PERCEPTION OF MASLOW’S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS THEORY BY NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY WORKERS – A CHALLENGE TO UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS

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Abstract
The study investigated the perception of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs among Nigerian federal universities’ workers following the general public reactions on the managers’ need to study and understand what really motivates their workers. The population consisted of all 27 Nigerian federal universities. A sample of three Nigerian federal universities was selected by stratified random sampling method for the study. A stratified random sampling method was used to select 300 (150 (75 males and 75 females) academic and 150 (75 males and 75 females) non-academic) staff from each of federal government universities. A total sample of 900 staff (450 males and 450 females) participated in the study. The data of the study were collected using questionnaire and oral interview. The questionnaire was titled Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs’ Inventory (MHNI). The questionnaire was made up of two parts – Part A contained demographic variables while Part B contained 10 questions bothering on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and the justification of the hierarchy. The validity of the questionnaire was made by experts in Educational Administration and Planning and Psychology. The reliability of the instrument was tested using a Split-Half Method. The Correlation Coefficient was corrected by the use of Spearman Brown Formula. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was .75 and final Spearman Brown Formula yielded 0.82. The statistics used for data analysis were Z-test and percentage. The major finding was that Maslow’s hierarchy of needs was not applicable as perceived by the workers. Based on the major finding, it was recommended that managers should study their workers needs bearing in mind the impact of culture on the workers and the personal attributes.

Keywords: PERCEPTION ; MASLOW’S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS ; NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY WORKERS ; CHALLENGE ; UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS
INTRODUCTION

Individual’s behavior is basically goal oriented and individuals’ needs or drives differ. Before Maslow propounded his theory on the hierarchy of needs, some researchers like Frederick Douglas etc have focused separately on such factors as achievement or power. Maslow came up with this theory on hierarchy of needs in 1943 based on deficiency and growth needs. He arranged human needs in ascending order of physiological needs which are needs for basic things of life like food, water etc; safety needs which is the need for security; need for love and belonging which are the needs for being accepted among groups and feeling of companionship; need for self esteem which is the need for recognition and respect; and finally the need for self-actualization which is the need for self fulfillment and to make use of the most unique abilities.

Needs are deficiencies, which move one into action to satisfy them. Individual needs or drives are unlimited, insatiable and endless but the resources to satisfy them are limited. Maslow believed that the lower needs must be satisfied before higher needs. He believed that at any given time, there is a uniquely active need which must be satisfied. Maslow asserted that satisfied needs do no motivate anymore.

The questions are if needs do really come in order expressed by Maslow as perceived by Nigerian university workers; whether all Maslow’s hierarchy of needs are really experienced by every individual; and finally if met needs never reoccur. Although Maslow made a positive contribution to the study of motivation, culturally, economically, physiologically, psychologically and politically, human needs may not be in Maslow’s hierarchical order. The lower needs that have been satisfied may reoccur after the higher needs have been met. A good example is hunger. The need to satisfy hunger is always there whether the individual is at lowest, middle or any level of the hierarchy but Maslow believed that once a need is met, it ceases to be a motivator. Also, many people may see safety as the first basic need than physiological needs. The rate of insecurity may even make one to lose appetite and care less about some physiological needs.

Ryan and Deci in 2000, divided needs into three. These according to them might not be in order. These are autonomy, competence and relatedness. Wahoo and Bridwell (1976) found little evidence for ranking needs or even for the existence of such hierarchy as expressed by Maslow. Franken (2001) opined that Maslow’s theory was unsupported rather, he found that a person’s attributional style modifies the person’s needs. They advised that it would be better to ask people what they wanted and how their needs would be met. Many other researches like Hall and Nougain (1968) and Lawler and Suttle (1972) did not support Maslow hierarchy of needs. Bradley (2010) criticized Maslow based on the fact that he did not account for selfless acts like bravery and charitable nor did it account for a starving artist who seeks self actualization even when basic physiological needs are being hardly met.

In every management, there should be a concern for need recognition. According to Obikoya in 1996, need recognition stresses the recognition of employees’ needs, particularly their desire for quality of work life, job satisfaction, having knowledge of what is going on in the organization and being informed of any changes before they take place. In assessing needs, it is imperative that the manager has a good knowledge of his workers. McOliver & Nwagwu (1996) expressed that individual acts on the basis of his or her perception or interpretation of reality.
Nigerians have cultures which sometimes make one not to act oneself. There is this impression that many may prefer to starve as long as they belong to certain groups. Belonging to groups seems to give many people the mental satisfaction often needed. It gives the sense of popularity. Nigerians in general can be said to like recognition even if they are lacking in basic things of life.

Statement of the Problem

The hierarchy of needs’ theory as propounded by Maslow may not be applicable as perceived by Nigerian university workers because many workers seem to act on their perception of reality. The culture and the high insecurity in the country may highly affect the hierarchy of needs among workers. There is a concern that needs may tend to reoccur and motivation will deviate from Maslow’s hierarchical order. There is need to investigate these assertions to find out if the workers would perceive their needs as being in Maslow’s hierarchical order.

Research Questions

Based on the stated problem, the following research questions are raised to guide the study:

1. Are needs in hierarchical order as expressed by Maslow?
2. Can satisfied needs reoccur?
3. Can reoccurred satisfied needs motivate?
4. Does everyone have the same hierarchy of needs?
5. Is there any difference in the perception of hierarchy of needs between male and female university workers?
6. Is there any difference in perception of hierarchy of needs between academic and non-academic workers?
7. What factors can affect individual needs in Nigerian economy?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated from the research questions:

HO1 There will be no significant difference in perception of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs between the academic and the non-academic university workers?
HO2 There will be no significant difference in the perception of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs between the male and the female university workers?

Significance of Study

Nigeria being a developing nation needs above all to know the needs of her workers and how best to satisfy them so that there would be increase in workers’ productivity. The Nigerian government would be happy to know that her stated goals in the National Policy on Education are being effectively implemented by applying appropriate motivational forces by the university administrators. The Nigerian universities’ administrators would know if needs are really in hierarchical order and would be able to know those factors that motivate their workers and how best to motivate their workers so that the goals of education would be achieved. The workers would be happy to know that their needs and expectations would be met if they put more effort in meeting the needs and expectations of the organization.

Methodology

The research design used was survey. The population consisted of all 27 Nigerian federal universities. A sample of three Nigerian federal universities was selected by stratified random sampling method for the study. A stratified random sampling method was used to select 300 (150 academic (75 males and 75 females) and 150 non-academic (75 males and 75 females).
staff from each of the selected federal universities. A total sample of 900 staff (450 males and 450 females) participated in the study.

The data for the study were collected using questionnaire and oral interview. The questionnaire was titled Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs’ Inventory (MHNI). The questionnaire was made up of two parts – Part A contained demographic variables while Part B contained 10 questions bothering on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and the justification of the hierarchy. The validity of the questionnaire was made by experts in Educational Administration and Planning and Psychology. The reliability of the instrument was tested using a Split-Half Method. The Correlation Coefficient was corrected by the use of Spearman Brown Formula. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was .75 and final Spearman Brown Formula yielded 0.82. The statistics used for data analysis were Z-test and percentage. The scoring was based on 0 – 1.00 as very low perception; 1.01 – 1.99 as low perception; 2.00 –2.99 as average perception, 3.00 - 3.50 as good perception and 3.51 – 4.00 as excellent perception.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are needs in hierarchical order as expressed by Maslow?</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Can satisfied needs reoccur?</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Can reocurred satisfied needs motivate?</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Does everyone have the same hierarchy of needs?</td>
<td>07%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is there any difference in the perception of hierarchy of needs between male and female university workers?</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is there any difference in perception of hierarchy of needs between academic and non-academic workers?</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What factors can affect individual needs? Environmental factors, culture, In Nigerian economy? Level of ethical value, level of education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypotheses

HO1 The first null hypothesis which states that there will be no significant difference in the perception of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs between the academic and non-academic university workers was analyzed with the data collected from the questionnaire. The result is as presented on Table 2.

Table 2 Significant Difference in Perception of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs between Academic and Non-Academic University Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Academics</th>
<th>Non-Academics</th>
<th>Calculated Value</th>
<th>Z-Value</th>
<th>Table Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>450</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>-1.92</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 2, the calculated Z-Value at 0.05-Confidence Level is 1.92 while the Table Value is 1.96. The null hypothesis which states that there will be no significant difference in the perception of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs between the academic and non-academic university workers is therefore accepted. The mean scores for the academic worker was 1.56
while the non-academic workers had 1.61. Although their means differed, the difference was insignificant. Both group had low perception of application of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

**HO2** The second null hypothesis which, states that there will be no significant difference in the perception of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs between male and female university workers was analyzed with the data collected from the questionnaire. The result of the analysis is as on Table 3.

### Table 3 Perception of Hierarchy of Needs between the Male and the Female workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Calculated Z-Value</th>
<th>Table Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>450</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 3, the calculated Z-Value at 0.05-Confidence Level is .71 while the table value is 1.96. The Second null hypothesis which states that there will be no significant difference in the perception of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs between male and female university workers is therefore accepted. From the data analysis, the male workers had a mean score of 1.63 with the standard deviation of .43 while their female counterparts had a mean score of 1.65 with the standard deviation of .41. Both groups although they differed in their means, but statistically, it was found to be insignificant. Both groups had low perception of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

**Discussion**

From the analysis of data on Maslow’s hierarchy needs as perceived by Nigerian university workers, many things were revealed. One of the questions in the questionnaire was to rate their needs in hierarchical order based on Maslow’s five hierarchy of needs. Only 15% of the participants rated their hierarchy of needs as suggested by Maslow while 85% had alternative hierarchies. This is in agreement with Bridwell (1976), Franken (2001) and Suttle (1972). On the question of if needs do reoccur, 87% of the respondents agreed that needs do reoccur which is in contrary to Maslow’s theory. Also, 85% of the respondents were of the opinion that reoccurred needs do motivate. Again this is contrary to Maslow’s theory.

Ninety-three percent of the participants agreed that everyone does not have the same hierarchy of needs. Some participants who were interviewed compared the hierarchy of needs with the scale of preference in economics. They believed that everyone’s scale of preference as applicable to needs differ. Factors like environment, individual’s values, level of education, social status and personal attributes are capable of affecting individual’s hierarchy of needs.

Both the academic and non-academic workers have low perception of application of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Gender also did not affect their perception.

**Conclusion**

From the results of the study, it is confirmed that a Nigeria university worker whether academic or non-academic, whether male or female does not fall under Maslow’s hierarchy of needs for motivational purposes. Therefore, it is necessary for university administrators not to assume that the application of Maslow hierarchy of needs theory would solve their problems of workers’ motivation. There is need to study their workers by asking them what they need rather than making some assumptions. The administrators should be aware of
personal attributes and cultural trends to be able to effectively and efficiently motivate the workers.

Recommendations

For proper motivation of workers, the following recommendations are made: --

- Conferences, seminars and workshops should be organized to create public awareness on factors that motivate which may not be in hierarchical order as suggested by Maslow.

- Constant effort should be made by the Nigerian university administrators to recognize that employees have needs.

- University administrators should study their workers to be able to determine how to motivate them so that the goals of the organization can be achieved.

- It is important to note that satisfied needs can reoccur and when they reoccur, they can motivate.

- University administrators should make the quality of work life and job satisfaction conducive for university workers.
References