

EVALUATING THE APPLICABILITY OF MASLOW'S THEORY OF MOTIVATION TO EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The theory of Maslow's need hierarchy is not new to the organization behavior. In order to understand the different aspects of Maslow's theory of motivation, its application to education and colleges from the student's point of view is studied. The purpose of this paper is to understand the different stages of motivation for students while they are taking education in the college.

The paper is aimed to study the effect of motivational factors on the academic performance of students. According to Maslow's theory, needs that are in the lower hierarchy must be at least partially met before a person will try to satisfy higher-level needs. Although ultimately our goal is to aid students in self-actualizing or becoming "all that one can be," they must first achieve the level of *Need to Know and Understand*.

Keywords : *Maslow's Need Hierarchy, Motivation, Education, Student, College, Needs, Goal*

INTRODUCTION

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory in psychology anticipated by mid-1950's humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper "**A Theory of Human Motivation**". He consequently extended the idea to include his observations of humans' innate curiosity, and despite all these years his 'hierarchy of needs theory' remains relevant in every sector of our business even to this day.

In the education sector, however, researchers in the '80s raised questions about the applicability of Maslow's theory.

Students have an education goal that is accomplished through the process of learning. Another important goal is to attain knowledge and information meaningful to them for their future. An essential factor that is involved in achieving these goals is motivation. But if this motivation does not take place, then students will fail to learn. Hence there is need to study the theory based on hierarchy. This theory studies the factors of motivation.

This paper will focus on the impact of this theory on educational structure.

In order to maximize on the effectiveness of teaching programs; administrators and teachers must consider student needs and their hierarchical order. This must be a top priority in the development of these programs so that students have the capability of reaching their highest levels of potential.

There is utter need to understand that schools and government agencies have long realized that if students' basic needs are not met student performance will suffer.

Unfortunately, these measures address only part of the first tier of Maslow's theory; physiological needs. Addressing basic physiological needs is a key concern for today. These basic needs must be met before the student can reach the next level.

Student safety needs play a critical role in achieving student success. A safe environment is not limited to physical parameters. Students must not only feel safe in the classroom physically, but emotionally and psychologically as well. The student must feel a degree of safety in all aspects of the classroom and school environment before progressing to the next step in Maslow's theory - belongingness and love needs.

The student must feel that he/she is important as an individual - that he/she is lovable and is deserving of being loved and cared about. Once these needs are met, the student may then move to the next level; need to know and understand. It is at this level that the student is most receptive to learning.

HISTORY

The "motivation to work" published by Maslow probably provided the field of organizational behavior and management with a new way of looking at how humans are motivated. Abraham Maslow was a clinical psychologist who introduced his theory based on personal judgment, which was generally known as the need hierarchy theory.

According to him if people grew in an environment in which their needs are not met, they will be unlikely to function as healthy individuals or well-adjusted individuals. Specifically Maslow theorized that people have five types of needs and that these are activated in a hierarchical manner. This means that these needs are aroused in a specific order from lowest to highest, such that the lowest-order need must be fulfilled before the next order need is triggered and the process continues.

According to Maslow's theory, one does not feel the second need until the demands of the first have been satisfied or the third until the second has been satisfied, and so on. If we look at this from motivational point of view, Maslow's theory says that a need can never be fully met, but a need that is almost fulfilled does no longer motivate. As per Maslow we need to know where

a person is on the hierarchical pyramid in order to motivate him/her.

Below is a summary of these needs which are classified into **Deficiency needs** (psychological, safety, social needs) and **Growth needs** (esteem, self-actualization needs).



Figure 1. Hierarchy of Needs based on Maslow's theory of motivation

The different levels of needs on Maslow's hierarchy are discussed as follows:

1. Physiological needs : These biological needs consist of the need for oxygen, food, water, and a relatively constant body temperature. They are the strongest needs because if a person were deprived of all needs, he / she will not come under the purview of Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory.

2. Safety needs : When all physiological needs are met and are no longer controlling thoughts and behaviors, the needs for security can become active. While adults have little awareness of their security needs except in times of emergency or periods of disorganization in the social structure (such as widespread rioting), children often display the signs of insecurity and the need to be safe.

3. Needs for love, affection and belongingness : When the needs for safety and for physiological well-being are satisfied, the next class of needs for love, affection and belongingness can emerge. Maslow states that people seek to overcome feelings of loneliness and alienation. This involves both giving and receiving love, affection and the sense of belonging.

4. Needs for esteem : When the first three classes of needs are satisfied, the needs for esteem can become dominant. These involve needs for both self-esteem and for the esteem a person gets from others. Humans have a need for a stable, firmly based, high level of self-respect, and respect from others. When these needs are satisfied, the person feels self-confident and valuable

as a person in the world. When these needs are frustrated, the person feels inferior, weak, helpless and worthless.

5. Needs for self-actualization: When all of the foregoing needs are satisfied, then and only then are the needs for self-actualization activated. Maslow describes self-actualization as a person's need to be and do that which the person was "born to do." "A musician must make music, an artist must paint, and a poet must write."

OBJECTIVE

The specific objectives of the current study are:

- To Study Abraham Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory.
- To determine its applicability to the student community.
- To identify the satisfaction level of students.
- To suggest necessary changes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

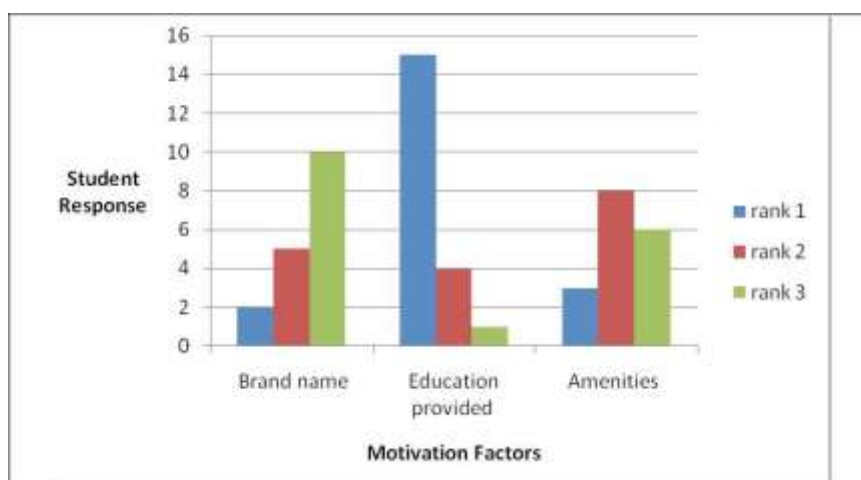
- The paper studies the factors affecting the motivation of the students based on Maslow's theory while they are taking education in their college. Questionnaire method was used to collect the data and graphical method is used for analysis.

LIMITATION OF STUDY

Due to the constraint of time, our study was limited to collecting data from the students pursuing their Undergraduate studies.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

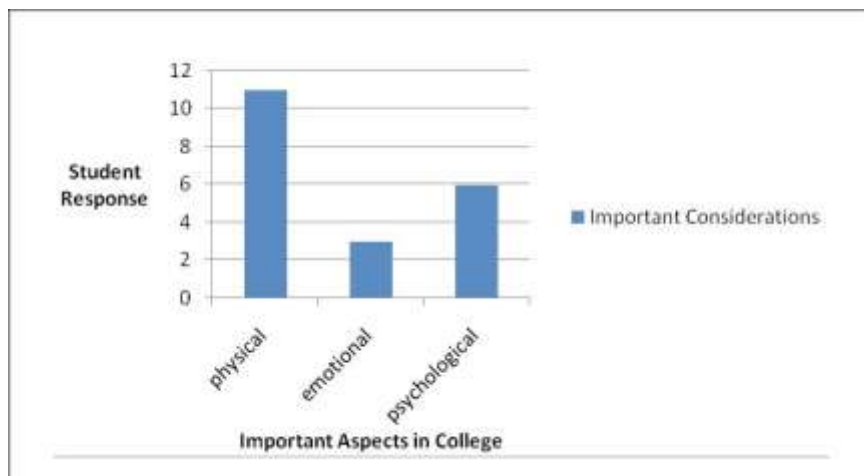
1. Motivation factors in education



The education provided by the college is the most important factor that contributes to the motivation of a student. This is followed by amenities provided by the college to the students and brand name was seen as the least motivating factor.

Hence it is inferred that students are focused on the educational inputs provided by the college that ultimately develops the personality and enhances knowledge of a student for his better tomorrow.

2. Important consideration for college

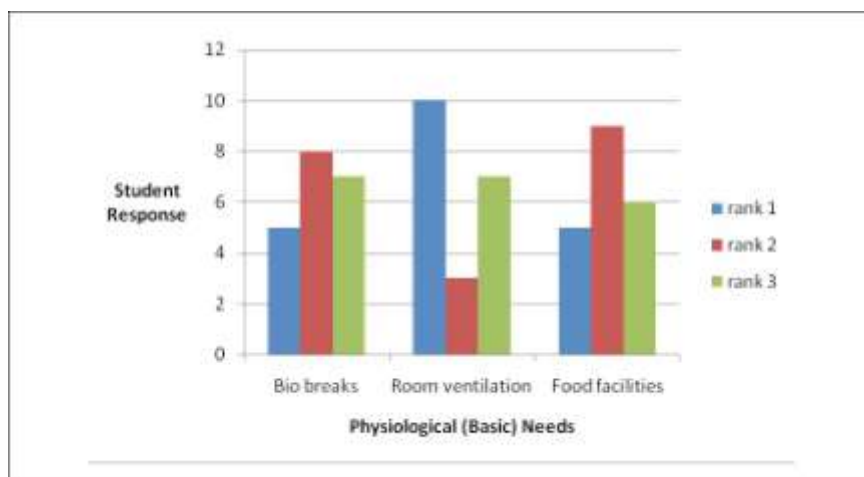


Most of the students consider that physical parameters like availability of clean classrooms, washrooms, activities conducted for the students etc. are very important whereas emotional and psychological parameters seem to be of lesser importance to the students.

Hence it can be deduced that physical parameters are the ones that a college needs to focus on. Physiological needs on the basis of their importance

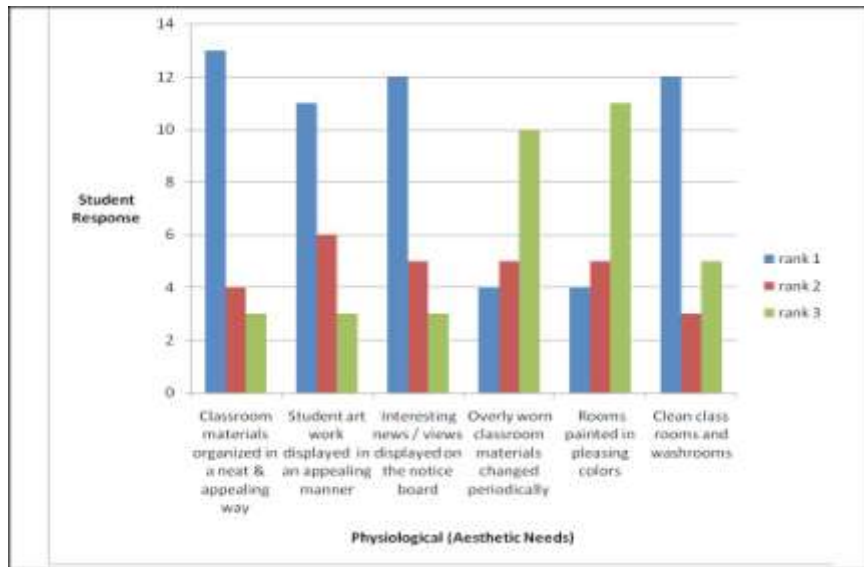
3. Basic Physiological Need

a) Basic Physiological Need



Room ventilation in the classrooms and seminar halls is a matter of concern for most of the students. Food facilities and Bio breaks are least preferred factors of the physiological needs. Hence physiological need of clean and fresh air is the basic aspect of students. Classrooms with good number of windows, fans will be motivators while they secure admission to a college.

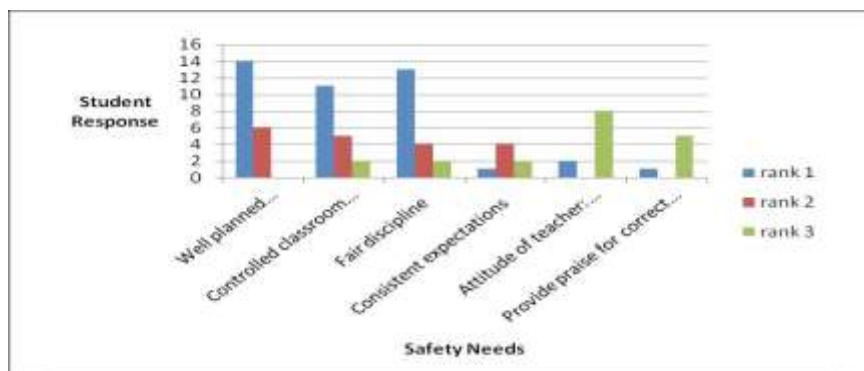
b) Aesthetic Physiological Need



Classrooms that are very neat and appealing for the students as well as display of students performance and extracurricular activities, etc. is considered to be the most important aesthetic physiological need as a motivating factor for the students.

Hence it can be inferred that aesthetic needs that enhance students learning and improve their creative bent of mind will be the most preferred motivational factor.

4. Safety needs on the basis of their importance



The students are more concerned about the well planned lessons carried out in an orderly manner and fair discipline with a controlled classroom behavior by the faculties.

From this we can infer that systematic organization of the syllabus coverage along with their contents as also a right attitude through the behavior of faculties create a sense of security amongst the students.

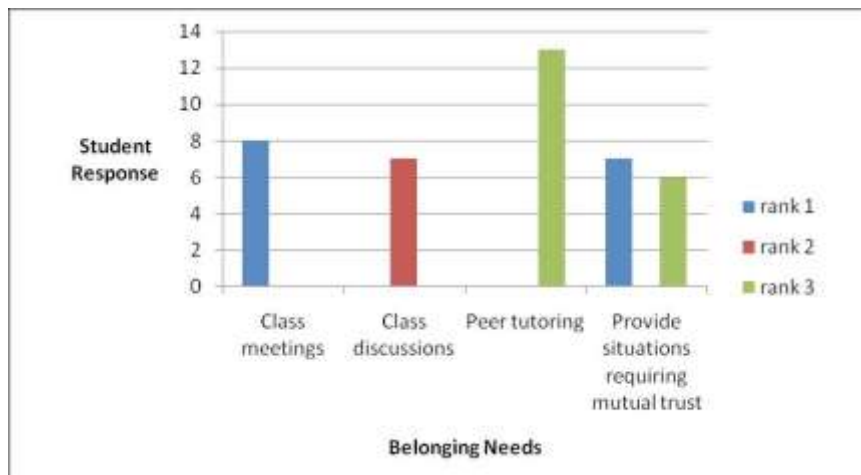
5. Belonging needs on the basis of their importance

a) With regard to teacher-student relationships

An admirable personality with a supportive behavior towards the students will create a favorable / positive relationship amongst student & teacher.

Thus we infer that students consider their teachers to be their ideals / role models having the following characteristics viz. being empathetic, considerate, patient, fair, positive, good listener, etc.

b) With regard to student-student relationships



Regular class meetings which help to develop mutual trust amongst the students are the most favorite factors in maintaining 'student – student' relationship.

Thus we infer that building a good rapport amongst the peer groups enhance their level of confidence. Also it helps the college to build a strong alumni base.

6. Self-esteem needs on the basis of their importance

Focus on student strengths and class participation enhances their esteem and builds their confidence. Whereas disciplining a student by a faculty is considered a major devaluator for the students.

Thus we infer that high esteem is developed when the students get opportunities to utilize their strengths through different programmes and activities conducted at the college level / inter collegiate level. It encourages students to be empathetic & good listeners and employ cooperative learning in such a way as to develop trust between students.

7. Self-actualization needs on the basis of their importance

Freedom to explore their ideas and working on their own potential and the expectation to do their best generates sense of Self-Actualization. Thus we infer that sense of achievement gives a sense of fulfillment of goals resulting in Self-Actualization.

FINDINGS

It was found that students are more focused on the educational inputs which are based on physical parameters of motivation. They are motivated to select such colleges which fulfil their basic requirement and appeal them aesthetically. They are more inclined towards joining such colleges that practices systematic organization of teaching where teachers can be their ideals / role models. Preference for activity based learning that strengthens the student relationship amongst them is strong motivational factor. High esteem is developed when the students get opportunities to channelize and utilize their strengths to the optimum. Sense of achievement gives a sense of fulfillment of goals resulting in self-actualization.

CONCLUSION

Educational institutions and government agencies have long realized that if students' basic needs are not met, student performance will suffer. Addressing **basic physiological needs** is still a key concern in today's classroom which needs to be met before the student can reach the next level.

Student **safety needs** play a critical role in achieving student success. The need for a structured and safe classroom is essential for student growth and progression. A structured classroom provides psychological safety for the student. By having knowledge of clearly defined and established processes, procedures, rules and practices teachers eliminate students' fear of the unknown. By gaining knowledge of the expected dynamics of the classroom, the student gains more control of their environment simply by being aware of what is going to happen before it happens. A safe environment is not limited to physical parameters. Students must not only feel safe in the classroom physically, but emotionally and psychologically as well. An environment must be provided and maintained where students feel free to take risks such as answering a question or sharing thoughts without concern for ridicule or teasing by other students. Additionally, students must trust that the teacher will not ridicule, use sarcasm, or otherwise berate the student when answering questions or addressing issues. The student must feel a degree of safety in all aspects of the classroom and school environment before progressing to the next step in Maslow's theory - belongingness and love needs.

The student must feel that he/she is important as an individual, that he/she is lovable and is deserving of being loved and cared about. Oftentimes the only time that these attributes are

reinforced may be by the teacher in the class. Students must be made aware that teachers value them as individuals as well as the work they perform. We as teachers must take advantage of each and every opportunity to reinforce each student's **self esteem** in the manner in which we treat them in the classroom. This reinforcement of positive attributes of the student in turn aids in developing respect or a favorable impression of oneself.

Once these needs are met, the student may then move to the next level, the need to know and understand. It is at this level that the student is most receptive to learning. Our challenge is to aid the student in achieving this level.

SUGGESTION

As teachers, we can help and guide our students in moving up Maslow's Hierarchy by adopting the following measures -

- Understand that each student brings his/her own unique background to the classroom. A student's readiness to learn is not solely dependent upon existing knowledge and skills. We must develop a relationship with the student in order to determine their current readiness level. Once determined, we must develop a strategy to address current needs as well as the needs in the next level.
- Create a safe classroom environment. Develop rules and procedures which provide a structured environment rich in routine and shared expectations. Develop and enforce rules prohibiting sarcastic, degrading, and berating remarks and comments by students directed at other students. No student may physically or verbally hurt another. Additionally, learn to use positive reinforcement instead of negative reinforcement to correct student behaviors. Lastly, provide copious amount of praise and reinforcement for student risk taking. We should act as an advocate for each of our students. Take time out to let each student know how well they are doing. This could take the form of a short handwritten note on their papers, or verbal comment. The key is to focus on the students' positive attributes and aid the student in developing an increased level of self-esteem.
- The students should feel that we care about them. Although many of us assume our students know this, it's not necessarily the case. Let the students know that we want them to succeed, whether it be to pass their latest test, or class, or graduate from college and get a good job. Let them know that we appreciate the work they do on classwork, or a test, or home assignments. Take the time out to explain issues and concerns with them. When feasible, provide student participation in the class decision making process.

As an educator, we find this theory eternally relevant for students and adults, especially in our classrooms. As teachers we are in a position to strongly influence student outcomes. However, to change outcomes we must first understand that we must assess the whole child to include not only student knowledge of material but more importantly, student readiness levels based on Maslow's theory and obstacles to learning. Only when we address both of the issues, will student learning be enhanced and maximized, thus contributing towards the growth and sustainable development of our country.

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