



Influencers and their role in supporting charitable and humanitarian work in Saudi society Fayez Al-Maliki as a case study

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ABSTRACT

Prominent individuals in Islamic nations such as Saudi Arabia have a philanthropic urge to alleviate the humanitarian crises that arise from time to time. They strongly believe that the humanitarian and charitable work at community level renders itself to the Islamic calling of humane care for less privileged. This research took a qualitative approach to critically test if the Saudi society is ready to incorporate prominent individuals in humanitarian and charitable work. The research adopted a case study of the humanitarian work by Fayez Al-Maliki, a prominent media tycoon of the Saudi Arabia and the Arabic world. Using an interview, Fayez was asked 5 critical questions to determine his perceptions of the humanitarian and charitable work from the perspective of prominence. The research finds that undertaking humanitarian work in Saudi society is fully supported by the governance structures, especially with the vision by King Salman bin Abdulaziz and the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The results also of shows that Saudi communities have a positive outlook from humanitarian work by prominent individuals. This government supports prominent individuals, like Fayez, to undertake the humanitarian work because such individuals help the government to align the vision with community within the Saudi society.

Keywords: Charitable, Influencers, Humanitarian, Prominence, Saudi-Society.

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Introduction

The social-political, economic and cultural dynamics of charitable and humanitarian works in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region anchors on Islamic religious principles (Khafagy, 2020). It implies that Islamic principles form a critical element for humanitarian and charitable work for both faith and non-faith based organisations or Islamic and Western humanitarian organisations (Mohamed & Oferinger, 2015). Generally, humanitarian and charitable work aims to address humanitarian needs regardless of the location (AlMezaini, 2021). In the case of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, humanitarian work very important to the government, hence, it channels the work through Muslim world league, the United Nations (UN) and other national and international recipients of the aid (Gov.SA, 2021). This paper examines the role and influence of prominent individuals in supporting humanitarian and charitable work in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia amidst the social-cultural, political and religious dynamics associated with aid. The paper uses a case of Fayez Al-Malki to explore the challenges individuals have in playing a meaningful role in humanitarian work. It concludes that the perception that prominent individuals has a positive support from government because it is the vision of the government to have a positive impact on humanitarian and charitable in Saudi Society and other societies without discrimination over race or religion.

Dynamics of the Building blocks of the Saudi Society

According to Gendron (2010, p.487) the Saudi society is built on Muslim world. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabian government ensures that the national budget incorporates Islamic missionary works (Gendron, 2010); including the humanitarian and charitable work. Because Islam is the building blocks for the Saudi society, Islamic voices are prominent on all humanitarian works (Mohamed and Oferinger, 2015). Therefore, good humanitarian work is embedded government since its establishment (Vision 2030) as a strategy to help its people, other countries and refugees (Saudi Aid Platform, 2021). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia joins other countries in the Arabian Peninsula to offer humanitarian and charitable work in many forms (Barakat et al., 2020). The significance of the national building block of the Saudi society and the regional geo-political powers on humanitarian and charitable work reflects on how governments deal with humanitarian crises (Gendron, 2010); such as fighting terrorism or the engagement of the private sector to assist with humanitarian crises (Khan, 2020).

Charitable and humanitarian work in Saudi Society

The order of preference in responding to charitable and humanitarian work is heavily skewed towards organisations with government links (Abueish, 2021; Gov.SA, 2021). According to Tammar et al., (2020) government has invested in humanitarian agencies

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that aim at reducing disaster impacts as well as improving the resilience at individual, household and community level (Tammar et al., 2020). Therefore, government promotes responsible handling of resources, especially for climate-based disasters (Burnell, 2012). For example, government supports many non-government and non-profit organisations that deal with humanitarian work (AlMezaini, 2021).

Established channels for Charitable and Humanitarian work

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has established organisations through which government channels the humanitarian and charitable works (Gov.Sa, 2021). Many organisations are fully supported by the vision of Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (Abueish, 2021) – see Figure 1.



Figure 1: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (L) and King Salman bin Abdulaziz (R) (Source: English.alarabiya.net [Abueish, 2021])

Abueish (2021) reported that King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman donated \$7.9 million (SR30 million) to charity through the Kingdom's Ehsan Platform. The Saudi society relies heavily on the Islamic principles of managing resources in a prudent way (Mohamed and Oftringer, 2015).

Research Methodology

The research is qualitative centric (Bryman, 2012), designed to ensure accommodate the anticipated qualitative primary data (Gioia, 2020). The research strives to address the question (RQ):

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Is the Saudi society ready to incorporate prominent individuals in humanitarian and charitable work?

Because of the social-cultural factors affecting humanitarian and charitable work, qualitative research methodology is ideal (May, 2011; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In addition, a case study is the ideal research method because the research question asks for “prominent” individuals.

Purposively, Fayez Al-Maliki was selected as the prominent individual (Guarte & Barrios, 2006) to base the research on because anecdotal evidence at the time of the research indicated his willingness and efforts to use his prominence to offer humanitarian work in the Saudi society – see Figure 2.



Figure 2: Picture of Fayeze Al-Maliki (Source: <https://sollywood.com.sa/2021/03/25/5-200/>) (05/08/2021)

Through an interview, Fayeze was asked “if the Saudi society was ready to incorporate prominent individuals, like him, in humanitarian and charitable work”. The next section discusses the information from Fayeze about his humanitarian and charity work in Saudi Arabia; using answers from 5 sub-questions asked to Fayeze in a 13 minute telephone interview 1 August, 2021.

Analysis and Discussion of Results

Using the five sub-questions, the analysis and discussion of responses from Fayeze are as follows:

(i) Does fame have an impact on the social life?

Fayeze is a recipient of many honours, most notably the Muftaha Festival and other awards to signify him as the most influential figure in the Arab World. He argues that humanitarian and charitable work is in line with Islamic teachings. (Opoku ,2013) opines that Islamic teachings has been a critical motivating factor in the philanthropic work in Islamic countries. However, Fayeze feels that his fame has negatively affected

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his life. The effect of fame on Fayeze al-Maliki centres on the loss of family privacy. He argues, “I can't go out much, I have become an observer”.

(ii) Are you happy with your charitable work?

Fayeze reports that he was happy with his work and was proud of himself for his work mainly because he has a strong belief that humanitarian and charitable work is God given. This response tallies with the perception by (Almbaideen ,2016) that prominence can be a key factor in shaping humanitarian work through social networks. Fayeze has been actively using social media in this regard; which is a good sign of happiness in promoting humanitarian work.

(iii) What challenges do you face in your field?

Social connectivity is important in humanitarian work. For instance, (Almbaideen ,2016) believes the use of social network can boost humanitarian work. (Gendron ,2010) argues that in Saudi society supports social integration; therefore, humanitarian work is a good vehicle for such integration (Bloodgood and Tremblay-Boire, 2011). Fayeze states that he has very few challenges resulting from his humanitarian work except the loss of family privacy.

(iv) Do you, after experiencing painful situations with humanitarian cases, cry or feel sad for a long time?

Fayeze argues that on occasions that remain stuck in my memory he gets emotional; however, the bigger picture is that because it has life, it is a great honour to continue serving his society. He cited a case of one family with five disabled and poor children; but within hours, the humanitarian and charitable work managed to provide her with a secure home and money so that her children are able to continue receiving treatment. “Such great results relieve my pain”, argues Fayeze.

(v) Did you find support from the community?

“There is good community support for my work”, argues Fayeze. However, he believes that one of the reasons for his continuation in this field is the support of the community; For example, once Fayeze adopts social media such as “snap chat”; the community responds instantly to provide resources to solve a humanitarian crisis. This shows that Saudi societies see positive results in humanitarian work by prominent personalities such as Fayeze Al-Maliki, and the government supports charitable work and highlights it in the most beautiful form through the humanitarian work carried out by King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in society.



Conclusion

A reflection on the research question (RQ): “Is the Saudi society ready to incorporate prominent individuals in humanitarian and charitable work?” shows that Saudi communities see a positive outlook on humanitarian work by prominent individuals such as Fayeze Al-Maliki. The government has great humanitarian work by King Salman bin Abdulaziz and the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman; and it is supportive of the humanitarian works by prominent individuals such as Fayeze because prominence is used as a means to deliver government vision 2030.

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