

Motivational Factors for In-Service Students Enrolled in Higher Education Programs

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In this competitive era, employees continue to strive for further education and training for survival and growth in the workplace. This study aimed to explore the most inspirational need which forces people to enrol themselves in higher education, using Maslow's need hierarchy as a theoretical framework. The study was descriptive and a questionnaire was used for data collection. A sample of 350 in-service students, was selected through snowball sampling technique. The result indicates that self-actualization need acts as the greatest motivational factor to higher education followed by esteem needs, physiological needs, safety needs, and social needs as the least motivator. The results also indicated that low-income students gave the highest ranking to physiological needs and young students gave the highest ranking to esteem need. It is suggested that universities may take initiatives for exceptional continuing higher education programs for in-service people to fulfil their self-actualization, and esteem needs.

Keywords: Motivational Factors, Higher Education, Maslow's need Hierarchy⁵

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Introduction

Higher education is confronted with significant difficulties in the twenty-first century. It is essential that universities provide educational opportunities to adult learners. Higher education is considered as an important factor for the social and economic development of emerging economies now a day. The World conference on higher education in 1998 has mentioned in its outcome that during this era of globalization higher education is a significant catalyst for the social and economic progress of the country. Economic progress and development are the results of the creation, dissemination, and application of all kinds of knowledge (de Oliveira Pires, 2009; Eggins, 2003). People who enrolled themselves in higher education program after starting career defiantly persuaded by some motivational factors as learning and motivation has a fundamental relationship (West, 1996).

Motivation energetically moves human beings towards a goal or hard work. It energizes or directs our behavior. Some psychologists have explained motivation in terms of the personal traits of an individual (Woolfolk, 2007). Motivation means giving direction to thoughts to be matched with your desires (Deci & Ryan, 2000). It is a wide hypothetical notion that we frequently use to elucidate why people engage in particular actions at particular times (Beck, 2004). Motivation is a broadly-used concept in many disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology, education, and management. The term motivation in psychology is a global concept for a variety of practices and effects. The realization that an individual chose a specific behaviour because of anticipated results and then implement it with good energy is the basic consideration of this global concept. It is a very comprehensive concept that is influenced by multiple factors. In general, it is summarized as extrinsic or intrinsic motivation. A satisfaction that emerges after completing a task is classified as intrinsic motivation and when an individual involves in a task to attain external reward is known as extrinsic motivation (Vallerand & Blssonnette, 1992).

Neto (2015), investigated the relationship between motivation and self-actualization needs and its effect on the academic achievements of the students. He found that thriving learners always have a profound perception of what forced them intrinsically. It is the natural tendency to seek out and conquer challenges as we pursue personal interests and exercise capabilities. When we are intrinsically motivated, we do not need incentives and punishment, because the activity itself is rewarding (Woolfolk, 2004). Persistent motivation is the result of intrinsic drives, as

persons get instantaneous happiness and satisfaction while engaging in an activity for internal satisfaction or inspiration they get while completing it. In contrast, when we do something to earn a grade, avoid punishment, please the teacher, or for some other reason that has to do very little with the task itself, we experience extrinsic motivation. We are not interested in the activity for its own sake; we care only about what it will gain us.

Intrinsic motivation denotes intangible rewards on the other hand extrinsic motions denote tangible rewards. Compensation, job incentives, place of work, labor circumstances, and employee safety are some examples of extrinsic motivations. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), only work conditions are not enough for the satisfaction of extrinsic motivation which means some external rewards like money, food, praise, etc. are important for engaging individuals in activities. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations provide bases for the development of further motivational concepts.

Since the last century number of motivational theories are developed and they are applicable till today. These theories enabled us to understand the relationship between motivation and student's learning. Abraham Maslow presented a hierarchical theory of human needs in 1943. He argued that human beings are not controlled by involuntary forces (the stimulus and response forces of behaviorism) or the cataleptic instinctual desires of psychoanalysis. He asserted that needs are innate, inherent, and universal. He further elaborated that human beings are motivated by only one need at a time which is dominant at any given time (Shahrawat & Shahrawat, 2017). He focused on human beings' capabilities and emphasized that human beings always struggle to achieve the highest level. An Individual's state of motivation is not constant but varies from time to time. Maslow suggested that human needs can be ranked in order. Maslow named them physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs in ascending order. He suggested that humans have a hierarchy of needs ranging from lower-level for survival and safety to higher-level needs for intellectual achievement and finally self-actualization. After fulfillment of one level of needs, human beings pursue the next levels of needs. He labeled the three higher-level needs, intellectual achievement, aesthetic appreciation, and finally self-actualization. When these higher-level needs are met, a person's motivation ceases; instead, it increases to seek further fulfillment (Woolfolk, 2007). Although some researchers have suggested

a rearrangement of this pyramid (Oved, 2017). This theory is helpful to understand human behavior and motivation. Human beings' course of action throughout life is guided by these needs (Melnic & Botez, 2014; Otway & Carnelley, 2013; Petty, 2014; Hale et al., 2019).

The history of human civilization reflects that societies always used education as a transmission agent of cultural heritage. It is considered a lifelong process that develops human beings' physically, mentally, and morally. Motivation and learning are related significantly. No single theory seems to adequately explain all human motivation. The fact is that human beings in general and students in particular are complex creatures with complex needs and desires. The majority of research studies on motivation have been conducted on school or workplace context while there is a lack of research literature in the higher education milieu (Kember, Hong, & Ho, 2008). There is a noteworthy association between learning and motivation worldwide (Muenks, Yang, & Wigfield, 2018). Students' retention in the university and in the career related to their field of study is significantly linked with psychological factors (Ballmann & Mueller, 2008; Saunders-Scott, Braley, & Stennes-Spidahl, 2018).

Rationale of the Study

Higher education is facing a litany of challenges (Brint, 2019). Historical bounds of the academic disciplines are stretching their boundaries and emerged as a flexible and convenient format of continuing higher education (Gobor & Yerkes, 1999). So, there has been a rapid growth of institutes and universities for continuing education. These institutes and universities cover a varied array of interests and designed educational programs for all stages of life to learn new skills, gain new insights, and discover the untapped creativity of individuals. The significance of higher education is continuously increasing day by day. There is a deep-rooted realization that societies and economies cannot progress without a skilled work-force. Progressive societies need knowledgeable human capital, so it is essential to upgrade and upskill human beings to maintain a high-quality workforce to serve the economy. Osamwonyi (2016) stated that human capital can only be developed through higher education. Furthermore, this system of higher education needs to reform and reposition because orthodox and static systems do not transform societies. According to Griscti and Jacono (2006), a

rigorous determination is required to make continuing higher education achievable and genuine.

Students from the lower middle class face many challenges to continue their education after the secondary level in under-developed countries like Pakistan. Factors that hinder the implementation of continuing education arise from individual, professional, and organizational perspectives. The most common factors are expensive higher education, organizational restrictions, and family responsibilities of aspiring students in terms of earning. Higher education institution seems unable to cater to such students due to lack of public supports and diverse set of students. So, challenges multiply for people to continue higher education.

This study investigates in-service adult learners' motivational factors that activate them to pursue higher education based on the framework of Maslow's theory of motivation. The rationale behind this study is to investigate in-service students' motivational needs for enrolling themselves in higher education programs. Maslow's theoretical framework is used in this study to find out the motivation level of students. It is commonly perceived in Pakistan that people get enrolled in higher education to excel in their professions and get promotions. Most of the studies on Maslow's theory deal with working adults' motivational factors in the workplace. This study deals with in-service adult's motivation to acquire higher education and the effect of their income and age on the motivational factors of need.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

- To investigate the motivation level of in-service students enrolled in higher education programs in terms of their physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs and examine the ranking of their needs.
- To examine the effect of income and age on the motivational factors of needs.

Hypotheses

- There are significant differences among different income groups of in-service students regarding Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

- There are significant difference among different age groups of in-service students regarding Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Method

Research Design

This study was a descriptive research and a survey questionnaire was used to collect data. The population of the research was in-service students presently enrolled in higher education programs i.e. MS, MPhil, and Ph.D.

Sample

The sample of this research was 350 in-service students selected through snowball sampling technique. Out of these 350 students, 335 were enrolled in MS/M.Phil program and 15 were enrolled in Ph.D. programs in Education, Business, Sciences, and Humanities at University of the Punjab, Lahore College for Women University, and University of Sargodha. The age range was 21 to 40 years with a minimum income of forty thousand Pakistani Rupees per month for all in-service respondents.

Measures

The core objective of this study was to investigate the ranking and hierarchical placement of motivational factors for in-service students who were enrolled in continuing higher education programs in Lahore. Keeping in view the nature of the study, a questionnaire was used for collecting data as a research instrument for this study. The first section of the questionnaire required demographic information i.e. age and income of the family. The second section comprised of a survey instrument used in this research which was based on the work of Chwan-Yi and Yaw-Bin (2004) and was available publically, who examined adult learners' motivation for continuing education programs based on Maslow's theory. Some of the statements were modified with the consultation of experts. The questionnaire was a 5 point Likert type scale and comprised of five factors aligned with Maslow's need theory. Before collecting actual data from research participants of the study, pilot testing was conducted by administering a questionnaire to 30 students. Cronbach alpha was used to verify the reliability of the instrument. The details of the factors of the instrument are as under.

Physiological Needs. This subscale is comprised of five items measuring physiological needs. (Sample Items: “To have better living environment”; “To buy a better vehicle for efficient transportation”.) Reliability coefficient of the scale measuring Psychological Needs was .70.

Safety Needs. Safety needs were measured with five items. (Sample Items: “To prevent being harmed by others”; “To be safe from injury”.) The reliability coefficient for safety needs subscale was 0.88.

Social Needs. Social need subscale contained six items. (Sample Items: “To make more friends in my learning Environment”; “To participate in a variety of activities and clubs”.) The reliability coefficient for Social Needs subscale was satisfactory ($\alpha=.79$)

Self-Esteem Needs. The sample items for the Self-Esteem Needs subscale are as follows. (Sample Items: “To be appreciated by others”; “To be respected”.) Cronbach alpha coefficient for Self-Esteem Needs subscale was 0.75.

Self-Actualization Needs. Self-Actualization needs were measured with six items. (Sample Items: “To appreciate the good, the true, and the Beautiful”; “To fulfill my personal and professional Objectives”.) Cronbach alpha coefficient for Self-Actualization Needs subscale was 0.83.

Procedure

After doing pilot testing, actual data was collected. The sample of the study was 350 in-service students who were enrolled in higher education programs. The questionnaire which was used for this study was based on five factors in which motivations behind the enrollment of in-service students in continuing higher education programs were measured. The questionnaire was given to the respondents personally by the researchers and they returned after answering each item satisfactorily..

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality of participants was ensured and informed consent was taken specifically. All participants of the study were informed that

their identity would be kept secret and their responses would be utilized for research purposes only.

Results

The mean score and standard deviation for each factor were calculated for finding out the level of needs of in-service students at the higher education level. Analysis of Variance was used to discover group differences regarding age and income of the adult learners.

Table 1

Mean, SD and Rank for Maslow's Needs Hierarchy

SN	Need Hierarchy	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)	Rank
1	Physiological Needs	3.83	(1.05)	3
2	Safety Needs	3.07	(1.21)	5
3	Social Needs	3.54	(1.14)	4
4	Esteem Needs	3.90	(1.01)	2
5	Self-Actualization Needs	3.97	(0.93)	1

Table 1 indicates the average scores of all five needs as given by Maslow (1970). Self-Actualization Needs with the mean score of 3.97, was the highest-ranked motivator, and safety needs with the mean score 3.54, was ranked as the lowest motivator. Self-actualization need had the highest score among the five levels of needs. This revealed that the people who enrolled themselves in higher education programs had the greatest motivation for self-actualization needs. The hierarchical order of the remaining need was; esteem needs, psychological needs, social needs, and safety needs.

Table 2

Monthly Income and Five Levels of Needs

Level of needs	Less than 40,000	40,000-70,000	Above 70,000	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Physiological	3.90	3.74	3.60	8.60	.000
Safety	3.01	3.00	3.13	2.47	.085
Social	3.55	3.56	3.45	0.66	.515
Esteem	3.92	3.89	3.81	1.05	.348
Self-Actualization	3.95	3.96	4.07	1.34	.263

The above table reveals that there is no significant difference in all types of needs of learners of different income levels, except physiological

needs $F(1, 349) 8.60, p= 0.0002$. Income has a significant effect on the physiological need of the students only.

Table 3

LSD Post-Hoc Test of Multiple Comparisons for Different income Groups on Five Levels of Needs

Dependent Variable	(I) Monthly Income	(J) Monthly Income	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Physiological Needs	Less than 40,000	Above 70,000	1.50*	.839	.028

It was revealed through LSD post hoc test of multiple comparisons that students with high income (above 70,000) ($M=3.60$) are less motivated than the students of lower-income level (less than 40,000) ($M=3.90$) who were enrolled in continuing studies programs of universities.

Table 4

Difference in age and five levels of needs

Factor	Age 21-25	Age 26-30	Age 31-35	Age above 36	F	P
Physiological	3.86	3.82	3.79	3.62	1.52	.207
Safety Need	3.83	3.75	3.68	3.83	1.62	.182
Social Need	3.56	3.57	3.47	3.32	1.65	.176
Esteem Need	3.99	3.89	3.75	3.70	4.72	.003
Self-Actualization	4.01	3.94	3.94	4.04	1.03	.378

There was no significant effect of the age of adult learners on physiological, safety, social, and self-actualization needs. Age affected esteem needs only $F(1, 349) 4.72, p= 0.003$.

Table 5

LSD Post-Hoc Test of Multiple Comparisons for Different age Groups on Five Levels of Needs

Dependent Variable	(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Esteem Needs	21-25	above 36	1.45	.799	.031

LSD post hoc test of multiple comparisons revealed that the young students belonging to the age group of 21 years to 25 years have higher self-esteem needs as compared to other age groups especially adult learners who were 36 and above.

Discussion

Being a humanist psychologist Maslow introduced the idea of hierarchal needs in 1943. Since then lot of research had been conducted in this aspect of human nature. Maslow's theory has been criticized for the reason that people do not always appear to behave as theory would predict (Woolfolk, 2007). Some researches supported and substantiated the idea but findings of some research endeavors reported less evidence for hierarchal order of such need. The significance of in-service education is widely known for equity and social cohesion, democracy, employment, and economic development. de Oliveira Pires (2009), stated that a deeper look into the motives for pursuing higher education reveals that adult motives are complex and individual specific. The results of this research study emphasized that there is a strong relation between epistemic motives, higher levels of education, and training. Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece (2008), claim that motivation is an important factor that infiltrates all aspects of teaching and learning.

Some of the findings of the study supported the theory but there was a contradiction in some findings. Self-actualization was ranked as the highest need by respondents while esteem need was ranked on second place. Self-actualization need proved to be the highest motivating factor for respondents simply because of their maturity level and due to the reason that their lower-level needs were fulfilled and they were at a stage when higher-level needs arise as theorized by Maslow. A similar finding was reported by (Chwan-Yi & Yaw-Bin, 2004) that the highest-ranking among the five levels of Maslow's needs is self-actualization. Neto (2015), also stated that students enrolled in continuing higher education program have high self-actualization because of their maturity level. Furthermore, individuals who wanted to excel in life and wanted to seek meaning and understanding in life, are probably to be motivated by self-actualization needs (Frana, 2013; Huss & Magos, 2014). According to Akçay and Akyol (2014), students having a high level of self-actualization can achieve their maximum development on the path to a superior state of existence. Personal advancement, self-esteem, and professional development are motivators for these individuals. Kim and Kim (2015), suggest that the most academically motivating factors are

intrinsic factors associated with self-actualization. It was also discovered that the most influential need of the teachers on the self-actualization level was interesting and valuable activities which influence motivation (Arslan, 2017).

According to Maslow's theory physiological need are placed at the lowest level (Jonas, 2016) but the result of the present study place this need above social and safety needs. The reason for this deviation can be explained due to different sociological and cultural context of this study. Because Pakistani society is based on strong family bonding and usually individuals obtain social support from the families unlike western society, which might be the reason that respondents ranked these needs lowest. Pakistan's per capita income is quite low in the world and unemployment is one of the major problems of people. So respondents ranked physiological needs higher than social needs. Findings of the present study also indicated that the young student ranked esteem need higher and low-income students ranked physiological need higher. Low-income students may have an urge and desire to increase their salary and improve their lifestyle which could be a reason to prioritize physiological needs. The results of this research support that some factors are strong motivators and others are comparatively low motivators. Researchers found that different age group students have different needs. The results of the study also conclude that there is a significant difference between income and five levels of needs same as the study conducted by Ohja & Pramanick (2009) and Evans & Yuan (2018).

Conclusion

It was concluded that all five factors of needs which were based on Maslow's theory of motivation were considered motivators by the adult learners invariably. It exhibited that there was a hierarchy in the motivational needs of in-service students who enrolled themselves in continuing higher education programs in Lahore. Self-Actualization need was the greatest motivation for in-service students which was followed by esteem, physiological, safety, and social needs. The social need was considered the least motivator among all five levels of needs. The outcomes exhibit that some of the results support Maslow's theory of motivation. As per the results, low-income learners were more concerned about their physiological and safety needs than high-income learners. The results demonstrated that self-actualization need seems to influence the high-income in-service learners' group. Further, it was concluded that

young students were more concerned about their physiological needs than other age groups.

Limitations and Suggestions

The population of this study was adult learners enrolled in different programs at the higher education level. There was no data available regarding these students and because of this limitation, researchers selected a sample using the snowball sampling method. The present study deals with Maslow's motivational factors but there are other factors as well given by other proponents, which may stimulate students for higher studies, so in the future, those factors may be also be explored. Comparative researches are recommended between the students of public sector universities and private universities, as the social class difference and inherited affordability may impact the results of researches. It becomes imperative that institutions of higher education should cater to the needs of today's adult population, especially self-actualization needs.

Implications

The study results demonstrate that self-actualization was the most important need of the students so it is necessary for the universities that they start more higher education programs, tailored and customized according to the motivational requirements and needs of potential students.

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