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**RECONSTRUCTING THE KALEIDOSCOPE:  
ADJUSTING THE KALEIDOSCOPE CAREER MODEL TO COMPLEX CONTEXTS**

Submitted to the Eastern Academy of Management

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## **RECONSTRUCTING THE KALEIDOSCOPE:**

### **ADJUSTING THE KALEIDOSCOPE CAREER MODEL TO COMPLEX CONTEXTS**

#### **ABSTRACT**

The Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) is a model that suggests that careers are driven by three parameters: authenticity, balance and challenge (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006). While the model remains relevant for over a decade, it was developed in North America and hence might not be well suited to other contexts. The current study tests the model in the Greek Public sector, which in addition to cultural differences, was deeply affected by the 2008 financial crisis. Findings show that context frames and shapes career perceptions, such that some KCM needs become less salient, and needs that were not included in the original model, specifically the need for safety, are present. Based on these findings we suggest a potential modification to the KCM model, which will allow it to better explain career needs across multiple contexts. The practical contribution for HR professionals is recommendations to satisfy these needs by specific HR practices.

Keywords: Career development, kaleidoscope career model, economic crisis, human resource development

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) was developed based on the phenomenon of people opting out of organizations, inspired by the boundaryless world metaphor (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006). The model suggests that career behaviours are being driven by three needs - authenticity, balance and challenge, when at different time points, different needs become dominant, reflecting the individual's situation at that time. While the model had demonstrated relevance to the changing world of work, it was developed in North America (Elley-Brown,

Pringle & Harris, 2018; Mainiero & Gibson, 2017; O'Neill & Jepsen, 2017), which might limit its generalizability across contexts. The aim of our study is to test the KCM within a national cultural context that is different from the original American context that the model KCM originated from, and in which limited empirical research has been conducted to date (Bellou, 2009). We choose Greece as the cultural setting of the study because it is considered to be culturally different from the US: first, US is positioned high on the cultural dimension of individualism (e.g. Hofstede, 1980), which reflects the inclination of people to perceive themselves as individuals rather than group members, and as a result, careers in the US, are expected to reflect individualistic values such as self-fulfilment. On the other hand, Greece is considered to be an average collectivist society, in which career perceptions tend to reflect collectivistic values and traditions (Granrose, 2007). Prior studies demonstrated how national values might affect career perceptions (Afiouni, 2014; Woodhams et al., 2015), and due to the influence and importance of context and culture within management research (Baruch & Vardi, 2016; Berkema et al., 2015; Khapova & Korotov, 2007) we argue that conducting research in Greece, with its unique history and culture, may shed additional light on the application of KCM.

The current paper begins with a brief overview of the theoretical model and then elaborates on the context of this study – the public sector in Greece, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging contextual influences in career research. Then we present the rationale for the present study, followed by details on the methodology and data analysis. The findings of the study are somewhat surprising, since they not only do not align with the dynamics between the three needs as previously described in previous studies on KCM, but they show how these needs were suppressed by a different need, which was not a part of the original model. Following these findings, we suggest a way to extend the theory to become more flexible across contexts and provide implications for HR practitioners.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONTEXT**

The KCM (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006) is a well-known model of career development that was introduced following the changes in the format of work – in the boundaryless world, with psychological contracts breaking apart, people become the drivers of their careers which might imply choosing to opt out of work within organizations. The model suggests that careers are based on three universal needs: authenticity, balance, and challenge. First, the need for authenticity implies being genuine to one's own values, one's need to find resemblance between work and his/her personal values. Next, the need for balance refers to combining personal life with work, which can be done in different ways, from adjusting their careers to fit their personal life to full or partial opting out of the workforce. Finally, the need for challenge is about developing, learning and finding stimulating work, consistent with the idea of intrinsic motivation. It is often claimed that challenge, rather than money, is the main reason that individuals work, helping them reach self-fulfilment. Each of the three KCM needs shift over the course of an individual's life, such that depending on one's circumstances, all three needs are always present but take on different levels of importance. For example, it was found that men often follow an Alpha pattern (challenge, authenticity, balance) while the Beta pattern (challenge, balance, authenticity) is more typical to women (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007). Together, these three needs form a set of universal career parameters that individuals consider when making career decisions (August, 2011; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006).

The concept of universal motivation needs was dominant in management research for more than half a century: needs satisfaction is the basis for the classic motivation theories (Alderfer, 1969; Maslow, 1954; McClelland, 1961) and an important feature of new theories such as Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) which are applied to explain motivation and behaviour in various domains, including careers. The KCM shows how career enactment is guided by three career-related needs (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006), however, when examining

the KCM from a needs' theory lens, one can see the needs that are included in it can be considered as "higher-order" needs such as self-fulfilment (Maslow, 1954), and no "lower-level" needs, such as survival (economic benefits) are present. This notion is suggested to reflect specific values that are typical to North American culture but might not apply to a different context.

There is growing evidence for the importance of context in organizational research, as contexts can make some situational features more salient than others, shape meanings and help explain variation in research findings (Johns, 2006). In the present study we purposefully use the KCM in a different context in order to investigate its applicability across situations (Elley-Brown, Pringle & Harris, 2015; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007a, 2007b, 2008; Woodhams, et al, 2015) and as Greece is characterized by different cultural values, we consider it to be a suitable context to do that. In addition to the basic cultural differences, Greece was deeply affected by the financial crisis of 2008, which created a strong context in which the needs for authenticity, balance and challenge could have become less pronounced (Baruch & Vardi, 2016; Blustein, 2001). To sum up, our study attempts to answer the call of scholars who argue about the importance of reconceptualising and indigenising concepts and models in order to enhance knowledge (Berkema et al, 2015; Counsell, 1999; Leung, 2008).

Greece is a country with a rich history and cultural heritage, that underwent a major political change in 1967, when a military junta took over and declared a military regime, and then again when democracy was reinstated in 1974 in the form of a republic model (Veremis & Koliopoulos, 2013). In the following years, Greece experienced prosperity and growth. The public sector especially expanded in human resources and became the "Greek dream" – the most desired employer - since it embodied the freedoms of democracy in the eyes of the Greek people (Giannakidis, 2013; Saiti & Papadopoulos, 2015) that employs currently 567 000 employees (Georgiadou, 2016). However, the financial crisis of 2008 left the country with one

of the highest economic imbalances in the euro area. In May 2010, Greece received for the first time help from the IMF and the EMU by means of a credit agreement in return for implementing a series of austerity measures, including the reduction of the number of civil servants by 18% (Georgiadou, 2016; Kokkoris et al., 2010).

The debt crisis, along with its austerity measures, has had huge consequences on the Greek society, with unemployment currently being the highest in Europe at 26.1% (Eurostat, 2015), while pay cuts in pensions and salaries have affected all citizens, in both public and private sectors (Parliament, 2012). The decline in wages and the increase in unemployment have affected six out of ten households, while a large segment of the lower- and middle-class population is struggling to keep up with regular bill payments (Frangos et al., 2012).

As a result, job insecurity had an impact on people's perception of careers and possibilities that are or are not available to them: As Chrysoloras (2013) argues, "*Whoever loses his or her job in Greece today has virtually no prospect of finding another one in the foreseeable future*" (2013, p.6). In the same vein, arguing about the impact of the recession on the Greek population, a sociologist at the National Centre for Social Research stated that "*Joblessness will continue to grow, the recession will get worse, more businesses will close. The big question is who will survive*" (Smith, 2013). This situation raises questions regarding the applicability of modern career theories in situations of limited career options on a national level, switching the focus back from the individual to the wider context. In this study we employ qualitative methodology that can help explore unique aspects of careers perceptions in this context of a country that was both different culturally and suffered from a crisis.

## METHODOLOGY

A total of 33 semi-structured interviews were undertaken with full-time public sector employees in Greece. We choose the Greek public sector as the arena to conduct the study

mainly because as the biggest employer in the country, it is quite representative of the population and of the national work values. Since in the last two decades research has tended to focus on boundaryless careers, as organisational careers are considered declined, the idea that not everyone desires or is capable of pursuing a boundaryless career was pushed to the side, however it might still be subject to question (Baruch and Vardi, 2016; Clarke, 2013; Hall, 1996). Our sample included 10 men and 23 women from different educational backgrounds working in two of the largest public insurance companies in Greece, who undertake a range of different roles. Further demographics of the sample are presented below in the table.

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Insert Table 1 here  
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Participants were recruited via purposive and snowball sampling and interviews stopped when saturation occurred (Patton, 2002), which in the present study happened after 33 interviews. As the interviews progressed, the nature of some of the questions changed because interviewees frequently raised important issues that were necessary to explore further in subsequent sessions. The first question was general and focused on understanding participants' career paths up to that point, consistent with the original version of the KCM (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006). More specific questions were based on the careers literature, for example "how do you understand the notion of career?" which is important, because the way in which people understand their career may differ due to their contextual and situational circumstances; other questions were inspired by the KCM needs, such as: "what motivates you in your career?", "how do you understand the notion of work-life balance?", "how do you understand challenge at work?", and "what is your dream job?" (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007b). In this way, the questions were informed by theory and by the emerging interview data, and the study therefore possessed relevance to both (Shaw, 2003). The interviews ranged in length from 35-45 minutes, were audio-recorded and the tapes transcribed and analysed by the first

author using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis method (2006). While the literature formed the basis of the analysis, as the interviews progressed, new themes emerged such as individuals' own career needs and wants. These themes, which emerged from the data, allowed us to validate and extend the theoretical model. A sample of the coding can be found in the table below.

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Insert Table 2 here  
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The results are outlined below, together with illustrative quotes from participants to display themes relating the analysis to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## FINDINGS

This section describes the representation of the three KCM needs - authenticity, balance, and challenge (ABC) as reflected in the interviews, as well as other emerging themes.

### **Authenticity**

Authenticity means being true to one's values and in terms of career needs, it is expressed as the focal point in decision-making being the self rather than the surrounding context (August, 2011; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliouis & Joseph, 2008). Our findings surprised us, since the participants, who were asked to describe authenticity concerns regarding their career, reported that their career was detached from their values: it was seen as a role or a means to an end, which did not provide them meaning and purpose in life, something which the authentic careerist would pursue according to the KCM (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006). Instead, they described looking for meaning outside the workplace, often in terms of attachment to others, such as family and friends.

This is illustrated by Christina (female, 38):

*“No, I don’t think so. Meaning in life is not in this office or in this work. Definitely not. My family gives me meaning, my children, my husband, my parents. This is a job....”*

For Christina, meaning in life lies outside the office, her career is a job that she fulfils in order to make a living. Similarly, Apostolos (male, 39) also referred to the absence of authenticity and the need to remain in his permanent job.

*“I work here as it provides me the only safety, in terms of work in Greece. Working here is OK, I mean what else is there? What motivation? I mean here the way things are, you try to preserve your belongings.”*

For Apostolos, purpose and meaning in life were not to be found in the civil service; he was aware of it but had decided to stay there as context restrained him, especially the last 10 years when the country was going through a crisis and no jobs are available. Similar views were expressed by Chrysa D. (female, 48) when she reflected upon her reasons for choosing this type of employment.

*“...I don’t know why I choose it, I was 22 years old and maybe I choose it because of the way we were brought up. I mean it was a safety, it gave stability, a wage... My father suggested this (appointment) for me, I mean, you knew it was a stable path and you took it. I had a degree in foreign languages and wanted to become a teacher, but instead I came here.”*

All the participants stated that the reason they chose a career in the public sector was not alignment with their personal values. While recognizing the importance of meaning and authenticity, they do not perceive their workplace as a source of personal meaning but looked for authenticity in relationships, which may be explained by the dominance of family and collectivist values in the Greek culture. In addition, it seems that the 2008 financial crisis could

be another reason to see the workplace as a source of stability rather than of meaning, as Greece is known as a country with the highest score on the uncertainty avoidance cultural dimension (Hofstede, 1980). This finding was the first signal of how perception towards one's career are influenced by the context as reflected in people's stories (Thomas & Inkson, 2007), in a striking contrast with the KCM model as the need for authenticity was barely present.

### **Balance**

The second KCM need is balance - people choose careers and/or find strategies to balance their work lives with their personal lives. In the Greek public sector, working hours are more or less stable (typically from 7am-3pm), and overtime is hardly ever an issue, thus making it an ideal working place for many with a need for balance. According to participants who had previously worked in the private sector, the need to balance their lives was one of the most important considerations:

Petros (male, 41) explained it thus:

*“Yes, I have plenty of time now. Stable working hours and holidays were a pivotal part when choosing the public sector. In the bank, where I was working previously, I worked over 10 hours a day, every day ....”*

For Petros, the public sector not only provided him with safety, but also with “stable working hours” which provided him with plenty of time to spend as it pleases him. In other words, Petros previously experienced a conflict between working life and personal life, which led him to move to the public sector. Similar issues were raised by Parthena (female, 53)

*“I don't have long working hours. I finish on time and this is important when you have children. One of the reasons I chose the public sector was the stability it provides. In terms of pay and hours....”*

From Parthena's perspective, for those in the public sector, balance is not a major concern since it is often present, but it was a motivator when choosing to work in this sector, especially for those who had previously worked in the private sector. In Greece, the work-life balance of the civil servants in the public sector is protected by a legal framework (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011), and since it is the biggest employer in the country, it is possible that national culture underlies this phenomenon, making the need for balance very dominant in comparison to the other KCM needs. Moreover, the interviewees did not express a dynamic view of the needs that might change throughout the lifetime, as expected in the KCM theory, but showed a rather stable preference towards balance, at least when referring to the period before the crisis.

### **Challenge**

The third career need in the KCM is challenge – the desire to learn and grow in one's career and find stimulating work (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006). In all cases, participants had a clear understanding of what challenge at work means. However, in practice they did not see or look for any challenge in their work, which was perceived as routine and bureaucratic. Gianna (female, 52), illustrated:

*“Day in and out we do exactly the same thing, we complete the same reports,  
we use the same manuals and screens, and we listen to the same stories of people ...”*

Many participants considered their careers as being content plateaued, characterised by repetitive tasks and lacking challenge. Litsa (female, 55) only worked *“to be financially ...compensated...”* and in general, there was no evidence of challenging work being a motivator, but rather signs that people worked in order to be financially secure.

However, although work was considered routine, there were some references to challenge in the form of interactions with the clients, and the emotional work that is associated with dealing with demanding customers. Says Chrysa D. (female, 48)

*“...When an 80-year-old lady comes to the office and you provide a solution to her problem and she cries in front of you and tells you ‘I do not know how to thank you’, I believe this [behaviour] says it all, there is no better feeling. I am affected only by thinking of it.”*

Hence, challenge as it was conceptualised by the KCM - individual progress, learning and development- was not present, but it was manifested in a different form, i.e. overcoming difficulties and making an impact. Magda, (female, 38) shared a similar story but laden with negative emotions:

*“...dealing with people, who are unhappy constantly, is hard work. A lot of them come with prejudice. They say, ‘I am paying you, you need to do this for me’ especially now, with the crisis...we are the lucky ones, we have a job...”*

For Magda, dealing with demanding citizens was a challenge. Challenges of this kind are common in service jobs where communication with customers is a necessity and may lead to emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). In general, while modern career theories discuss different needs such as self-fulfilment, learning and growth, our findings show little support for these needs, except for balance which was an important component of career decisions. We argue that this may be due to the cultural context and values: since Greece is considered a collectivist country, the idea of authenticity and meaning did not arise in their work but rather outside of work, in their personal relationships. Challenge, also differed from the original model, as their work was considered routine and instead of learning and development, challenge was perceived as overcoming difficulties.

In addition to the cultural fundamental differences, it is plausible that the financial crisis had an additional impact on the career perceptions of the interviewees, since they mentioned it quite often as the event that made them hold on to their job, even though they knew it is not fulfilling

and limits their chances to experience authenticity and challenge. Most interestingly, the stories revealed other themes that were not part of the KCM framework, but were present in early need theories of motivation

### **Other Career Needs**

In addition to the topics of authenticity, balance and challenge, that were explicitly asked during the interviews, the participants described in their stories three additional career parameters that were important to them: safety, fairness and training. These parameters differed from those that are described in the KCM and focused on survival, possibly associated with the financial crisis in the country.

#### ***The need for safety***

The most salient need that emerged from the data was the need for safety: employment security, meaning being able to have stable work under to the threat of layoffs. This need was mentioned in many interviews as one of the main reasons for choosing this line of work, similarly to the need for balance; however, an additional layer of complexity was added as the participants expressed worries and provided examples of people who had been dismissed during austerity.

Chrysa G. (female, 42), illustrates her safety worries:

*“Everything changes constantly. The government changes laws, and no one knows what is going on. You wonder constantly, will I be fired? What is going to happen next? There is a continuous general insecurity and fear in our society...”*

Chrysa felt that her worries, and the insecurity she experiences in her daily life, were caused by the recession. The crisis has blurred employment stability and put stress on the employees.

Iliana (female, 34), also mentioned her concerns about being transferred:

*“Now I feel insecure with everything that happens... The unionists say do not worry, but the uncertainty is general and strong...”*

Similarly, Giannis T. (male, 35) mentioned his worries:

*“The way things are going [in Greece] I see no improvement. Unemployment everywhere, debts and fear. If you have a job, you are lucky...if you lose it, it’s probably impossible to find another one...”*

Due to the general insecurity and unemployment of the context, insecurity was part of every narrative.

### ***The need for training***

In addition, participants felt that they had not received enough training and development at work. While it could potentially be linked to the need for challenge, it seems that in the given context training is perceived as a precondition to competence, being able to complete the task rather than grow as an individual. Many of them described receiving training in the form of on-the-job sessions, which could be inconsistent if the instructor, usually the colleague, did not comprehend the working object well enough. In addition, they argued that the absence of public funds leading to lack of training in the form of seminars. Magda (female, 38), illustrated how most participants learn:

*“We learn, either by reading in order to be updated, or by someone who has been in the object longer... So, for instance, if your colleague is not familiar with any changes in the policies, you will receive wrong information and you will continue making errors. I believe that we need to learn properly. We need to go to seminars...”*

Similarly, Eleftheria (female, 42) argued about the absence of training:

*“I was assigned to the department of debt collection, this involves lawsuits and working closely with the lawyers... I lack legal knowledge ....my manager told me to read the relevant documents and ask my colleagues. I was lost...”*

The financial crisis and the austerity that followed has led to cuts in public spending, and this has affected training even more: Zacharias (male, 43) reported feeling *“exposed and inadequate”* when dealing with the public.

The importance of training and education has long been recognised (e.g. Pfeffer, 1995) from a HR perspective. Training provides employees with essential knowledge, improves work quality (Romanowska, 1993) and contributes to feelings of security and appreciation (Harvard, 2010). Participants argued about the absence of proper training which lead to disappointment, not necessarily because they wanted to be challenged but because lack of competence could put their job at risk, which in turn is related to the need for safety.

### ***The need for fairness***

Another key theme in the present study was the participants’ perception that their career is harmed by lack of justice, and that there was a need for more fairness. Participants expressed their concerns about the lack of fairness in terms of position and promotion and in terms of procedures, referring to the appraisal system. The participants mentioned that promotions and placements in the “good” divisions were conducted due to clientelism or “knowing whom” (Bozionelos, 2014; Inkson & Arthur, 2001; Koskina, 2008). This was illustrated by Makis (male, 43) who described promotions in the Greek public service:

*“In the public sector progress is via relationships. The connections one has. It can be from within the organization or outside, ex. from a political party. The connections will make sure that your career progresses...”*

Makis depicts a common scene of distributive injustice, where instead of someone being promoted through meritocracy, people are promoted either through favouritism, or political connections/ clientelism, an idiosyncratic feature of the Greek public sector (Koskina, 2008) which refers to the influence and interference of political parties within the sector, for example via appointment of directors who share the political ideology of the party in government and who consequently discriminate against people with different political beliefs in situations such as during promotions.

Additionally, Magda, (female, 38), echoes Makis's previous claims:

*“Progress in the public sector is related to one's political beliefs. If the employee's political beliefs are not those of the party in government, he/she might find obstacles possibly in her/his career progression...”*

Thus, for participants there is an issue of distributive injustice, highlighting obstacles to career progress. The need for procedural fairness in the appraisal system was another key sub-theme expressed by participants. The following extract, from Konstantina (female, 36) illustrates her perception of the appraisals:

*“The appraisal is a form that we fill in every year. Everyone gets the same marks, whether they work or not. Some people don't work and still get the same mark as those who do. In my opinion, this is not correct ...”*

Konstantina illustrates that everyone received high marks even though they were not being effective. This happened because relationships are built on exchanging favours, and management did not want to upset anyone. As appraisals are perceived as being unfair and based on relationships and political considerations (which is typical in the Greek cultural context), the participants expressed concerns regarding their chances to being promoted or even maintain their job in case of layoffs.

To sum up, participants expressed little interest in authenticity and challenge, when the need for balance remained a salient need for many years, especially in the more prosperous period in the country's history. In addition, they raised other career needs and specifically the need to feel safe at work, when additional needs such as the need to be treated fairly and the need to receive training support the main theme of safety. These needs were present before the crisis, but as austerity led to major budget cuts, people lost jobs and training was even more limited, this concern became even more dominant, taking over the other needs.

## DISCUSSION

The data presented herein support the argument that there are no universal career needs, since career perceptions are socially constructed and context-dependent (Thomas & Inkson, 2007). While the KCM reflects the new reality of weakened psychological contracts, with the individuals being active agents who construct their careers in accordance with their changing needs, it could benefit from further development, including macro-contextual factors. For example, our study shows how the Greek culture and context creates conditions that influence people's perceptions of their career needs, which differ from the ones originally proposed by the KCM model, possibly because it was created in a different cultural and economic context.

In addition to the cultural values which influence the way the KCM needs are perceived, our findings - lack of employment security, fairness and training, also suggest that the financial crisis determined which career needs are salient at the time of the study. Hence, in the context of austerity participants were in need for a stable financial income. This created a very different picture regarding the original KCM needs: first, regarding authenticity, while participants did acknowledge their dreams, they consciously gave up on satisfying their need for authenticity in order to hold on to their salary, looking for meaning elsewhere, for example in relationships, which are a dominant part of the Greek culture. Our participants viewed work as a matter of

survival and a role one plays, not expecting it to create meaning in life, which aligns with the idea that when people classify their work as a “job,” the focus is on financial rewards and necessity rather than self-fulfilment or pleasure (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 2007; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). This also supports Blustein’s (2001, 2006) thesis, according to which people who lack satisfactory financial capital are more interested in staying in jobs that will allow them to survive. The aspiration to work in the public sector represents a wish for security and stability (Lewis & Frank, 2002; Patiniotis & Stavroulakis, 1997), which was a dominant value in Greece pre-crisis, but even more so following the crisis, making the possibility to fulfil oneself through work even more illusory. Indeed, stability and safety were the most salient career need that was expressed by the participants, reflecting both cultural values (uncertainty avoidance) and the current financial and social situation in the country. Undeniably, the precursors of job insecurity are related to the labour market conditions (Linz & Semykina 2008; Nätti , Happonen , Kinnunen, & Mauno, 2005).

The need for balance between personal lives with work was the only KCM need that was supported by our findings, perhaps reflecting the national interest in a stable career - participants who worked previously in the private sector pointed out that in the past, they faced issues with balance, but it is less of a problem in the public sector. Interestingly, the aspect of challenge was mentioned, but carried a different meaning that was originally intended by the theoretical framework, which could also be related to the focus on the collective rather than on individual growth. Hence, financial stability and employment security emerged as the major motivators to work, even before the crisis, which could be related to the cultural values of Greece (Hofstede, 1980). The need for balance was quite salient and stable until the need for safety suppressed all the other needs, including balance, during the austerity period. Yet, this need which appears to be so central, was not included in the KCM, perhaps because the model

was developed in a different context, which raises significant questions regarding the applicability and generalizability of the theory outside of North America.

In addition to the need to have a safe employment, our findings also point to issues that the participants perceive as important in their career development, and which potentially could be linked back to the need for safety, namely procedural fairness and training. These issues are central in HR management as shown by many studies throughout the years (Bardwick; 1986; Noor, 1981; Sverke, Hellgren & Näswall, 2002; Taylor, 2006). Notably, the absence of training, due to the crisis, meant that the participants' career development was impeded, with potential consequences to themselves and to organisations. While from the organizational side failure to provide training results in poorer performance, decrease job satisfaction, and increased withdrawal from the organization (Nikandrou, Apospori,, Panayotopoulou, Stavrou,& Papalexandris, 2008; Sparrow & Hiltrop 1997), from the individual point of view lack of training decreases the chances to survive career turbulence (Baruch, 2004).

The need to experience fairness at work in terms of promotion and HR procedures was also part of every narrative. In terms of procedural justice (Greenberg, 1993), performance appraisal is a vital HRM tool which, if implemented correctly, leads to improved individual and organisational performance (Amygdalos et al., 2014; Baruch, 1996). Unfair procedures can lead to mistrust and disappointment (Brown et al., 2010; Nalbandian, 1981), which in turn make the employees worry about their jobs and undermines their sense of security.

In general, our findings point out a few limitations of the KCM theory: first, two out of three needs in a model were not present, such that there was little dynamic between needs – in contrast with the idea that needs shift over the lifetime. The main dynamic was between the need for balance and the need for safety, which became more salient to the point of suppressing the other needs because of the circumstances. Second, the need for safety (and supporting

themes), was not included in the original theory, perhaps due to national cultural differences, but appears to be too powerful to be disregarded. This points to the limited applicability of the model in its original form, but these limitations can be overcome by including more relevant factors that may have an impact on the changing needs of workers.

In the current study, we focused on the Greek public sector that is characterized by the need for stability and balance rather than by authenticity and challenge. There are other conditions under which the employees will not be interested in being challenged or being authentic. Blustein's (2001, 2006) psychology of work theory focuses on marginalized groups, such as low-income working class, people who experience discrimination for different reasons, people who lack sufficient access to continuous development as well as to financial and social capital. For these people, the desire for self-fulfilment is less relevant, as they are looking for decent work that will allow them to survive, to feel connected and to maintain their psychological health (Blustein, 2008). Hence it is reasonable to assume that people who are driven by the need to get any kind of a decent job will not be attentive to the needs that are described by the KCM.

Here we suggest reconciling both theories, by including a survival, or safety, factor in the KCM, and propose the acronym ABCD (authenticity, balance, challenge and defence). This addition will make the model more flexible and applicable to different macro-contexts. Early theories of motivation, such as Maslow (1954) distinguished between lower-level needs (physiological needs and safety needs) and higher-level needs (needs for belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization). It is possible therefore that the needs for safety, or defence, is not on the same level as the other three KCM needs but is a pre-condition to them. If there is economic insecurity or other factors that may jeopardize the workers' survival, the needs for authenticity, balance and challenge will be suppressed. Only when the need for defence is

satisfied, the workers will be more likely to attend to their other needs. This idea can be represented by the following equation:

$$\mathbf{W} = \mathbf{D} (\mathbf{A} + \mathbf{B} + \mathbf{C})$$

In this conceptualization, the needs for Authenticity, Balance or Challenge can be set to 1 or 0, when usually only one of them takes the value of 1 at a single time point. However, this is only meaningful when the need for Defence is set to 1, otherwise if Defence=0, the outcome is 0 and none of the other needs will matter. This idea enables to further develop the KCM and make it more inclusive in terms of different employment sectors, countries and economic conditions. Prior findings on the outcomes of satisfying basic needs are increased employee commitment, job satisfaction and improved performance (Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004; Edgar & Geare, 2005; Marescaux et al., 2012). Hence, we argue that safety is a prerequisite to the model, because without the need for defence, the remaining career needs of the KCM are suppressed. In terms of practical contributions, as this need can be satisfied to some extent by HR practices such training and fairness, we recommend paying further attention and investing more in these factors.

### **LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

As with any research, this research has several limitations which need to be acknowledged. The study utilised semi-structured interviews with public sector employees in Greece, hence we cannot generalise from the findings, and care in interpretation is warranted. We would recommend expanding the study to see how the suggested model applies to the public and private sectors other countries suffering from the recession, as well as in affluent countries such as UK. By further researching the new model in different contexts, it will contribute to developing practice which in turn will benefit employees and employers alike, as organisational competitiveness is achieved via employees and by accommodating their needs.

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## APPENDICES

Table 1: Demographics of participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Highest qualification	Years of service	Job title	Interview duration (min)
Iliana	Female	Bachelor	8	Front line	45
Athanasia	Female	Lyceum	23	Front line	35
Sofia K	Female	MA	10	Front line	40
Urania	Female	Technological	26	Middle manager	37
Hermione	Female	Bachelor	28	Senior manager	43
Sofia P	Female	Lyceum	9	Front line	35
Stella	Female	MA	10	Front line	35
Theodor	Male	Lyceum	15	Front line	40
Toula	Female	Technological	9	Front line	42
Vaso	Female	MA	15	Middle manager	45
Giannis	Male	Technological	10	Front line	45
Eleftheria	Female	MBA	13	Front line	45
Christina	Female	MA	11	Front line	45
Chrysa G	Female	MA	13`	Front line	45
Gianna	Female	Lyceum	26	Front line	45
Magda	Female	BA	10	Front line	45
Maria G	Female	Technological	15	Front line	35
Mihalis	Male	Compulsory	33	Front line	37
Litsa	Female	BA	22	Middle manager	36
Konstantina	Female	BA	7	Front line	45
Nikos	Male	Technological	17	Front line	39
Petros	Male	BA	8	Front line	40
Giannis T	Male	Lyceum	8	Front line	45
Chrysa M	Female	Technological	14	Front line	42
Chrysa D	Female	BA	26	Middle manager	38
Zaharias	Male	MA	12	Front line	38
Eleni M.	Female	Technological	23	Middle manager	43
Eleni S.	Female	Technological	8	Front line	45
Koula	Female	BA	31	Senior manager	42
Nikos N.	Male	Lyceum	24	Front line	45
Apostolos	Male	Lyceum	18	Front line	36
Makis	Male	Lyceum	18	Front line	35
Parthena	Female	Technological	29	Middle manager	45

**Table 2:** Example of coding

<b>QUOTE</b>	<b>CODE</b>	<b>THEME</b>
<i>One day they say this, the other day they vote that, you don't know what to do, what is going on, will they cut my salary again? What is happening is stressful, and of course you think different things, but what can I say? Surely we want to have things as they were before, when you did not have to worry, but nowadays you don't know – you might get a letter to transfer somewhere where you are needed more [due to organisational needs], so you either go or you get fired.”</i>	Insecurity  Stressful  Wants things to be as they were  Ultimatums	Career safety
<i>“Now I feel insecure with everything that happens... you might end up in another public sector organisation from the reforms and mergers, they scare us all the time. We had, I believe, 10 colleagues of ours who went to other public sector organisations due to overstaffing in this office, and some ended up in different cities. The unionists say do not worry, but the uncertainty is general and strong. Especially before the elections, it was very strong...”</i>	Insecurity  Public sector organisational changes  Distribution of colleagues  Union reassurance  Strong uncertainty	Career safety
<i>“When we were students [at university], we thought that we would do the ASEP exams (Civil Service Staffing Council examination) and after that we would be immediately appointed as civil servants. Suddenly, due to the recession, everything has changed. And while I was planning how my life was going to be after the appointment, now I have to find something very different to do as a backup plan, in case I get fired or not paid in</i>	Belief of career permanency  Changes in career belief due to austerity- unsafe  Private plans change  Need backup plan - unsafe	Career safety

<i>the next few months, since my plans have been ruined.”</i>		
<i>Balance, well yes, I think I have it, I don't have long working hours, I mean I always finish on time, I have never had to stay late, so I think that yes, I have balance. I am not under pressure, so yes.</i>	<p>Good working hours</p> <p>Finish on time</p> <p>No pressure</p>	Balance
<i>Look, I cannot say, I am tired or work late. Before (private sector) the hours would be long, the boss would expect you to stay late and finish the job, if you had not finished it during the work day. You could not simply leave. the hours were crazy. I got home late and I felt that I was constantly running</i>	<p>Content with work and hours</p> <p>Expected to work late</p> <p>Crazy work hours</p> <p>Running</p>	Balance
<i>“I know that I thought about it then (before I got the job), because you believe that you will be better off here [public sector], more balanced, with the children and that, it will be easier than the private sector and it was, they support you more in the public sector, the working conditions are different...”</i>	<p>Balance in her mind</p> <p>Belief of better working conditions</p> <p>Support from public sector to balance</p> <p>Different working conditions</p>	Balance
<i>“We learn the wrong way, we learn by ourselves, we are looking for the answer, either by reading in order to be updated, or by someone who has been in the object longer, or we phone another colleague in another branch who works on the same sort of task, to get help. So, for instance, if your colleague got it wrong in the beginning, he/she will give you the wrong information and the fault will continue. We need education. This is a huge problem, as we don't go to seminars to learn and this is problematic – we learn on the wrong basis, we learn incorrectly, we make mistakes and everything moves very slowly”</i>	<p>Learning issues</p> <p>Problematic learning</p> <p>Need to learn</p> <p>Mistakes</p>	Training

<p><i>“Two years after the beginning of XYZ [name of department], in 2013, I arranged for us [colleagues] to meet others in similar positions in other branches... I called them and said, ‘Guys, listen, we must get ourselves organised, as I believe we share the same problems’. And we met in Kavala on a Saturday morning with our papers and we decided that we, representing the six branches in Northern Greece, in the same position would work in a similar way.”</i></p>	<p>Initiative taking to learn</p> <p>Arrange learning meeting</p> <p>Common issues</p> <p>Decide to work similarly</p>	<p>Training</p>
<p><i>“...seminars aren’t being conducted, if you want to go on anything you have to pay it on your own and seek for it on your own, the headquarters have a very limited budget for that. For instance, the staff asked for IT training, but there were no seminars running from us (the organization) so I told them to fund them on their own. At least that is what I did for my IT training. The staff complains and asks about training but I cannot help them, there is nothing from the head office.”</i></p>	<p>Absence of seminars</p> <p>Private training funding</p> <p>Staff complaint and requests</p>	<p>Training</p>