Motivation Of Human Being’s Wants & Needs

Motivation invigorates a human being’s wants & needs. In an attempt to systemise these drives, Abraham Maslow (1943) concocted a hierarchy based off of his own experimental studies, which placed physiological needs, safety needs, love & belonging, esteem & self-actualisation in decreasing order of significance. Maslow stated that before a successive need emerges, the one below must be satisfied & also embraced that this process was universal. The assumed universality of this has been subject to great contradiction. Individualist societies are self-sufficient & independent whereas, collectivist societies rely on others & put others before themselves. This essay intends to explain why Maslow’s hierarchy is only applicable in an individualist society, through discrepancies in fundamental needs, varying perceptions in self-concept & the attainment of self-actualisation.

Individualist & collectivist societies have distinct discrepancies in their priorities, even in their most fundamental needs. Maslow (1943) originally proposed that all humans have intrinsic physiological drives such as hunger or thirst, that propel them & that one can only advance to secondary needs once they have satisfied these. However, Lian-Cang (1980) proved otherwise with a cultural survey study assessing what motivations Chinese factory workers, characterised as collectivist, held most significant. Nevis (1983) also conducted the same with middle managers from the U.S.A, vastly known for its individualistic nature. Surveys completed by collectivist members demonstrated that social goals such as a raise in group bonuses & wages, belief in communism & a happy family took precedence over individual goals such as a promotion or a reputable title. Conversely, in surveys answered by American middle managers, individual goals such as interesting work & promotion prevailed.

Results were suggestive of membership & loyalty being significantly valued in collectivist organisations whereas, individualist organisations honoured employees for their individual sense of achievement & leadership (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003). Such values are coherent with collectivism, which involves an intimate societal framework, in which citizens bear no reservations in integrating their occupation & private life in exchange for loyalties & consideration from higher officials (Hofstede, 1983). In great contrast, individualistic societies religiously maintain separate professional & personal lives (Hofstede, 1983). Since the surveys solely focused on blue-collar & middle class employees, this is possibly a skewed cross-section of their respective societies & is consequently, a potential drawback of this study. Despite this limitation, Nevis (1983) & Lian-Cang (1980) tastefully accommodated culturally specific criteria to each survey, such as belief in communism & interesting work. This elevates the credibility & appropriateness in terms of this being a study scrutinising diverse perspectives. Given that the drive to accomplish social goals & the need to belong in a collectivist society exceed the motivation of personal wellbeing, it is evident that the universality of motivations that Maslow (1943) advances, is built on extensive generalisation.

The defining line between individualism & collectivism exerts a profound influence on an individual’s self-concept & quality of life. The way one views themselves is deeply moulded by the values & ideals their society surrounds them with. Hofstede (1980) exemplified this idea by conducting a worldwide study of 40 countries, where employees of the same multinational business corporation across the globe answered 32 value questions. Subsequently, an

ecological factor analysis of the 32 means discovered that 49% of the variance between each country's quality of life was consequent of 4 dimensions, one of which is the statistical association between the Individualism/collectivism continuum (I/C continuum) & power distance (Hofstede, 1980). Although this was implemented to analyse work quality of life, it can also be translated to an individual's inherent quality of life. In 1943, Maslow persevered that an individual should always hold themselves to the highest regard, whether that's through self-esteem or self-respect, to inflate their self-confidence, worth.

However, results from the factor analysis evidenced that this was not a priority that members of collectivist societies such as Pakistan, Philippines, Korea etc. strived for. On the contrary, the conservation of respect, avoidance of shame & gratification of loyalties amongst one's reference group or clan were compelling reinforcers in the way they lead their lives, reflecting their tendency to put others before themselves. (Hofstede, 1984). Meanwhile, the quality of life of individualist societies e.g. Australia & U.S.A was dictated by material novelties, self-esteem & achievement, which reflect their idealistic nature to be the best they can be (Hofstede, 1984). This aligned strongly with Maslow's (1943) assumptions. The degree of association in each societal framework is determined by the relative power distance, which refers to the level of dependence subordinates have on authoritative figures, which is why collectivist societies have large power distance & individualist societies have small power distance (Hofstede, 1984). Typically, the procedure of a factor analysis is open to interpretation of the researcher. Due to this limitation, objectivity of the patterns received in cultural relativity may be questionable. In spite of this disadvantage, since participants of this study are matched across the same multinational business corporation, the data is reliable & heightens the accuracy of the conclusions drawn. Ultimately, a collectivist member of society renders the harmonious interactions they have with others invaluable & so the need to view themselves highly is not important, as Maslow (1943) fallaciously assumed.

The concept of self-actualisation is prevalent in individualist societies, but collides with the encompassing values of a collectivist society. Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy motioned that despite satisfying all inferior needs, if an individual is yet to indulge in self-actualisation, the apex of the hierarchy, a sense of restlessness would linger. Itai (2008) examined the cultural validity of this assumption with the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) questionnaire & assessed 100 & 100 Indian participants, who respectively represented individualist & collectivist societies, on self-actualising facets. On 10 out of 12 subscales, which included self-regard & being inner oriented amongst others, participants scored significantly higher than Indian Participants, as predicted by the hypotheses (Itai, 2008). The magnitude of statistical differences in self-actualising values reflects an individualistic member's affinity towards fulfilling their highest potential & a collectivist member's tendency to gratify the potential of those around them.

The high degree of independence in a person from an individualistic society can also be correlated with a high sense of restlessness, as they excessively rely on their self-esteem & worth (Itai, 2008). Consequently, feelings of inadequacy will emerge, which stifles their drive to achieve utility & ultimate happiness. As opposed to Maslow's (1943) belief, a member of a collectivist society is devoid of this drive as they depend on extrinsic motives of loyalty & membership, therefore, they will always remain content. The lack of including & measuring culturally sensitive criteria to facilitate the vastly different ideals of both Great Britain & India limits the validity of this study. Despite this shortcoming, a strength of the POI questionnaire is the extreme difficulty for an individual to forge a positive impression for the measured values. This heightens the degree of objectivity of the conclusions. Since every individual from a

collectivist society plays a crucial role in sustaining the fragment of society & display no restlessness, the universal need for self-actualisation that Maslow proposes does not emerge.

References;

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