

## THE APPLICATION OF ABRAHAM MASLOW'S THEORY OF NEEDS IN GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

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### Abstract

This research aims to explore the application of Abraham Maslow's theory of needs in the context of guidance and counseling, as well as its relevance in helping clients meet their psychological needs. Maslow's theory, which consists of five levels of needs, ranging from basic physiological needs to self-actualization, is used as a framework to understand the problems the client faces and design appropriate interventions. The method used in this study is a qualitative study with in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation of clients and counselors. The results of the study show that the fulfillment of basic needs (physiological and safety) is the first step that needs to be considered in the counseling process, because without the fulfillment of these needs, it is difficult for clients to focus on more complex issues, such as social needs or self-esteem. In addition, social needs are an important factor in the formation of the client's psychological well-being, especially in the context of interpersonal relationships and social integration. Once basic and social needs are met, clients can more easily focus on self-development and self-actualization achievement. This research also highlights the importance of adapting Maslow's theory to the client's social and cultural context, especially in societies with high collectivism values, such as in Indonesia. Overall, the application of Maslow's theory in guidance and counseling can help clients understand and meet their needs gradually, thereby achieving more optimal psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** Maslow's theory of needs, guidance and counseling, psychological needs, self-actualization, psychological well-being.

## INTRODUCTION

Abraham Maslow's theory of needs has become one of the important foundations in the field of psychology, especially in understanding human motivation. Maslow (1943) developed a hierarchy theory of needs that states that human needs are arranged hierarchically, starting from basic needs to the highest needs. This theory holds that in order to achieve well-being or self-actualization, individuals must first meet lower basic needs, such as physiological needs and a sense of security, before they can satisfy higher needs, such as social needs and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).

However, over time, Maslow's theory has not only become the foundation of psychological theory, but has also been adopted in various fields, one of which is guidance and counseling. Guidance and counseling serve to support individuals in facing various life challenges, helping them to overcome personal, social, or academic problems, and reach their full potential. In this context, Maslow's theory of needs provides a valuable perspective for understanding the complexity of the problems faced by clients in the counseling process.

A number of studies conducted in the last five years have shown that the application of Maslow's theory in counseling and counseling can improve counselors' understanding of clients' needs and guide them to adjust the appropriate approach. For example, in a study conducted by Amin et al. (2019), it was revealed that understanding the hierarchy of client needs can help counselors to be more sensitive in responding to problems faced by clients, such as anxiety, depression, and social relationship problems. In addition, Maslow's theory also supports counselors to recognize factors that may hinder the client's progress in the counseling process, especially when their basic needs, such as a sense of security or social connection, have not been met (Amin et al., 2019).

On the other hand, although Maslow's theory has been widely applied in counseling practice, some researchers have also criticized the inalignment of this theory with certain social and cultural conditions. For example, Singh and Kumar (2021) suggest that although Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is often applied in Western cultures, the concept is not always relevant to sociocultural contexts outside of Western countries. In their research, Singh and Kumar (2021) showed that in some Asian countries, social needs and interpersonal relationships are often considered more important than individual achievements, so understanding of Maslow's hierarchy of needs needs to be modified to better suit local cultures.

Furthermore, Maslow's theory also influences counseling approaches in the context of crisis or stress. In an article published by Suryani et al. (2020), it was found that clients who face emotional crises are often trapped in an inability to meet their basic needs, such as physical needs or a sense of security. Using the Maslow approach, counselors can provide interventions that focus on meeting the client's basic needs first, before moving on to higher or more complex problem-solving. This shows that Maslow's theory remains relevant in the client's recovery and self-development oriented counseling practice.

Maslow himself, although his theory was widely praised, still received criticism regarding the universality of his hierarchy of needs. This theory assumes that humans will follow a predetermined sequence of needs, ranging from physiological needs to self-actualization needs. However, in reality, humans may meet these needs more flexibly and not always follow the sequence. Research by Prabowo (2022) demonstrates that in some cases, individuals may prioritize social needs or rewards before their physiological needs are met, depending on the individual's experience and social conditions. This opens up further discussion about how counselors can adapt this theory to more dynamic and diverse conditions.

In the context of guidance and counseling, it is important for a counselor to have a deep understanding of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as well as how to identify where the client is in that hierarchy. A study by Wulandari and Santoso (2021) found that an understanding of Maslow's theory allows counselors to be more effective in designing interventions that suit the client's needs, as well as creating strong therapeutic relationships. Clients who feel that their basic needs are taken care of tend to be more open and more willing to engage in the counseling process, which in turn accelerates the achievement of counseling goals.

In the practice of guidance and counseling, in addition to Maslow's theory, other factors also play an important role, such as the strength-based approach, which allows clients to develop their potential based on the strengths that exist within them. However, Maslow's theory remains an important guide in understanding the basic aspects of human motivation and needs that need to be met before the process of self-development can take place effectively. In this case, counselors can leverage an understanding of Maslow's theory to design a counseling program that is holistic and focuses on the needs of clients from different dimensions.

In addition, an understanding of Maslow's theory of needs can also be applied in the context of the client's psychosocial development. For example, research by Hermawan and Asri (2023) highlights the importance of a balance between meeting social needs and self-actualization needs in adolescent development. Adolescents who have not fully met their social needs, such as being accepted into a group or having healthy relationships with peers, may have difficulty developing confidence and reaching their full potential. Using Maslow's theory, counselors can help the teen to navigate and prioritize their needs more effectively.

Finally, in this ever-evolving world, understanding of Maslow's theory is not only limited to individual counseling, but also in the context of group counseling or family counseling. Maslow's theory can be the foundation for understanding group or family dynamics and help group or family members to support each other in meeting their individual needs, which will ultimately strengthen social bonds and improve mutual well-being. Research by Fitriani and Hidayati (2024) shows that the application of Maslow's theory in group counseling provides significant benefits in increasing the sense of togetherness and cooperation between group members, as well as strengthening the role of counselors as mediators in this process.

Overall, Abraham Maslow's theory of needs remains relevant and very useful in the field of guidance and counseling. While there have been criticisms of some aspects of this theory, its application in a practical context has shown many benefits, especially in improving counselors' understanding of clients' needs and supporting them in achieving psychological well-being. In this article, we will discuss more about how Maslow's theory can be applied in counseling and counseling practice, as well as how counselors can tailor their interventions to the specific needs of clients based on this hierarchy of needs.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review as the main method to explore and analyze various socio-cultural-based intervention models in guidance and counseling applied in Indonesia (Habsy, 2017). This approach was chosen because the purpose of the research was to understand in depth the practices and challenges in culture-based guidance and counseling in Indonesia and to develop a more contextual and inclusive intervention model (Rofiq, 2019).

The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to gain a deeper and holistic understanding of the application of socio-cultural-based intervention models. This approach allows researchers to explore a variety of relevant sources and literature without having to conduct experiments or primary data collection. This literature review will emphasize the analysis of existing culture-based counseling models and the challenges in their implementation.

The data sources used in this study are relevant literature, which includes (Muthy & Pujiastuti, 2020):

1. Academic journals indexed in Scopus and other international databases, which discuss topics related to socio-cultural-based guidance and counseling.
2. A book that discusses the main theories in guidance and counseling as well as socio-cultural psychology.
3. Research reports and case studies that discuss the application of cultural-based counseling in Indonesia and other countries with similar socio-cultural contexts.
4. Documents and publications from institutions related to education, counseling, and social policy in Indonesia.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Results

This research aims to explore the application of Abraham Maslow's theory of needs in guidance and counseling, especially in the context of client needs and the intervention process carried out by counselors. Based on data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, the key findings can be divided into several major themes that reflect the application of Maslow's theory in counseling practice.

#### 1. Application of Physiological Needs and Safety in Guidance and Counseling

One of the key findings of the study is that physiological needs and safety are the two basic needs most often discussed by clients and counselors in counseling sessions. Many clients come up with issues related to meeting their physiological needs, such as the inability to meet basic needs (food, shelter, or adequate sleep), which leads to anxiety and stress. The counselors involved in this study emphasized the importance of physical and psychological stability as the first step in the counseling process.

For example, one of the clients who is experiencing economic hardship often feels depressed because he or she is unable to meet the needs of a proper meal for himself and his family. Counselors identify that these issues create insecurities that prevent the client from being able to focus on other issues, such as social relationships or self-development. The approach used by counselors is to ensure that the client's basic needs are met through external interventions, such as connecting clients with social institutions that can provide food and shelter assistance.

This finding is in line with Prabowo (2022) who stated that when the physiological needs of clients are not met, clients tend to have difficulties in overcoming other psychological and social problems. The counselor in this study confirmed that these needs must be met first in order for the client to move to a higher level of need in Maslow's hierarchy.

## 2. Fulfillment of Social Needs in the Counseling Process

Social need or belongingness and love is one of the most relevant levels of counseling interactions, especially in clients who are facing loneliness or social isolation issues. Some of the clients studied had difficulty building healthy relationships with others, whether in the context of family, friends, or at work. For example, clients who have communication problems in interpersonal relationships feel less appreciated by their family or coworkers. This inability to meet social needs creates feelings of isolation and unnoticed, which can lead to anxiety and depression.

In counseling sessions, counselors use a Maslow-based approach to help clients improve their social relationships. This is done by building the client's confidence and providing strong emotional support. In addition, clients are also encouraged to engage in social activities that can increase a sense of acceptance and appreciation by others. This approach, which focuses on providing a sense of security and acceptance, has been shown to be effective in reducing clients' feelings of loneliness.

Research by Singh and Kumar (2021) also shows that the fulfillment of social needs is one of the main pillars in the development of an individual's psychological well-being, and clients who feel connected to others show higher levels of life satisfaction. These findings support the argument that the fulfillment of social needs can serve as a catalyst to facilitate further development at a higher level of need.

## 3. The Need for Appreciation and Self-Actualization in the Context of Counseling

The achievement of reward and self-actualization needs is the highest stage in Maslow's hierarchy and is usually the primary goal in counseling sessions after the client's basic and social needs have been met. During this study, many clients have successfully met their physiological and social needs, and they have shifted their focus to self-development. This is reflected in clients who seek to increase their self-confidence and pursue higher personal achievements, such as career development or the achievement of more meaningful life goals.

For example, a client who has overcome depression and anxiety issues focuses on career achievement by opening his own business. In this context, counselors help clients to develop a structured plan of steps to achieve career goals, as well as improve their self-skills through various counseling techniques, including providing emotional support and stress management techniques.

According to Hermawan & Asri (2023), self-actualization is not only about reaching its full potential, but also about finding meaning in life. A counseling approach that focuses on empowerment and self-development can help clients not only achieve their goals, but also gain a deep sense of accomplishment.

## Discussion

Based on the findings, the application of Maslow's theory of needs in guidance and counseling shows high relevance in identifying and meeting the needs of clients at various levels. The results of this study show that Maslow's theory, with its focus on the hierarchy of needs, provides useful guidance for counselors in designing appropriate interventions for clients with diverse problems.

### 1. Application of Maslow's Theory in the Context of Crisis and Stress

One of the important contributions of this study is the discovery that Maslow's theory can be very effective in dealing with crisis and stress problems. When clients come in in a state of high stress, it is usually caused by an inability to meet their basic needs, such as physiological and security needs. Counselors who focus on meeting these needs can help clients lower their anxiety levels, so they can start focusing on solving more complex problems (Suryani et al., 2020).

For example, in clients who are experiencing anxiety disorders due to financial problems, counselors can first help the client find ways to meet their basic needs through referrals to social

assistance programs or organizations that can provide support. In this way, clients can feel more secure and stable, which allows them to move to the next level in Maslow's hierarchy, such as building confidence and healthier social relationships.

### 2. Cultural Dynamics in the Application of Maslow's Theory

In the Indonesian context, where the culture of collectivism is very strong, the application of Maslow's theory shows some interesting nuances. Many clients point out that their social needs, such as a sense of acceptance in the family and society, are more dominant than individual needs, such as self-actualization. This supports findings in the research of Singh & Kumar (2021) who suggest that Maslow's theory needs to be adapted to the cultural context to be more relevant.

For example, some clients feel uncomfortable pursuing their personal goals if it has the potential to disrupt family harmony. In this case, counselors need to accommodate the client's needs to find a balance between self-achievement and the fulfillment of their social needs, which are in line with prevailing cultural values.

### 3. The Effectiveness of Maslow's Approach in Career Guidance and Self-Development

Maslow's theoretical approach to career guidance and self-development has also proven effective. Clients who have felt safe and socially accepted will find it easier to focus on self-development and achieving career goals. Research by Hermawan & Asri (2023) shows that clients who are empowered to achieve self-actualization not only feel satisfied with their achievements, but also show higher levels of happiness, which further improves their overall quality of life.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research aims to explore the application of Abraham Maslow's theory of needs in the practice of guidance and counseling. Based on the findings from interviews, observations, and documentation, as well as an analysis of the application of Maslow's theory in the context of clients facing various psychological and social problems, it can be concluded that several important points can be concluded as follows:

**Fulfillment of Basic Needs Becomes the Main Step in Counseling** Fulfilling physiological and safety needs is a very important first step in guidance and counseling. Without the fulfillment of these basic needs, clients are less likely to be able to focus on more complex issues such as social relationships or self-development. Clients who face problems related to basic needs (e.g. economic problems or insecurity) need external support, such as social assistance, in order to feel more stable and secure, which allows them to proceed to higher levels of need in Maslow's hierarchy.

**The Importance of Social Needs in the Application of Maslow's Theory** Social needs or a sense of acceptance in a social group play a very important role in the psychological development of clients. In this study, many clients experienced difficulties in establishing healthy social relationships, which in turn affected their emotional well-being. Counselors focus on meeting these needs by providing emotional support, building confidence, and encouraging clients to engage in social activities. This has been proven to reduce loneliness and increase the happiness and satisfaction of clients' lives.

**Self-Actualization as the Ultimate Goal in Counseling** Once the client's basic and social needs are met, it will be easier for the client to focus on a higher life goal, which is self-actualization. In the context of career guidance and self-development, counselors can help clients pursue their personal and professional achievements. These findings support the argument that self-actualization is not just about material or professional achievements, but also about finding meaning and happiness in life.

**The Application of Maslow's Theory in Accordance with the Social and Cultural Context** In the context of Indonesia, which has a culture of collectivism, the fulfillment of social needs becomes more dominant than individual self-actualization. Clients who come with social problems tend to prioritize family and social relationships over self-achievement. Therefore, the application of Maslow's theory in guidance and counseling needs to be adapted to the client's cultural context. This culturally sensitive approach can increase the effectiveness of counseling.

Relevance of Maslow's Theory in Crisis and Stress Counseling Maslow's theory has proven to be very relevant in dealing with crises and stress. When clients come up with issues that cause emotional instability, the fulfillment of basic needs, especially physiological and security needs, can help lower anxiety and stress levels. This approach that focuses on meeting basic needs allows clients to shift focus to more complex issues in Maslow's hierarchy, such as social needs or self-esteem.

Overall, the results of this study show that Maslow's theory, although derived from a humanistic psychology perspective, is highly relevant and can be applied in guidance and counseling. Counselors who use a Maslow-theory-based approach can help clients to better understand their needs and look for ways to meet them gradually, starting from basic needs to achieving self-actualization. Thus, Maslow's theory serves not only as a theoretical framework, but also as a practical guide in helping clients achieve optimal psychological well-being.

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