for analysis we looked at descriptive statistics, and then reliability in the form of Cronbach's alpha. The items were reliable as expected (Cronbach's alpha = .74). OBCs were measured from the same scale as Study 1 (e.g., I help others who have been absent). Team performance was measured with 4 items as before (e.g., My team has high work performance). Again, reliability was good (Cronbach's alpha = .80 and .85).

To test whether the experiment treatment condition made a significant difference, a T-test was run showing a significant difference on all three measures between the two samples (Employee Engagement 4.4 v. 6.35, p<.001; Organisational Citizenship Behaviours 4.0 v. 5.9, p<.001; and Work Performance 5.0 v. 5.9, p <.001) The means, standard deviations, and alphas amongst these variables are provided in Table 0-2.

Table 0-2 Correlations among Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Alpha
1. Employee Engagement	5.44	1.2	.74
2.Organisational Citizenship Behaviours	4.97	1.0	.80
4. Group Performance	5.49	1.3	.85

4.7 Summary

This field experiment also provides support for the usefulness and efficacy of the framework of employee engagement for the GCC. The managers at the

business were comfortable looking at the framework document and talking through what they do well already in terms of engaging their employees, and where they felt they could do better. Using the descriptions of each of the enablers they were able to devise a plan to try and enhance employee engagement. Within a few days they reported workers staying longer, being more willing to help and support others, step in for others who missed work, and so on. The survey results also made clear that engagement had taken a step-up compared to the rest of the company.

5 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND FUTURE WORK

5.1 Discussion

This research develops and tests a framework for large organizations in the GCC and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to improve employee engagement and thus improve business performance. In the first qualitative industrial field study the research developed proposed changes to the literature on employee engagement by conducting in-depth interviews with experienced executives in the region. From the literature review and interviews with experienced leaders in the GCC a tentative framework was developed. In the survey validation study the research tested the ideas generated in the first industrial field study using a survey. The research finds support for a model of employee engagement that is both consistent with existing (Western) literature suggesting key enablers such as providing opportunities for employees to learn and grow as a key enabler of employee engagement, but also some significant changes. This research contributes to the literature in providing evidence for employee engagement in the region having some region-specific enablers including, 1) employee voice without control, 2) accommodating the religious practice and personal life of employees, as well as 3) employees establishing personal friendships with senior bosses and important families. The validation studies then confirm the usefulness and predictive validity of the framework. The first study shows that employees in the region agree with the leaders in what motivates them. The second study demonstrates that a manager can use the framework to make meaningful changes in leadership, and experience more engaged employees, who take on citizenship/helping behaviours in the workplace.

This research has important implications for the employee engagement research literature, as well as for employers in the GCC region. This is one of a very small number of studies looking specifically at what works in terms of management in the region – rather too much of existing advice for managers from the region derives from Western research. For scholars of employee engagement, the message is that there are some enablers that work everywhere (e.g., opportunities for learning and development), as well as likely to be cultural

differences in what motivates and engages employees in different regions of the world. The research specifically shows that what engages employees in the GCC region is both largely consistent with existing employee engagement research, but is also significantly distinct and reflects local culture. This suggests that the literature on employee engagement needs to become more culturally sensitive, with this research showing how cross-cultural research on employee engagement can be accomplished.

Like all research, it is not perfect. The test of employee engagement reported here comes primarily from a cross-sectional survey in which causality is very difficult to establish. Future research should use surveys of enablers of engagement with non-survey measures of performance, ideally a mix of financial and performance appraisals. That being said, this research does measure performance in the GCC region and does not assume that what engages employees in the USA or the UK, for example, will engage employees in the KSA. Hopefully this research inspires scholars from around the globe to conduct additional research identifying how employee engagement is different in different regions of the world, and in so doing identify what enablers and inhibitors are universal, as opposed to region-specific. Or worse, region-specific (i.e., Western) proposing to be universal.

5.2 Conclusion

The aim of this study is to develop a framework for improving employee engagement in large organisations in the GCC by leveraging aspects of national culture in order to enhance business performance. Based on the research and findings described here, the conclusions are as follows:

1. The literature supports the notion that national culture affects employee engagement, and thus business performance.

2. The impact of employee engagement can be measured by four key indicators: a) reduced turnover and absenteeism, b) greater customer and brand loyalty, c) increased profitability, and d) greater employee productivity.

3. This research demonstrates that the enablers of employee engagement in the GCC are largely the same as in the literature: opportunities to learn and grow, job security, enjoyable workplace, engaging managers, clear direction for work, and clear strategic narrative for the organisation, but also includes some enablers that are not currently in the literature and may be specific to the GCC region: a) engaging leaders need to include a personal relationship with the boss and/or higher ups in the organisation, b) employee voice and consultations without control, c) job security needs to include a clear pathway and promotion criteria, and d) accommodate personal life, including the practicalities of Islam such as prayer times, and family obligations.

4. The framework that was developed for employee engagement is a practical tool for improving behaviours and feelings of employee engagement, as well as being a predictor of key organisational outcomes.

5. This is also the first study to link specific aspects of national culture (e.g., power distance) to employee engagement, as well as to specify the distinctions between the enablers, behaviours, and feelings of employee engagement.

5.3 Future Work

Based on the findings and conclusions of the research, a number of suggestions for future research are listed below:

1. Given there are clear regional differences in the GCC, it likely that there are regional differences in other parts of the world. What are those differences? And what enablers of employee engagement are cultural versus consistent across geography. Are there any truly universal enablers of employee engagement?

2. Full implementation of the framework should be investigated for future work. Do each of the enablers in the framework contribute independently to employee engagement?

3. What are the specific behavioural changes managers can make to improve employee engagement for each enabler? What are the links between specific manager behaviours and employee engagement? Much existing research on employee engagement confuses managerial behaviours aimed at creating engaged employees, employee feelings of engagement, and employee behaviours that result from feelings of employee engagement. This research makes an attempt to consider enablers of employee engagement (Table 3-2), separate from behaviours of engaged employees (Table 3-3), separate from outcomes of employee engagement (Figure 3-1). Table 5-1 summarises and tests the core causal argument in this research about how these things fit together, but much work needs to be done to be confident in the causal mechanisms here.

4. Further research into human resource and knowledge management practices that are unique to the GCC region is needed. Most organisations in the GCC use Western research to inform management practices. This research suggests that much of that is sound advice, but there is also local nuance and cultural difference that needs to be accommodated.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Employee Engagement in the GCC (Saudi Arabia)

2.   Introduction

I am conducting interviews with a number of experienced business people like yourself in Saudi Arabia. I want to learn more about your experiences, challenges, and approaches to getting employees engaged with their work.

Employee Engagement is a workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organisation's goals and values, motivated to contribute towards organisational success, and are able at the same time to enhance their own sense of well-being.

For the next 60 minutes, you and I will have a conversation about your experiences engaging employees in their work. I am primarily here to learn from you—to get your perspective. The idea is not to see if anyone is conforming to a particular standard. The purpose of the research is to find out what the common practices are – in other words, what you think describes how to get employees engaged with their work. The overall aim of this   project is to develop a framework to improve employee engagement in large organisations in the GCC Gulf Region and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

The researcher doing this research is Abdulrahman Alfaifi, PhD student at Cranfield University.

3.   Consent and Confidentiality

First…a little background. I will ask you some questions about your experiences, some specific, and some more general. I am interested in your opinions or thoughts only—there are no right or wrong answers. Your decision to participate in this study is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. You are free to withdraw or stop the interview at any time.

My studies are primarily for academic research purposes. The results may become available to the public in research journals, books and other academic publications, but our conversation will not be available to anyone except me, and you will never be identified in any databases, publication, or any other way as a study participant. In publications we will need to describe the group we are talking to (e.g., high-level business people in Saudi Arabia), but will neither use nor record names.

I would like to tape our conversation to make sure we capture everything you are saying, so that we are able to transcribe the interviews and make my research findings available to a broader global readership. Your name will never be recorded on tape. So, please do not use your name, others' names, or the names of any companies when we talk. If at any time you wish to stop the interview you may do so and have the recording destroyed.

If you have any questions pertaining to this research you may contact the researchers [offer to provide email addresses] Abdulrahman Alfaifi (a.m.alfaifi@cranfield.ac.uk). You will also have an opportunity to receive complete explanation of the research and its purposes following completion of the study you can provide us with an email to send it to you.

[START AUDIO TAPE HERE] If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, could we please have your verbal consent to participate in the project and be taped?

(The interviewee needs to say yes!)

4.   **Background Questions**

I'd like to get some background information first about you:

a.   What is your current position in your organization? How long have you been in that position?

b.   Can you describe one or two experiences when you have led a project or group of people?

5.   How to Engage Employees

    a.   What do you think are the main challenges of leading a group of people?

    b.   In your experience, what are some successful ways to engage employees? By employee engagement I mean 'commitment' or 'motivation.'

6.   Enablers of Employee Engagement

Next I'd like you to think about one or more experiences when you were managing people and you needed to engage and motivate employees.

Can you give me an example of when successfully engaged a group of employees? What did you do? Why did it work?

Which of these items are likely to motivate people in YOUR workplace and make them more engaged if you could give it to them?

Yes or no…

1.   A clear personal narrative about how their work/purpose for their work to make them feel their job is important.

2.   Engaging mangers who offer praise and support.

3.   Managers who build a personal relationship with their employees.

4.   Employee voice and control over their workplace.

5.   Consulting employees about their work.

6.   Clear direction for getting work done.

7.   The materials necessary for their work.

8.   A clear purpose or mission for the organisation.

9.   Opportunities to learn and grow, including training and courses.

10.   An enjoyable workplace.

11.   Variable pay for overtime/ Good benefits/Financial compensation.

12.   Job security and a clear career path.

13.   Managers who accommodate family and personal life (e.g., prayers, wedding, new baby, accident, illness, etc.).

7.   Inhibitors of Employee Engagement

Next I'd like you to focus on inhibitors of employee engagement.

a.   What in your experience reduces employee engagement? What makes it difficult to get employees to engage with their work?

b.   Can you give me an example of when you tried to engage your employees and it failed?

Which of these items are likely to de-motivate people in YOUR workplace and make them less engaged if it happened to them? Yes or no…

1.   A poor working relationship with their boss (e.g., their boss shouts at them).

2.   Feeling their work environment is not physically safe.

3.   Unfair hiring and pay decisions (e.g., boss' favourites get paid more).

4.   Not being consulted on important decisions in the workplace.

8.   Closing comments and additional things to share

Is there anything else you think I should know about how employee engagement works in Saudi Arabia? And what you think are the best ways to achieve it?

Thank you so much for your time.

This will now conclude our interview. When we have results to share would you be interested in receiving them? [If yes, ask for their email]

Appendix B Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

This is a research project investigating employee engagement in different regions. The aim of study to develop a framework for improving employee engagement in large organisations in the Arabic Gulf Region/Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) by leveraging aspects of national culture in order to enhance business performance. Your responses are anonymous. No identifying information is being collected about you. By filling out and returning this survey you consent to participation.

Participant Information

1. Title of Research: Developing A Framework for Employee Engagement in Large Organisations in the Arabic Gulf Region by Leveraging National Culture

2. Researcher: Abdulrahman Alfaifi

3. Contact Email: a.m.alfaifi@cranfield.ac.uk

4. Purpose of the research: To understand how to engage and motivate employee in the Arab Gulf Region(GCC)

5. What is involved: participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire

6. Voluntary nature of participation and confidentiality.

This is an anonymous survey whereby all responses will remain confidential and analysed at an aggregate level so that no one response is traceable. The data collected will be used for academic purpose. Your participation is strictly voluntary. You can skip any question if you do not feel comfortable in answering. The estimated time to fill the questionnaire is about 10 to 15 minutes. Please be assured that the data collected from you and others are stored electronically at the university and are password protected. It will be kept for a minimum of five years.

Consent:

I have read the above information and I agree to participate in this study (Please Tick)

☐ I agree to participate in this study

These questions should be rated on the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never None Not at all			Sometimes Somewhat			Constantly Always Totally

	EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT							
1	I am fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about my work.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
2	At work, I take positive action to further my employer's reputation and interests.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
3	I feel exhausted by my work.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
4	I have plans to leave my current job.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
	ENABLERS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT (Gallup, 2012)							
5	I know what is expected of me at work.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
6	I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
7	At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
8	In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
9	My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
10	There is someone at work who encourages my development.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
11	At work, my opinions seem to count.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
12	The mission/purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
13	My associates (fellow employees) are committed to doing quality work.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
14	I have a best friend at work.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
15	In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
16	This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
	ENABLERS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT (from Industrial Field Study)							
17	My supervisor consults me about important decisions.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7

18	I have a personal relationship with my supervisor.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
19	My career pathway and promotion criteria are clear.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
20	My supervisor accommodates my personal life (e.g., family events, religious holidays, etc.).	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
21	I am paid well for my work.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
	<mark>POWER DISTANCE</mark> (Brockner, et al, 2001; Earley & Erez, 1997; Yoo, et al., 2011)							
22	In most situations, managers should make decisions without consulting their subordinates.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
23	In work-related matters, managers have a right to expect obedience from their subordinates.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
24	Employees who often question authority sometimes keep their managers from being effective.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
25	Once a top-level executive makes a decision people working for the company should not question it.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
26	Employees should not express disagreements with their managers.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
27	Managers should be able to make the right decisions without consulting with others.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
28	Managers who let their employees participate in decisions lose power.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
29	A company's rules should not be broken-not even when the employee thinks it is in the company's best interest.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
30	People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
31	People in higher positions should not ask the opinions of people in lower positions too frequently.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
32	People in higher positions should avoid social interactions with people in lower positions.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
33	People in lower positions should not disagree with decisions by people in higher positions.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
34	People in higher positions should not delegate important tasks to people in lower positions.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
35	There should be established ranks in society with everyone occupying their rightful place regardless of whether that place is high or low in the ranking.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
36	Even if an employee may feel he deserves a salary increase, it would be disrespectful to ask his manager for it.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7
37	People are better off not questioning the decisions of those in authority.	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ 6	□ 7

38	Communications with superiors should always be done using formally established procedures.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
39	We have a very effective work team.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
40	We have a very effective work team.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
41	I perform my work well.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
42	I am very effective at work.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
	PERFORMANCE (group performance)--Conger, Kanugo & Menon (2000)							
43	My team has high work performance.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
44	My work team accomplishes our tasks quickly and efficiently.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
45	My work team sets high standards of task accomplishment.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
46	My work team beat its target.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7

Demographics:

53. Gender:
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

54. Age:
- ☐ Under 30 years of age
- ☐ 30 – 39 years
- ☐ 40 – 49 years
- ☐ 50 years +

55. Nationality:
- ☐ Saudi
- ☐ Other Arab
- ☐ European
- ☐ North American, similar
- ☐ Other Asian

56. Highest Education:
- ☐ Diploma or under
- ☐ Undergraduate degree
- ☐ Graduate degree
- ☐ Doctorate or other

57. Where was last qualification earned?
- ☐ Saudi Arabia
- ☐ Other Arab country
- ☐ Asian country
- ☐ European, North American, or similar

58. Career Experience:
Under 5 years
- ☐ 5 – 9 years
- ☐ 10 – 15 years
- ☐ over 15 years

59. Current Position:
- ☐ Owner
- ☐ CEO/Executive
- ☐ Line manager/Team Leader
- ☐ Staff

Appendix C Questionnaire from Experiment

Dear Respondent,

This is a research project asking just ten questions about how you think and feel about your work.

We want to understand about YOUR experience of work.

If you need help with the English, there is a tab on each page which will give you an Arabic translation.

Your responses are anonymous. No identifying information is being collected about you. By completing and returning this survey you consent to participation.

Participant Information

1. Title of Research: Employee Experience Questionnaire

2. Researchers: PhD Researcher Abdulrahman Alfaifi

3. Contact Email: a.m.alfaifi@cranfield.ac.uk

4. Purpose of the research: To understand how you feel about your work

5. What is involved: participants will be asked to complete ten questions

6. Voluntary nature of participation and confidentiality:

This is an anonymous survey whereby all responses will remain confidential and analysed at an aggregate level so that no one response is traceable. The data collected will be used for academic purpose. Your participation is strictly voluntary. You can skip some questions if you do not feel comfortable in answering. The estimated time to fill the questionnaire is about 4 to 5 minutes. Please be assured that the data collected from you and others are stored electronically at the university and are password protected. It will be kept for a minimum of five years.

Consent:

I have read the above information and I agree to participate in this study (Please Tick)

☐ I agree to participate in this study

These questions should be rated on the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never None Not at all			Sometimes Somewhat			Constantly Always Totally

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	==EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT==							
1	I am fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about my work.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
2	At work, I take positive action to further my employer's reputation and interests.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
3	I feel exhausted by my work.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
4	I have plans to leave my current job.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
	==ORGANISATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOURS==							
5	I help others who have been absent.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
6	Even when not required for my job, I volunteer for many things at work.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
7	I help others who have heavy workloads.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
8	I make innovative suggestions to improve my department.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
	==PERFORMANCE (group performance)--Conger, Kanugo & Menon (2000)==							
9	My team has high work performance.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
10	My work team accomplishes our tasks quickly and efficiently.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
11	My work team sets high standards of task accomplishment.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
12	My work team beat its target.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7