

# REVISITING MASLOW'S THEORY – A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Hendrick Musawenkosi Langa<sup>1</sup>, Ramoshweu Solomon Lebelo<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faulty of Engineering & Technology, Vaal University of Technology, South Africa

<sup>2</sup>Faulty of Applied & Computer Sciences, Vaal University of Technology, South Africa

hendrickl@vut.ac.za, sollyl@vut.ac.za

**Abstract.** A famous theory presented by Maslow provides a useful platform for researchers and scholars to ponder for many decades. Maslow's Theory is divided into five different aspects or needs, which are physiological needs, safety needs, relationship needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. Needs are very apparent in human life, existence, and activity. It is postulated that these needs are hierarchical and that they are met from the most basic to the most abstract needs in that order. It is assumed that once the physiological needs are met or partially met then the next level of needs arises in order of priority. This paper simplifies the model by describing needs in a more compact form. It is therefore suggested that these needs need not be expanded to more than three levels but rather be compacted into only three levels. Three categories of human needs are physical, emotional, and spiritual level needs. The paper also attempts to describe a common or abstract model that can be applied to all levels as well as some common variables that exist in all three levels. Therefore, the description amounts to a simple and concise model that uses a multidisciplinary approach in describing the meaning and application of Malsow's Theory. A contribution that this paper makes is that a new model which is regarded as more compact is proposed. This model is composed of only three levels. Associate models are also proposed that describe the composition of man as well as subcomponents that are aggregates of man. These models help give a concise definition of man in terms of attributes as well as operations that man can perform.

**Keywords:** Hierarchy of Needs, Physiological, Object, Class, Self-Actualization, Physical Needs, Emotional Needs, Spiritual Needs, UML Class Diagram.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Introduction

Maslow argues that there are five stages of human needs to motivate behavior. Firstly, there are physiological needs such as the need to breathe, eat, drink, or sleep. Once these needs are met, the second stage of needs arises and that is the need to be safe. In the level of need, finding shelter

to protect us from harm or danger becomes apparent. In stage three, we seek love and belonging. At this stage family is crucial and relationships are important. Some will join a society or even join a gang. Once one is comfortable in a group, then self-esteem is the next level to aspire to achieve. Once one is satisfied with being part of a group, one wishes to be a bit different, to be respected, and to feel confident. The fifth and highest level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs is self-actualization. Maslow postulated that a human has an innate desire to be all that he can be, to meet the self-actualization needs all the other needs must be met.

## 1.2 Background

This paper attempts to use induction to develop a new theory that is like Maslow's theory. This theory suggests that there are only three levels in which the needs exist and that these different needs are the same and replicate at different levels and in different forms. The proposed model is more compact and robust at the same time capturing all human needs and requirements that may arise.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

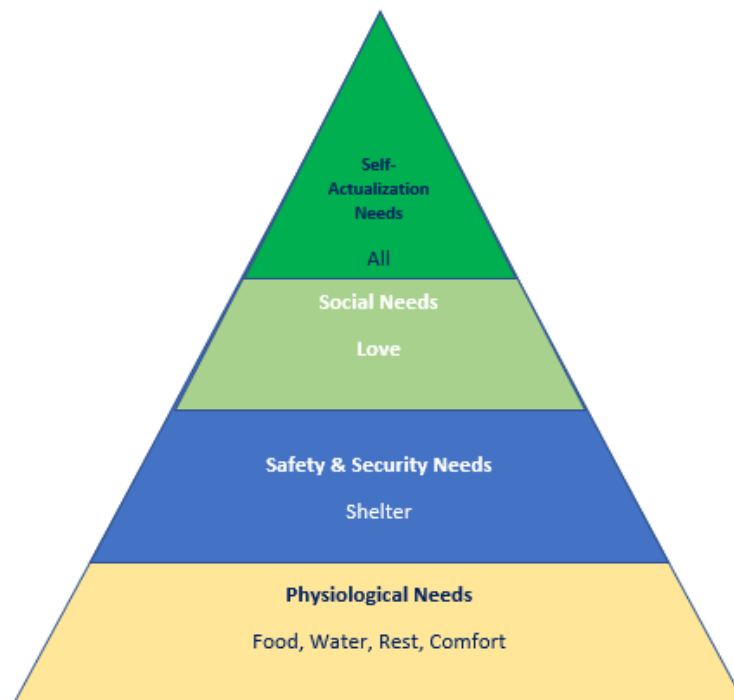
### 2.1. Maslow's Theory

We live in a hyper-competitive world where organizations are not only competing to have an edge in the product and services markets, but they also compete to attract, develop, and retain the best talent available in the labor market [Sanjeev, et al, 2022]. Failure to do the above results in a catastrophe for an organization and therefore without stable and motivated staff, the business is bound to lose its place in the market share.

The first humanistic motivational theorist who proposed the hierarchy of needs theory was Abraham Maslow in 1954. This theory was organized to structure human needs into five categories, namely, Physiological needs, safety and security needs, love and belonging needs respect, and self-actualization needs (Liu et al 2022). Fig 1 shows the well-known model referred to as the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs. This is one of the motivation theories that has been a subject of research for several decades. Maslow's theory is thought of as one of the most powerful perspectives on human growth (Papalentiou-Louca, et al, 2022) since it suggests that people have a strong desire to reach their full potential, self-actualization, and find the full meaning of life.

One interesting hypothesis of Maslow is that if lower-level human needs are not met, then higher-level needs would be impaired (Noltemeyer, et al, 2021). This hypothesis suggests a sequential satisfaction of needs or that needs are met from the level needs to higher level needs, in

that order. Maslow's hierarchy of needs consists of physical needs, security needs, social needs, and self-actualization needs in that order (Nurjanah, et al, 2022).



**Fig 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Maslow's theory is believed to comprehensively explain the different levels of individual motivation hence Maslow's theory has been preferred to other theories (Chopra, 2016). It emphasizes that motivation is based on needs and that needs should be partially or fully met before the next level of needs is met (Crompton 2016). The sequence of meeting the needs is very clear in this model. Maslow suggests that the 'Hierarchy of Needs' is a classification system that describes the stimuli for human behavior (Chiponde et al, 2022).

This ordering of needs from lower-level needs to higher levels is also confirmed by [Nguyen et al, 2020] where these are divided into distinct primary needs and secondary needs. As you progress in this hierarchy, self-actualization is the highest need on the ladder. Self-actualization is perceived as the process of exercising one's highest potential (Okech, 2015). Maslow postulated that successive satisfaction of the hierarchy of human needs provides motivation and purpose for life. It has been found that there is an inverse relationship between self-actualization and fear of incompetence (Singh, 2015). Self-actualized individuals are less likely to be overly

anxious about appearing incompetent around others, so they display psychosocial maturity and are as a result self-confident, honest, and outgoing. This is an important observation, and it can enhance our understanding of the concept of self-actualization. Maslow also cautioned that self-actualization is not a goal that an individual works for, but it is an outcome of needs that have been met (Singh, 2015).

In many organizations, especially in the public sector, employees raise many issues that point to their dissatisfaction with the companies that they work. This is probably due to a lack of accountability of management. Some motivation theories claim that there are factors that contribute to a decrease or increase in employee morale and motivation (Arasli et al, 2020). Maslow's theory suggests that increasing employee satisfaction or decreasing it depends on the extent to which these organizations have met employees' needs and expectations. Another example of the application of Maslow's theory was an analysis of the immigration of physicians from low-income countries to highly-resourced countries (Dohlman, et al, 2019). The authors found that a large majority of physicians moved to wealthy countries because of financial security and as well as self-actualization reasons.

## 2.2. Other Motivation Theories

No single theory can completely describe an organization in this modern time in which we live (Lau and Williams, 2015), and on the same token, no single can fully describe human motivation. Maslow's theory of motivation is not the only theory of motivation. It is interesting that Herzberg's two-factor theory (Sanjeev, et al, 2016) which was proposed in 1959 has been widely tested and has produced mixed results. What the course of mixed is, offers an opportunity for further scrutiny. Herzberg's theory (Delgado, 2005) has been one of the most validated theories in the Western world but has been found to yield different results in different countries, particularly the Asian countries, probably because of cultural differences. His view of the world was that it is not only financial rewards that motivate employees in a work environment but that there are other factors. He divided the motivators into two hence the two-factor theory. These factor motivators which factors he considered to be responsible for motivating people to work harder at work. He also identified factors that he called hygiene factors. He theorized that if these factors are not present, they will demotivate the employees, but he also theorized that they do not motivate employees on their own. Motivators are giving employees responsibilities, giving meaningful and fulfilling work, and rewarding achievements. Hygiene factors could include such things as good salaries, good working conditions, good policies, and good supervision. There is something very interesting said about the terms, motive, motivation, and satisfaction, which is a good basis for

future research and exploration (Sanjeev, et al, 2022). The concepts are summarized in the table and Herzberg's theory is built around the concepts in the table.

**Table 1. Definitions of Motive, Motivation, and Satisfaction.**

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Motive</b>       | It is the reason for doing something                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Motivation</b>   | It is the enthusiasm for doing something (Cambridge Dictionary)<br>It is the reason why somebody does something or behaves in a particular way (Oxford Dictionary)                                                                                               |
| <b>Satisfaction</b> | It is a good feeling you have when you have achieved something or when something you wanted to happen does happen (Oxford Dictionary)<br>It is a pleasant feeling you get when you receive something you wanted or when you have done something you wanted to do |

Taylor's theory, on the other hand, is the concept of scientific management. His focus in his theory was on the measurement of what can be done better and how. The theory also focused on monitoring to ensure that targets were met and control through analysis. Frederick Taylor's views were fundamentally correct concerning scientific decision-making and techniques such as time study, standardization, goal setting, money as a motivator, scientific selection, and rest breaks.

Alderfer's theory distinguished three classes of needs. These are existence, relatedness, and growth. This theory explains needs as a range rather than a hierarchy (Acquah, 2021).

McClelland's theory of needs for achievement, affiliation, and power is built on Maslow's theory (Acquah, 2021). Its focus is on satisfying existing needs rather than creating or developing needs. Since the model is being developed, more investigations must be undertaken to broaden its understanding.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Induction

Inductive reasoning is used to develop new theories. Observations made over time may spin out some regular patterns. Based on observations made one can arrive at a general conclusion. This

approach of reasoning from specific to general is called induction. This type of reasoning is the opposite of deductive reasoning which is from general to specific.

Research has shown that there is a connection between the spiritual realm and the physical realm (Chopra, 2022). Spirituality is characterized by faith and the search for the meaning and purpose of life. It is also characterized by a sense of connection with others, which results in inner peace and well-being. This connection will be discussed in the subsequent sections. This paper presents a new model by modifying Maslow's Theory of needs. As has been mentioned this is achieved by inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning is a well-known research technique which is in developing new theories.

## 3.2. MODEL DEVELOPMENT

### 3.2.1. Three Realms of Reality

The premise of the new model is the existence of three realms. This premise infers that a human being is three-fold as found in the scriptures, the body, the soul, and the spirit. A concept of spirituality [Lau and Williams, 2015] goes beyond religion and culture and it is characterized by faith. Spirituality is also characterized by the search for the purpose and meaning of life, a sense of connection with others, and transcendence of self. It is believed that this results in inner peace and well-being. The threefold nature of man is revealed in the bible: Genesis 2:7 "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became the living soul" (Holy Bible King James Version, 2016). This revelation is the truth is also found in the New Testament: 2 Thessalonians 5:23 "May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole **spirit, soul, and body** be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Holy Bible King James Version, 2016). The two references land us well on the conclusion that man is threefold. Therefore, we can use some principles of computer science to develop a modeling language known as the Unified Modeling Language (UML) to model objects. One of the tools used is called the UML Class Diagram. A class is a template used to create objects (Berardi et al, 2007).

### 3.2.2. Class Diagram of Man

Man is a class of his own, (Sanjeev et al, 2022) wonderfully and fearfully made (Psalm 139:14). His design is glorious, and his composition defies all logic. Fig. 2 shows this class of man and its divisions or sections. The first section is the name of the class in this case the name is 'Man'. It

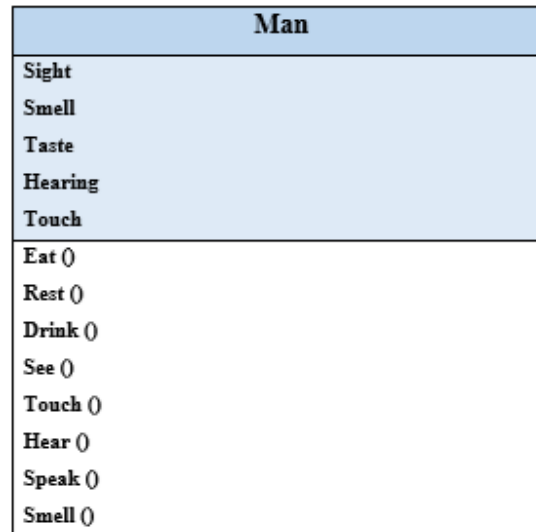
could be ‘Animal’ or Mineral or ‘Plant’ or ‘Country’ or any object. The objects can also be invisible. The second section shows the five senses that man possesses. The last section consists of what man does. In the field of computer science, the concept of a class is used to model objects. These concepts enable software engineers to model attributes of classes or objects and their behaviors or operations.

A Unified Modeling Language (UML) class is a representation of a real-world object. It denotes a set of objects that have common features [Berardi et al, 2005]. Any object can be instantiated from the class. It is easy to see that in the case of man, all mankind as a set of objects has a set of common features. Different men may have different features or attributes and can behave differently from one another or can have different operations. These operations can be performed by man, or they can be performed on man. For example, man can eat which is an operation whereas man has an eye which is an attribute.

### 3.2.3. Man

Man has five senses in his sensory perception as shown in Fig 2. They are, the sense of sight, which is the eye, the sense of smell, which is the nose, the sense of taste which is the mouth the sense of hearing which is the ear and the sense of touch which is the hand. All these senses enable man to have contact with the outside world without which man cannot experience satisfaction that was described early in the chapter. These are like communication channels with which information can be exchanged. The brain is like a computer or processor that interprets information and signals and enables the body to take appropriate actions.

Man also has needs for his body as referred to in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs in the previous discussion. Maslow refers to these as a need to eat, a need to drink, a need for shelter, and a need for comfort. In the model below, additional needs are included, namely, a need to see, speak, hear, smell, and touch. These can be deemed intrinsic needs or built-in needs because man as an object comes with those built in his being at the instantiation of his being. Nevertheless, without these qualities, man is not able to function optimally so they can be regarded as compulsory needs. Simply put man’s needs can be described as needs to do and to be.



**Fig 2. Class Diagram of Man.**

The needs could be more or less but because the model is still being developed it would not be necessarily an easy task to point them out outright. Nevertheless, whatever is deemed a need can be declared as such and alterations can be made based on future findings in the research process of developing the model.

### 3.2.4. Man – Spirit, Soul, and Body

The proposed model suggests that this model can be derived from the threefold nature of man. As stated, in the holy scriptures, man's composition is threefold. Man is composed of the body the soul and the spirit. This is evident from the book of Genesis during creation, the book of Thessalonians, and many other references. The body gives us a visible template from which to extrapolate the template of the spirit and the template of the soul of man.

The concept of aggregation is used in modeling objects in computer science. It is used when an object is composed of other objects. Fig. 3 shows the aggregation or composition of man from the three entities. Aggregation and composition are not the same thing although it is not far out to use both terms interchangeably.

An aggregation denotes the whole-part relationship between two classes (Shukur, 2007). In this structure, an object is composed of one or more objects, each of which is regarded as part of the aggregate object.

In a composition, aggregation owns its part with stronger ownership. If the object is destroyed, then its parts are also destroyed with it. Fig. 3 shows this type of relationship. The aggregation relationship would be drawn in much the same way as is shown in the figure. What would be different is that its diamonds would not be diamonds. In composition, an object is composed of another one whereas in aggregation an object contains another object.

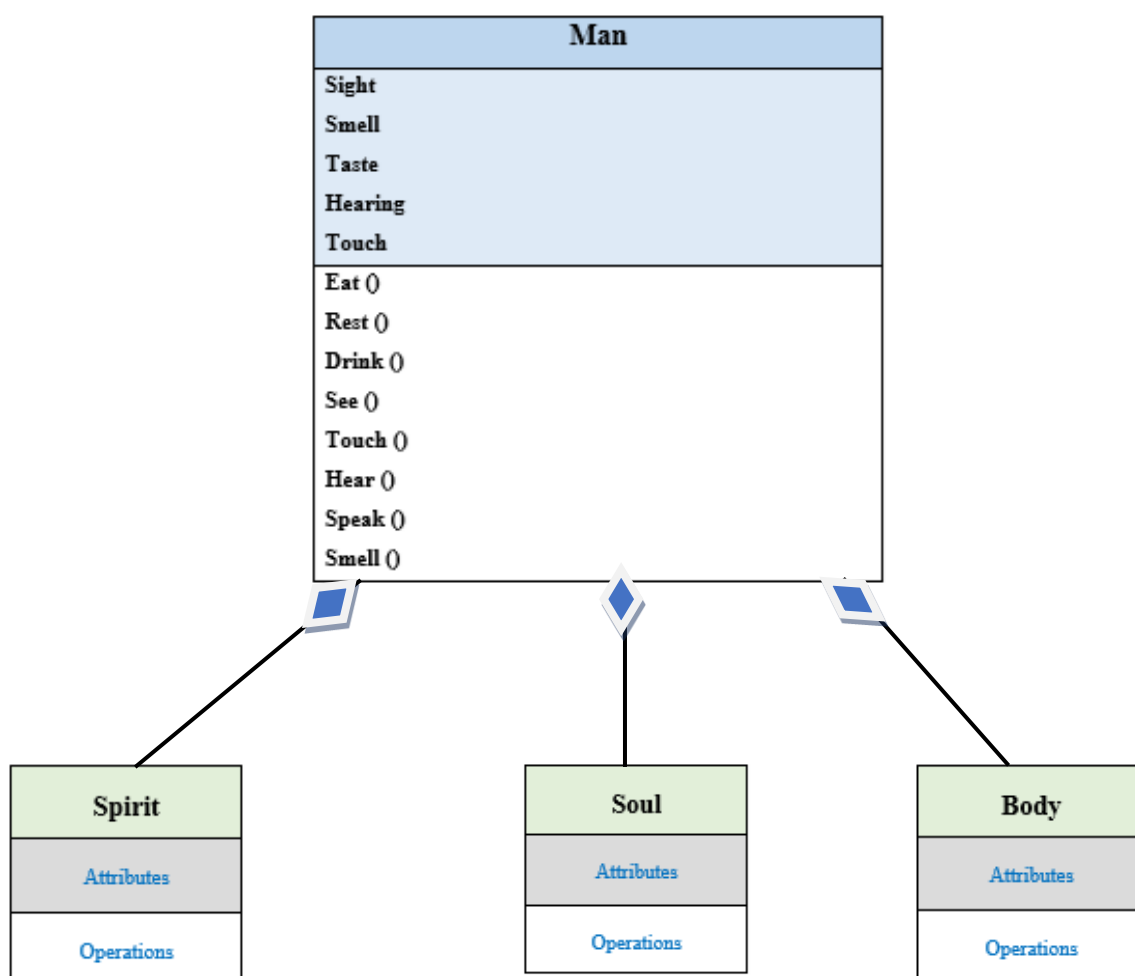


Fig 3. Class Diagram of Man – Spirit, Soul and Body: Exploded View of Man

It cannot be denied that the body is an extremely complex system and therefore one can refer to it as a system of systems. It can also be argued that the soul and spirit should be as complex except that they are invisible, but their existence is evident.

### 3.2.5. Proposed Model

In Maslow's theory of motivation, the hierarchy of needs is organized in order of potency (Shuk et al, 2011). The proposed model is more compact and has only three levels which are arranged in order of potency. The physical needs are potent but emotional needs are more potent and the spiritual needs are even more potent. However, the model suggests that all needs are similar and are met similarly.

Potency raises another argument to consider and that is the order in which needs are met. This is another debatable argument, but it will not be addressed in this paper. In the Garden of Eden, man's needs were met. This is apparent in the instruction given to them by the creator (Genesis 2:16 -17): And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." ([New King James Version, 2016).

It can therefore be postulated that man's needs for his spirit, soul, and body were met. He was therefore all that he was meant to be and to do. Fig. 4 depicts this proposed model with colors particularly chosen. The red color depicts the earth from which the bible says man was taken, the green color represents the soul terrestrial substance with which the soul was made, and the heavenly blue color depicts the celestial and heavenly substance with which the spirit of man was made. Each of the composite parts of man's needs were met by the trees.

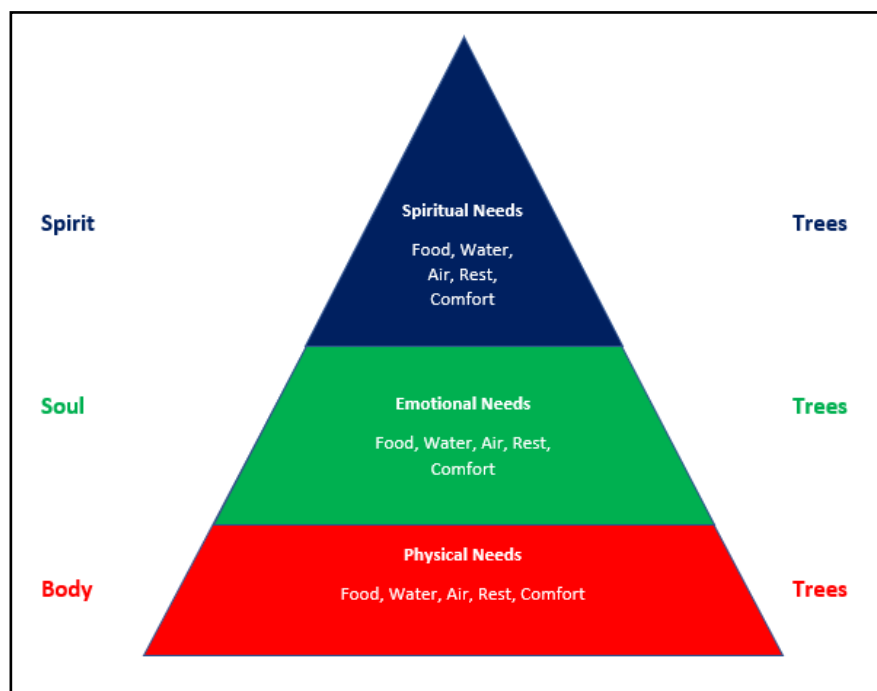


Fig 4. Proposed Model

When man was created in the beginning, he was placed in the garden to keep it and to work it (Genesis 2:15), (Holy Bible King James Version, 2016). But he was also commanded to eat of the trees in the garden except one. The woman stated that the Tree of Knowledge was good for food, that it was pleasing to one's eyes, and that it had the power to make one wise. (Gen 3:6) 5), [New King James Version, 2016]. All satisfaction came from the trees. Therefore, a man was in a complete state of satisfaction and self-actualization until the serpent moved the goalpost. One of the views taken by scientists, and psychologists in trying to understand human existence is that of spirituality (Papalentiou-Louca, et al, 2022). It is at this level that the concept of "Spiritual Intelligence" transcends physical realities and encompasses the realm of transcendence of life to try and answer questions such as these. "What is the world?" "Why is it made like this?" "Who are we?" "Where do we come from?" "What are we made of?" "What is the meaning of life?" "Why do we die?" "Is there life after death?" (Papalentiou-Louca, et al, 2022). Religion and spirituality have implications for our mental and physical health.

### **3.2.6. Robustness of the Proposed Model**

This paper attempts to use induction to develop a new theory that is like Maslow's theory. This theory suggests that there are only three levels in which the need exists and that these different needs are the same and replicate at different levels and in different forms. It is believed that this brings in an element of robustness as well as simplicity in the model. This model is perceived to be atomic level in its description and therefore cannot be broken down any further. It is also assumed that if, in future research, it is discovered that it can be analyzed to yield sub-components, then the basic components described in this proposed model will not change. These are hypotheses that are open to tests going forward.

## **4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1. Conclusion**

Our conjecture that Maslow's model can be simplified has been presented in this paper. The author presented a simple but concise model which has needs in only three levels or realms. These three realms are the body, the soul, and the spirit. The basic needs are apparent in the body realm whereas as you ascend in the model the needs are less apparent, and the realm becomes more

abstract. Needs in the body realm are more tangible and visible whereas they are less tangible and visible in higher realms.

While the needs in the body realm are tangible, it is postulated that the same needs are present in the soul and the spirit of man. There it follows that the construction or makeup of these two parts of man would have similar senses and perceptions. A multidisciplinary approach should therefore be used to explore the structure and behavior of this complex system called man. Engineering, Psychology, Computer Science, Mathematics, Chemistry, Philosophy, Physics, Medicine, and the Holy Scriptures could be tools to use to discover more truth about this model.

There is something very ingenious about the composition and formation of man. His needs are very real, and the realization of this goal brings man to the highest point of the realization of the reason for his existence which is the glory and worship of his maker and creator, the Almighty God. This paper attempted to open a discussion and further investigation regarding how researchers can view and assess Maslow's Theory. Useful as it may be in its application, new properties of the theory.

## 4.2. Recommendations

The new proposed model opens a wide range of areas of research to investigate. The model is a hypothesis that requires a rigorous test. Because the model transcends the physiological realm, many fields can be explored collaboratively in the search for truth. Engineering, Psychology, Computer Science, Mathematics, Chemistry, Philosophy, Medicine, and the Holy Scriptures are all fields that possess a set of tools to be used in the quest for knowledge.

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