Abstract

There has been an increasingly widespread awareness that academics need to engage in scholarly research activities. This could potentially enhance both individual and institutional performance and thereby the positive contribution that academic institutions can make to society. This paper aims to investigate the role if educational managers in promoting the scholarly research and publishing activities at the private college. Saudi Arabia is a young country and interesting case to examine. A private college was selected to conduct the research within. Survey was distributed among many academic participants. The main finding of this study is that the most highly recommended motivational strategies to promote scholarly research at the college are to minimise the dissatisfiers and provide incentives, rather than to threaten and/or impose punishments on academic staff.

Keywords: Motivation, Scholarly Research, Publishing, Private College, Saudi Arabia

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that engaging in research is important in revitalising the interest of academics in their subjects, and in building a research and publishing profile for their institutions. In fact, academic staff who actively publish can build a national and international reputation for themselves and for their institutions which, in turn, could impact on their ability to secure research funds and consultancy contracts (Goldsmith et al., 2001; Rowley, 1996). Nevertheless, many academic institutions within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have been remiss in terms of publishing their scholarly research outputs (Assuliman, 2007). As a matter of fact, scholarly research does not presently occupy more than 5% of the daily responsibilities of Saudi academics (Qamar, 2008).

Al-Ola College is a Saudi all-women’s private academic institution, at which the author used to teach. The author has been involved in informal discussions with her colleagues about the reasons behind their weak contributions in terms of scholarly publications, especially when compared with that of non-Saudi academics. Most of the causes that have emerged have been attributable to defective human resource management (HRM) on the part of the college’s leadership. On the other hand, the literature of educational HRM affirms that motivation can help to engage the academic staff in work behaviours and certain lines of action that are beneficial to their educational organisations and to themselves (e.g. Evans, 1998; Foskett and Lumby, 2003; Turner, 1992). Given the absence of relevant supporting empirical evidence, it is of interest to Al-Ola College to closely examine ways by which motivation can spur scholarly research and publishing activities at the college. This qualitatively-based research therefore aims to investigate the potential roles of Al-Ola College’s educational managers in motivating their academics to produce scholarly research. In order to achieve this overall aim, the following related research objectives need to be addressed:

- To review the relevant literature in order to both highlight the potential role of motivation towards the achievement of strategic goals at academic institutions, and to examine the current status of academic publishing activities within Saudi university and colleges.
- To identify, through surveying Al-Ola’s academic staff, what drivers and obstacles exist with regard to scholarly research and publishing activities.

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1 In line with BERA ethical guidelines, Al-Ola College is a pseudonym that has been chosen in order to ensure anonymity.
To interview some of Al-Ola’s educational managers with regard to their potential motivational role in boosting scholarly research among academics.

To make recommendations for motivating academic staff at Al-Ola College with regard to producing scholarly research.

In order to avoid repetition, it was decided not to provide a set of research questions, which would have been a paraphrased version of the above objectives. Having briefly introduced the research context as well as the set research aims and objectives, the following section draws upon the relevant literature before presenting the primary research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section aims to address the first research objective, and is comprised of two parts: (i) An introduction to the concept of motivation and its importance in terms of achieving strategic goals; (ii) A critical evaluation of the current status of scholarly research publication in Saudi Arabia.

2.1 Introducing the Concept of Motivation

There is no doubt that motivation and its management is a core element of HRM which, in turn, is the backbone of all effective educational management. This is because motivating people to work well and achieve results through them is the essence of good management (Riches, 1994). Apparently, no consensus seems to be available in the literature with regard to the definition of the concept of motivation (Chindanya, 2002). One of the most comprehensive definitions in the management literature was provided by Johannson and Page (1990), who defined motivation as “...processes or factors that cause people to act or behave in certain ways. To motivate is to induce someone to take action. The process of motivation consists of: identification or appreciation of an unsatisfied need; the establishment of a goal which will satisfy the need; determination of the action required to satisfy the need” (pg. 196). Simply put, motivation is concerned with what drives individuals, and how they are driven, to work in the way they do to satisfy needs or fulfil goals. Armstrong (1999) further explains that motivation at work can take place in two ways; i.e. staff can either motivate themselves or be motivated by management. These two types of motivation are respectively referred to an intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

A further review of the literature reveals that numerous theories have been put forward about the concept of motivation. Indeed, each motivation theory has its own strengths and weaknesses. Since a full review of all of the various motivation theories is well beyond the scope of this paper, care has been taken to study the theories that could potentially provide a conceptual framework for the subject of this present study. In keeping with its qualitative approach, identified relevant major theories include Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow, 1943), X and Y Theory (McGregor, 1970), Motivation-Hygiene Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964), Thorndike’s Positive Reinforcement Theory (Mosley et al., 1993) and the High-performance Cycle Theory (Lock and Latham, 1990). These theories can be broadly classified under three categories: content, process and positive reinforcement theories. Content theories, such as those of Maslow and Herzberg, are concerned with identifying the specific variables which exert an influence on an individuals’ work motivation. Process theories, such as those of Vroom and Adam, seeks to explain the dynamic relationships among the different variables involved in the motivation process (Alpander and Carter, 1991), whilst Positive Reinforcement theories advocate the idea of providing incentives (such as merit pay, job security, praise and recognition) in order to encourage repeated desired behaviours in the future (Mosley et al., 1993).

Bearing in mind that no an all-embracing theory exists to explain the complex phenomenon of motivation, these key theories have collectively provided a solid theoretical basis for making sense of the present research findings. A simultaneous reference will therefore be made some to these theories, where appropriate, when analysing the outcomes of this research that focuses on the motivation of the
academic staff at Al-Ola College. Moreover, it is perhaps worth mentioning here that other vital elements of HRM practices (such as rewards, compensation and appraisals) are highly relevant when it comes to motivating and committing the workforce. More specifically, they are usually perceived as potential motivating contributors for directing the workforce towards achieving the most favourable performance and/or certain strategic goals (Tong, 2001). Nonetheless, a number of educational management scholars, for instance in a book edited by Walker and Dimmock (2002), argued that the exact nature of such motivating mechanisms tends to be culture-specific. For instance, unlike collectivist cultures, individualistic ‘western’ cultures tend to favour administering tangible rewards based on individual performance rather than group outcomes. Therefore, given that this empirical research is carried out in Saudi Arabia, it would be interesting to discover which aspects of the above mentioned motivation models – and what kinds of motivators – seem to prevail within the Saudi cultural setting.

Having briefly highlighted the concept of motivation within the educational HRM context, it is now necessary to examine the current state of academic research within Saudi higher education institutions.

2.2 Scholarly Research and Publishing Activities within Saudi Arabia

It appears that all knowledge indicators – including the number of authored books, scholarly publications, television channels, internet access, registered patents, etc. – point to a knowledge deficit in Saudi Arabia. This was plainly suggested by a study published in 2003 by the United National Development Programme. This study even pointed out that Saudi Arabia – among many other Arabic nations – trail behind all developed and many developing nations in terms of knowledge indicators (Bennani et al., 2003). For instance, it was disappointing to note that only one Saudi scholarly paper had ever been cited more than forty times, compared with 10,481 American and 523 Swiss papers. Assuliman (2007) also mentions that only 580 articles in all possible fields were actually published in 2001 by scholars residing in Saudi Arabia. In this regard, Hamza (2003) further argues that, due to a lack of communication among scholars with regard to their research findings through academic publications and/or conference presentations, a sizable portion of scholarly studies are repeated in one form or another in Saudi Arabia.

Apparently, there has always existed limited supporting incentives and reward mechanisms for academic publishing in Saudi Arabia (Athubaity and Al-Karni, 1993; Handoussa, 2003). Although promotion in the Saudi higher education sector is currently partially based on scholarly publications, hiring does not require any. In other words, once an academic gets a job in the Saudi academia, he/she is not institutionally required to publish in order to retain his/her job status. Moreover, there appears to be only a few scholarly journals published in Saudi Arabia; hence active Saudi scholars and academics tend to submit to international journals. Bearing in mind that not all academic journals are of equal standing, it is usually assumed that prestigious journals are those which are monitored by the ISI Web of Knowledge. A few Saudi universities have therefore started requesting staff to present details of articles published in peer-reviewed journals monitored by the ISI in order to be considered for promotion (Assuliman, 2007). In spite of recent reforms within the Saudi education systems, it was recently reported that the best university in the country (namely King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals) was ranked 2,998 out of a total of 3,000 higher education institutions, while no Saudi university has ever been ranked according to any classification among the top 500 in the world (Al-Saddiqi, 2008; Safar, 2007). A review of the relevant literature reveals that reported deficiencies within the Saudi higher education sector include the low quality of academic teaching, poor library services and little emphasis on scholarly research activities (Al-Qahtani, 2004; BouJaoude, 2003; Muysken and Nour, 2006). Bearing in mind the relative absence of more recent published studies with regard to the status of scholarly research in Saudi Arabia, it is perhaps worth acknowledging that a review of the local Saudi media suggests that reforms of tertiary education seem recently to have received a lot of attention and generous funding from the Saudi Government. Given the limited recent empirical evidence on this subject, one hopes that the findings of this present research would not only be relevant to HRM practices at Al-Ola College, but could also provide fresh insights that may
contribute towards enhancing the poor status of scholarly publishing in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a whole.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this section is to briefly highlight the methodology adopted, as well as to provide a description and justification of the research design. Following this will be a discussion of the limitations of this research as well as the ethical concerns that this research raises.

3.1 Research Approach

The research approach, whilst varied, is predominantly qualitative - as opposed to quantitative-based. According to Hamby (2001), adopting a qualitative research approach is advantageous in terms of providing an in-depth examination of situations in which complex questions are posed. Bearing this plus point in mind, an interpretivist stance using a qualitative approach (Saunders et al., 2007) best fits the present research’s aim of gaining a deep understanding of the potential roles of educational managers in motivating their academic staffs to produce scholarly research by examining the case of Al-Ola College. In this regard, it is perhaps worth noting that qualitatively-driven researchers usually, although not necessarily, use a case study approach. Case studies are often cited in the research methodology literature as an appropriate approach when the researchers have no control over events and/or are unable to manipulate relevant behaviour (Ragin and Becker, 1992). A frequently cited definition of the case study approach is “...an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003: 13). Thus, despite being criticised by some scholars for its lack of generalisability (Verma and Mallick, 1999), a qualitative case study approach could potentially yield a rich understanding of the context of the research and the processes to be studied (Morris and Wood, 1991). It should be noted however, that whilst the research findings are expected to be of most relevance and value to Al-Ola College, they may still be partially generalisable. For instance, they might be relevant to other academic institutions in Saudi Arabia or abroad, especially those which also operate in rapidly developing countries and/or with cultural settings similar to that of Saudi Arabia.

3.2 Research Design

In order to enhance the validity of this research, it was decided to use a variety of evidence. This is usually referred to as “data triangulation” (Miller and Brewer, 2003; Patton, 2002), and is considered as an important feature of an exemplary case study (Remenyi et al., 1998). For the purpose of this research, the main data collection methods were a questionnaire sent to academics, and interviews with senior managers at Al-Ola College. This was supplemented with the use of available documentary evidence (i.e. recent documents detailing job responsibilities and conditions for promoting academics, obtained from the both the college and the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education).

Indeed, designing an effective questionnaire can require a lot of effort and time. Nonetheless, the use of questionnaires – despite the potential threat of low response rates – has many advantages over interviews. Saunders et al. (2007) explain that questionnaires are relatively more cost effective when it comes to accessing a large sample, and they also provide a greater assurance of anonymity. Moreover, they are fairly easy to administer, and the standardised terms should facilitate the analysis process. A questionnaire was therefore written in English (i.e. the teaching language in Al-Ola College), and was subsequently distributed via personalised emails to all of academic staff (i.e. 51 academics) at the college. For a copy of the invitation email and the questionnaire, please refer to Appendix A. The issues raised in the questionnaire were essentially inspired by the literature reviewed in Section 2. The underlying aim of the questionnaire was to address the second research objective, i.e. “to identify what drivers and obstacles exist with regard to scholarly research and publishing activities”. Given the
exploratory nature of this questionnaire, it was decided to use open-ended questions. Prior to inviting respondents to fill in the questionnaire a pilot test, in which two academic colleagues were asked to fill in a prototype version in order to examine the level of clarity, was conducted. Out of the distributed 51 questionnaires, a total of 28 were completed and returned (i.e. yielding a response rate of 55%). When compared with typical response rates of similar questionnaire surveys (Presser et al., 2004), this response rate can be considered to be very good. Three main factors may however have contributed to achieving such a relatively high response rate. Firstly, the respondents were essentially work colleagues who knew the author personally. Secondly, this response rate was achieved after sending reminder invitations to those who had not initially responded. Thirdly, as an incentive to participate, the respondents were offered a summarised copy of the final survey results.

In addition to surveying the academics, seven members (out of a total of nine) of the Al-Ola College’s Board of Directors agreed to be interviewed in order to discuss the prospects of boosting scholarly research endeavours at the college. Consistent with an adopted interpretive paradigm, Patton (2002) mentioned that qualitative interviews are based on the view that knowledge can be generated by individuals through purposeful conversation, and that the perspective of others is meaningful. For the purpose of this research, semi-structured in-depth interviews seemed beneficial in that they could ensure a focused approach, whilst offering flexibility in terms of modifying the interview questions to target new ideas raised by the interviewee (Ribbins, 2007). However, given that the researcher was only able to make a short visit to Saudi Arabia where the interviewees were located, it was impossible to conduct all of the interviews with such a senior sample on a face-to-face basis. Thus, five interviews were conducted in person, whilst the remaining two were carried out by telephone. Email interviewing was not used because it was seen as an unsuitable means for semi-structured interviews (Gwarney, 2007). With respect to data analysis, bearing in mind the small number of interviews (with a total duration of around five hours), the use of any sophisticated analysis software was deemed unnecessary. Hence, the interviews as well as the open-ended questionnaires were analysed manually through identifying the similarities and differences with regard to the responses of the participants. In this regard, Hart (2005) affirms that adopting such a qualitative approach to data analysis could be beneficial in terms of relating the individual responses to the “big picture” set by the research objectives.

3.3 Research Ethics

Embarking upon such research could mean that the surveyed academics and interviewed managers might feel intimidated and hence reluctant to participate in a study about promoting scholarly research; i.e. something which unfortunately does not receive much attention at the college. Therefore, certain themes in questioning could result in respondents wishing to avoid certain questions, or perhaps providing the type of answers that they think the researcher might want to hear. For these reasons, interviewees were encouraged to answer freely, in an environment where no specific answer was seen as right or wrong. In addition, as argued by Renzetti and Lee (1993), that especially when researching sensitive areas, investigators must ensure the anonymity of the respondents. Therefore, at the start of each interview, it was emphasised that the interviewees’ identities would not be divulged. The same promise was given in the survey’s invitation email. Ensuring anonymity has helped to secure the confidence of the respondents and hence has increased the likelihood of them expressing their views more openly. Moreover, it is of relevance to mention that the use of triangulation has undoubtedly enhanced the validity of the collected data (Fitzgerald, 2007). For instance, the use of relevant documentary evidence has allowed a cross-check of the information relating to the expected research duties of academics. As a final note, this research was carried whilst keeping away from unethical factors (e.g. fabrication, fraudulent materials or omissions) which could otherwise have invalidated the data collection and analysis. Among the other factors that may limit the validity of the response of surveys’ and interviews’ participants are leading, poorly framed and/or overly complicated questions (Bell, 2007).
3.4 Research Limitations

It is important to stress the limitations of this research. Although every care was taken to limit various potential sources of bias, qualitative approaches are often regarded as being subjective endeavours that inherently carry the potential threat of bias (Bell, 2005). Moreover, a case study approach typically suffers from a limited ability to generalise findings due to small sample size. Borrowing from the assumptions underlying interpretive case study-based research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003), a small sample was selected in order to obtain in-depth information, which—as argued in Section 3.1—could be partially generalisable. Despite the identified concerns, the email-based questionnaires and semi-structured interviews undertaken have produced useful and interesting results, which are presented and analysed next.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The aim of this section is to discuss the research findings that were derived from the survey of academics at Al-Ola College, followed by the results of the seven interviews that were conducted with senior management.

4.1 Survey Results

A graphical representation of the response analysis for each of the survey questions is provided in Appendix B. To begin with, answers provided for the first survey question have revealed that, with the exception of three participants, the survey population sample has an academic working experience of more than one year, and that 54% of the respondents have experience ranging between three and eight years. In spite of the relative seniority of the survey participants, it was disappointing to find that 64% of them have thus far failed to publish a single academic paper. Nonetheless, the participating academics have expressed a rather high level of job satisfaction with regard to their work and how they are being treated at Al-Ola College. In spite of such a prevailing sense of ‘equity’ as defined by Adams (1965), the survey has divulged that the vast majority of Al-Ola academics does not only appear to be dissatisfied with its scholarly research outputs, but would also like to witness an emphasis on the part of senior managers upon research activities as part of their job duties. In other words, although most of the surveyed academics seem to be intrinsically motivated with regard to academic publications, they demand extrinsic motivation on the part of management. The fact that they blame the college’s management for the current lack of scholarly research effort supports an implicit assumption of this research, i.e. that such a situation is largely a HRM-related issue. Strictly speaking, as highlighted by Nias (1980), such a negative perception towards management is a typical ‘dissatisfier’ that falls into the ‘hygiene factors’ category that was articulated by Herzberg et al. (1959).

In addition to the reported lack of support from management, the factor of ‘time constraints’ was on top of the list for obstacles hindering a focus on research activities. It was argued that most of the Al-Ola academics’ time during the day was devoted for teaching. In this regard, it was suggested that managers should try to reduce the teaching duties of their academics so that they can focus more on research activities. A couple of the participants further mentioned that there is no way they could carry out research activities after finishing an exhausting day teaching at the college. It was stated that “As a typical Saudi lady, I am expected/obliged to dedicate my out-of-office efforts to my family/house duties”. Another set of barriers were identified as ‘difficulties in accessing data’, which does not refer to limited library resources but also to the fact that women, for Saudi cultural-related reasons, do not have ready access to male-dominated primary sources of information. One of the research-active participants mentioned that she usually asks her husband and/or brothers to carry out interviews, on her behalf, with Saudi officials or managers for the purpose of collecting research data.
Another reported factor is the limited availability of research funds at the college. With an inadequate support from the private sector, the government’s limited funds for promoting research are wholly allocated to government-funded universities. Al-Ola College is a private college that was co-founded a decade ago by a few Saudi businessmen, with the main objective of providing top-quality higher education in majors which were not traditionally offered to Saudi women. Moreover, eight of the surveyed academics highlighted the poor perception towards the importance of research in Saudi Arabia, which can be attributed to two main reasons. Firstly, as bluntly put by one the participants, “It is unfortunate that research and innovation have never been a prime part of our educational system. We grew up seeing research as a luxury rather than as a necessity”. In other words, research lies at the top of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Secondly, due to negative perceptions, research activities tend to be “isolated academic exercises” whose outputs and results are usually overlooked. The factor of ‘deprived academic freedom’ came as the final highlighted barrier to carrying out scholarly research in Saudi Arabia. Due to the religious and conservative nature of Saudi society, there are certain subjects – such as those relating to government policies and women’s rights – which cannot be subject to any type of scrutiny. According to a couple of the participants, such a tightly controlled environment does not just impose limits on subject areas for scholarly research, but could also potentially cause frustrations among the researchers.

Having discussed the barriers that have been hindering Al-Ola academics from carrying out research activities, it was necessary to explore the potential factors that could motivate the academics to satisfy their claimed appetite for research. In fact, it was vividly argued by Dincer and Bitirim (2006) that extrinsic motivational drivers provided by senior management in educational institutions must work in coordination with intrinsic motivational drivers, since extrinsic motivational drivers need to trigger individual motivation levels. The survey responses contained a total of thirty-four suggested potential drivers, some of which were repeated by more than one respondent. These drivers can be grouped into two categories: tangible and intangible incentives. It was interesting to note that 91% of the suggested incentives were tangible motivators, whilst the remaining 9% were intangible ones. Arranged in the order of the frequency of mention, tangible incentives included permanent salary increases, promotion, ‘on-the-spot’ monetary awards for publishing a paper, research training and skill development. On the other hand, suggested intangible incentives included allocating more time for research activities, setting compulsory targets for academic publications, and praise and recognition in staff meetings.

4.2 Interview Results

For the semi-structured interview schedule, please refer to Appendix C. Despite confirming the existence of the various external obstacles identified by the surveyed academics, the interviewees agreed, as a whole, that increasing scholarly research and academic publications would bring benefits to the college and to Saudi society as a whole. For instance, it was argued by four managers that although the college has, thus far, been focusing on teaching students, there are genuine plans to transform the college into a fully-fledged university within a few years. In one of the interviewee’s words: “Encouraging research activities would indeed be one the important steps to help us build a name and good reputation for our future university”. Nonetheless, one of the interviewed managers, who happened to be educated at the United Kingdom (UK) argued that, given the recent and fragile history of Saudi higher education sector, it would only be fair to compare them with ‘post-1992 UK universities’ that were not even formally designated as polytechnics. As pointed out by Alghafis (1992) and Bahgat (1999), Saudi colleges and universities were recently established with the sole purposes of teaching and providing tertiary educational and/or vocational qualifications to the country’s rapidly growing young population. The author was shown that the current employment contracts for Al-Ola’s academics do not include clauses demanding publications in order to retain their jobs. A review of other documents provided by the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education confirms that this is the norm throughout the country. It was pointed out however that, although not officially stated,
there are various incentives for academics to engage in academic publishing. The Saudi higher education system makes some ‘implicit’ associations between publications and the prestigious status of academics. The more prestigious the status of a Saudi academic, the more the chance is to increase his/her income through securing research and/or consultancy contracts. Moreover, bearing in mind the conditions for promotion that have recently changed to include the number of academic publications, there is a growing recognition among faculty members that one needs to be at least an Associate Professor in order to become a Head of Department or a College Dean.

In spite of such ‘unofficial’ incentives highlighted by only two of the managers, the remaining interviewees admitted that, due to the absence of ‘obvious’ financial incentives, their academics are not sufficiently motivated to increase their scholarly research output. Whilst all the suggested motivators appear to be of the tangible type, and despite acknowledging the individual differences among their staff with regard to both their preferred motivators and their own level of intrinsic motivation, the incentives of salary increase and financial awards for publications were emphasised during all of the seven interviews. When discussing the Positive Reinforcement Theory, Mosley et al. (1993) argued that most educational managers subscribe to the view that the most effective way to motivate their staff is by means of financial incentives. This research affirms that Al-Ola’s senior managers are not an exception in this respect. Moreover, the fact that they are willing to offer the same type of incentives that are demanded by the academics themselves, can be interpreted as the essence of the Expectancy Theory of Motivation (Vroom, 1964). Moreover, the interviewed managers were not in favour of threatening and/or imposing punishments in order to spur scholarly research and publishing activities at the college. This perception, especially when bearing in mind the apparent intrinsic enthusiasm on the part of the surveyed academics, is much in line with McGregor’s Theory ‘Y’. This theory, which assumes that people want to take responsibility for work, is argued to be the preferred condition to motivate people, and hence is more likely to achieve the desired results (McGregor, 1970).

On a final note, among the themes that have consistently emerged during the interviews was a confidence that Al-Ola academics are inherently highly motivated individuals who currently enjoy working in the supportive, engaging and thought-provoking environment of the college. In fact, it was interesting to observe that the interviewees have raised issues such as having high expectations of staff, a willingness to offer contingent and non-contingent awards, and ongoing efforts to commit the academics to the goals and values of the college. Such factors, among others, were argued to be critical motivational success factors in the High-performance Cycle Theory (Lock and Latham, 1990). Hence, it is reasonable to suggest from the highlighted research findings that not only is Al-Ola College potentially equipped to develop its scholarly research activities, but the apparent strong commitment on the part of management means that it is more likely to overcome any potential barriers.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research has aimed to examine the motivational roles of educational managers with regard to promoting scholarly research and academic publications within a private all-womens’ college in Saudi Arabia. In order to boost the validity of this research, the triangulation of evidence was adopted; i.e. a survey of Al-Ola academic staff and in-depth interviews with senior management, that were also cross-checked with available documentary evidence. A preliminary review of the available literature confirms that scholarly research does not currently receive adequate attention from Saudi academics. Nonetheless, the HRM literature stresses the potential role of motivation towards the achievement of strategic goals within an educational establishment. This study therefore aimed to investigate the potential role of motivation in achieving an arbitrary strategic goal, i.e. the maximisation of scholarly research and publication activities. Among the reported factors that have arguably contributed towards a rather poor scholarly research output at Al-Ola College were: the lack of support from management, time constraints, difficulties in accessing data on the part of female researchers, limited research funds, poor perceptions of research and lack of academic freedom. In spite of such potentially daunting obstacles, most of the surveyed Saudi female academics appear
personally motivated to improve their academic research outputs. Rowley (1996) argued that such a high level of intrinsic motivation is not surprising in the academic world, where the development of professional skills and subject knowledge is the accepted norm.

Having conducted this study, the most highly recommended motivational strategies to promote scholarly research at the college are to minimise the dissatisfiers and provide incentives, rather than to threaten and/or impose punishments on academic staff. In this regards, it appears that financial-based awards are the most sought-after and effective motivators. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that formal reward mechanisms are only one tool which may be used by educational managers. One needs to be aware that certain motivators are not necessarily universally suitable for all staff, because different staff will always demonstrates varying inherent levels of motivation in setting goals and striving for them. Nevertheless, it is pleasing – not only to hear about but also – to observe the positive outcomes of the senior management’s efforts with regard to committing their academics to the goals and values of Al-Ola College.

Given the high level of enthusiasm witnessed from the research respondents, one hopes that this small-scale research endeavour will help to initiate further constructive discussions, and hopefully action, with regard to enhancing academic research and publication activities at the college and in the country as a whole. Finally, it should be recognised that the highlighted research limitations in terms of the lack of generalisability could, in fact, provide future research opportunities. Whilst believing that generalisation should not be the only criterion by which to judge a piece of research, it could be of value to take the findings of this research and test them quantitatively around a representative set of both private and public Saudi all-women academic institutions. Further research could also focus on male academic institutions in Saudi Arabia, or even in other countries exhibiting different cultural and development settings, in order to see whether or not Al-Ola academics and managers are trapped in female stereotyped perceptions with regard to motivation and scholarly research. In addition, since Saudi Arabia currently lags behind most countries in terms of scholarly research, an empirical examination of the research motivation strategies used by other countries could prove beneficial for Saudi Arabia.

6. REFERENCES


Appendix (A). Academics Survey

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Email Subject:</th>
<th>Survey Invitation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dear (Personalised Name),</td>
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I am writing to invite you to participate in a short survey to investigate the **prospects of promoting scholarly research and publishing activities at xxxx College**.

I would be most appreciative if you could kindly respond to the few survey questions attached at you earliest convenience.

Whilst anonymity of your identity is assured, a summary of the survey findings will be sent to all participants.

Many thanks in anticipation for your kind support and cooperation.

Kind regards,

Researcher

**SURVEY QUESTIONS**

1. How many years of academic work experience do you have?
2. Generally speaking, how do you feel about working as an academic at xxxx College?
3. To what extent would you personally support, or oppose, an emphasis upon scholarly research as part of your job duties?
4. How many peer-reviewed academic papers have you published to date?
5. Are you personally satisfied with your scholarly research output?
6. What do you see as the biggest obstacles for focusing on scholarly research?
7. Who do you think should bear the responsibility for the current lack of emphasis upon scholarly research and publication activities at xxxx College?
8. What kind of incentives would you like from management that could boost your scholarly research output?

Comments on any of the questions or the survey as a whole:
Appendix (B). Survey Response Analysis

Below is a graphical representation of the key surveys response findings. A detailed discussion of the survey results is provided in Section 4.1.

**Q1. How many years of academic work experience do you have?**

- Less than a year: 3
- Up to 3 years: 7
- 3-8 years: 15
- More than 8 years: 3

**Q2. Generally speaking, how do you feel about working as an academic at xxxx College?**

- Very satisfied: 15
- Somewhat satisfied: 8
- Not satisfied: 3
- No comments: 2
Q3. To what extent would you personally support, or oppose, an emphasis upon scholarly research as part of your job duties?

- Strongly support: 12
- Tend to support: 8
- Tend to oppose: 7
- Strongly oppose: 1

Q4. How many peer-reviewed academic papers have you published to date?

- None: 18
- 1-2 papers: 7
- 3-8 papers: 2
- More than 8 papers: 1
Q5. Are you personally satisfied with your scholarly research output?

- Yes: 4
- To a certain extent: 2
- No: 17
- Never thought of this: 5

Q6. What do you see as the biggest obstacles for focusing on scholarly research?

- Time constraints: 20
- Lack of support from management: 19
- Difficulties in accessing data: 14
- Limited research funds: 13
- Poor perception towards research: 8
- Deprived academic freedom: 4
Q7. Who do you think should bear the responsibility for the current lack of emphasis upon scholarly research and publication activities at xxxx College?

- Academics: 3
- Management: 18
- Academics & Management: 5
- No comments: 2

No. of respondents

Q8. What kind of incentives would you like from management that could boost your scholarly research output?

- Tangible incentives: 92
- Intangible incentives: 8

% of total suggested incentives
Appendix (C). Interview Schedule

The following are broad guidelines as opposed to precise questions to be asked in the interviews. Whilst all the seven interviews are to be conducted along the following lines of enquiry, each interview will differ slightly, depending on how each interviewee responds. Moreover, rather than treating the interview as a question and answer session, interviewees will be encouraged to elaborate on their answers.

- Do you believe in the need for engaging academics in scholarly research and academic publishing activities? Why?
- In your opinion, what kind of benefits and drawbacks are associated with intensifying academic research endeavours within xxxx College?
- Do you think that the current college staff are sufficiently motivated to carry out scholarly research? Why?
- In your opinion, what kind motivators could best encourage academics to carry out scholarly research?
- Do you support the idea of providing incentives to promote research activities among your academics? If so, what incentives might you be prepared to offer your staff?
- Do you support the idea of setting compulsory goals to promote research activities among your academics? If so, how do you propose monitoring and measuring such goals?
- The results of the academics’ survey were then shown to the interviewees, and they were invited to comment on them. *(N.B. In the case of the two telephone interviews, a copy of the survey results was emailed to the interviewees prior to the interview).*