# Motivation Theories

From the very beginning, when the human organisations were established, various thinkers have tried to find out the answer to what motivates people to work. Different approaches applied by them have resulted in a number of theories concerning motivation.

These are discussed in brief in that order.

### 1. Maslow’s Need Hierarchy Theory:

It is probably safe to say that the most well-known theory of motivation is Maslow’s need hierarchy theory Maslow’s theory is based on the human needs. Drawing chiefly on his clinical experience, he classified all human needs into a hierarchical manner from the lower to the higher order.

In essence, he believed that once a given level of need is satisfied, it no longer serves to motivate man. Then, the next higher level of need has to be activated in order to motivate the man. Maslow identified five levels in his need hierarchy as shown in figure 17.2.

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**These are now discussed one by one:**

#### 1. Physiological Needs

These needs are basic to human life and, hence, include food, clothing, shelter, air, water and necessities of life. These needs relate to the survival and maintenance of human life. They exert tremendous influence on human behaviour. These needs are to be met first at least partly before higher level needs emerge. Once physiological needs are satisfied, they no longer motivate the man.

#### 2. Safety Needs:

After satisfying the physiological needs, the next needs felt are called safety and security needs. These needs find expression in such desires as economic security and protection from physical dangers. Meeting these needs requires more money and, hence, the individual is prompted to work more. Like physiological needs, these become inactive once they are satisfied.

#### 3. Social Needs:

Man is a social being. He is, therefore, interested in social interaction, companionship, belongingness, etc. It is this socialising and belongingness why individuals prefer to work in groups and especially older people go to work.

#### 4. Esteem Needs:

These needs refer to self-esteem and self-respect. They include such needs which indicate self-confidence, achievement, competence, knowledge and independence. The fulfillment of esteem needs leads to self-confidence, strength and capability of being useful in the organisation. However, inability to fulfill these needs results in feeling like inferiority, weakness and helplessness.

#### 5. Self-Actualisation Needs:

This level represents the culmination of all the lower, intermediate, and higher needs of human beings. In other words, the final step under the need hierarchy model is the need for self-actualization. This refers to fulfillment.

The term self-actualization was coined by Kurt Goldstein and means to become actualized in what one is potentially good at. In effect, self- actualization is the person’s motivation to transform perception of self into reality.

According to Maslow, the human needs follow a definite sequence of domination. The second need does not arise until the first is reasonably satisfied, and the third need does not emerge until the first two needs have been reasonably satisfied and it goes on. The other side of the need hierarchy is that human needs are unlimited. However, Maslow’s need hierarchy-theory is not without its detractors.

**The main criticisms of the theory include the following**

1. The needs may or may not follow a definite hierarchical order. So to say, there may be overlapping in need hierarchy. For example, even if safety need is not satisfied, the social need may emerge.

2. The need priority model may not apply at all times in all places.

3. Researches show that man’s behaviour at any time is mostly guided by multiplicity of behaviour. Hence, Maslow’s preposition that one need is satisfied at one time is also of doubtful validity.

4. In case of some people, the level of motivation may be permanently lower. For example, a person suffering from chronic unemployment may remain satisfied for the rest of his life if only he/she can get enough food