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## MOTIVATION AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BASED ON MCCLELLAND'S THREE NEED MODEL

**HANSIKA KHURANA**  
**ASST. PROFESSOR**  
**GARGI COLLEGE**  
**UNIVERSITY OF DELHI**  
**DELHI**

**VAISHALI JOSHI**  
**INDEPENDENT RESEARCH SCHOLAR**  
**# 2065, OTRUM LINES**  
**GTB NAGAR**

### ABSTRACT

*Motivation lies at the core of all managerial activities. It is an effective tool for managers to create a willingness to work so that organizational goals can be achieved. Many thinkers and psychologists have given their own inferences on what motivation is but it all comes down to a single meaning – desires and aspirations that urge people to give their best. Over the years, many theories on motivation have emerged and each of them has their own relevance. The aim of our study was to understand the drives of people in terms of the three motivators given by David McClelland in his Three Need Model. 100 people from different backgrounds were surveyed on the basis of a structured questionnaire. The proportion of males and females was kept equal. The responses were recorded on a Five-Point Likert Scale. Simple statistical measures such as Mean and Standard Deviation were used to evaluate the results. The findings have a theoretical as well as a practical relevance.*

### KEYWORDS

David McClelland, motivation, achievement, power, affiliation.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

As per Rensis Likert, motivation is the core of management. It is a significant function performed by managers at all levels so that goals of the organization can be accomplished. Many techniques are available to managers and he may choose the technique that is best suited to his organization.

Robert Dubin defines motivation as “the complex of forces starting and keeping a person at work in the organization. Motivation is something that moves a person into action, and continues him in the course of action already initiated.”

The behavior of man depends on the stimulus and stimulus is dependent on motives. Therefore, by studying a person’s needs and desires, his motives can be known. This becomes an effective tool for management since they can predict behaviors based on the motivators.

#### 1.1 THEORIES OF MOTIVATION

Over the years, many theories have been formulated to explain different motivation levels for different people. Motivation could arise from Intrinsic factors (factors which arise naturally or within) or Extrinsic factors (factors which are based on an external stimulus).

Some of the widely accepted theories are Abraham Maslow’s Need Hierarchy Theory, Douglas McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y, Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, David McClelland’s Three Need Model, etc. to name a few

#### 1.2 DAVID MCCLELLAND'S THREE NEED MODEL

In the early 1940s, Abraham Maslow created a Theory of Needs. He identified that needs of individuals follow a certain order or hierarchy. Higher levels need start gaining importance once the lower level need is satisfied.

Based on his work, David McClelland wrote a book in 1961, The Achieving Society. He identified three motivators and the dominance of each explains the behavior and characteristics of each person.

These needs were as follows:

- i. Need for Achievement (n.Ach)
- ii. Need for Power (n.Pow)
- iii. Need for Affiliation (n.Aff)

According to McClelland, these motivators are learned (which is why this theory is sometimes called the Learned Needs Theory).

McClelland says that, regardless of gender, culture, or age, everyone has three motivating drivers, and one of these will be a dominant motivating driver. This dominant motivator is largely dependent on culture and life experiences.

McClelland’s theory is important because it helps to identify the drivers so that goals can be set and jobs can be designed efficiently.

##### i. Need for Achievement:

People with a high nAch have a compelling drive to succeed. They strive for personal achievement rather than the rewards for success, which follow it. McClelland observed that high achievers differentiated themselves from others by their desire to do things better. High achievers dislike succeeding by chance; they take calculated risks which would guarantee success.

People motivated by achievement need challenging, but not impossible, projects. They thrive on overcoming difficult problems or situations. People motivated by achievement work very effectively either alone or with other high achievers.

##### ii. Need for Power

People with a high nPow strive to impact, influence and control others. They prefer being in status oriented positions and enjoy competing.

McClelland categorized power into two categories:

- Personalized Power: for the personal gain of an individual, and
- Institutionalized Power: for the social benefit of many others

Those with a high need for power work best when they’re in charge. Since they enjoy competition, they do well with goal-oriented projects or tasks. They may also be very effective in negotiations or in situations in which another party must be convinced of an idea or goal.

##### iii. Need for Affiliation

People with high nAff require harmonious relationships with others and have a desire to feel accepted. They tend to conform to group norms and are more agreeable than others. They display unique characteristics such as a sincere interest in the feelings of others, a strong desire to gain approval from others and have a high degree of mutual understanding

People motivated by affiliation work best in a group environment. They also dislike uncertainty and risk.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, money was taken to be the most important factor while working. However, a series of researches conducted by Elton Mayo, popularly known as the Hawthorne Studies (1920s) paved the way for a new conclusion. It was not solely the money but other contributing factors, which led to different work-related attitudes.

Different definitions of motivation have emerged over the years. The word motivation is derived from the word "motive" which means any idea or need that prompts a person into action. Motivation has been defined as "a decision making process through which the individual chooses desired outcomes and sets in motion the behaviors appropriate to acquiring them" (Huczynski & Buchanan, 1991).

S.P. Robbins (2005) defined motivation as the "willingness to exert high levels of effort towards organizational goals, conditioned by the ability to satisfy some individual need". According to Robbins (2005), a need is an internal state that makes certain outcomes appear attractive; an unsatisfied need creates tension that stimulates drives within an individual.

The process of motivation usually begins with identifying a need which is deficient. According to Arnold, Robertson and Cooper (1991), a needs-related model of the process of motivation is initiated by the conscious or unconscious recognition of unsatisfied needs. The needs create wants, which turn into desires to achieve or obtain something. Thus, at the very outset, it becomes fundamental to create a motivation strategy. Herzberg et al. (1959) proposed that an employee's motivation to work is best understood when the respective attitude of that employee is understood. That is, the internal concept of attitude which originates from a state of mind, when probed, should reveal the most pragmatic information for managers with regard to the motivation of workers.

Work related motivation is essential to our study since most of the theories are centered on this. The performance and continuity of every organization depends on its key assets, capabilities of management and the efficiency of employees. To keep an employee satisfied is a major challenge for management since different people have different desires. Understanding these and devising an appropriate course of action is the basic essence of studying motivation. Urchuck (2002) stated that a motivated employee would increase the capability of the organization to achieve its mission, goals and objectives. It will also engage everybody to build a strong organizational culture.

Human Motivation, in McClelland's perspective (McClelland, 1985), is the arousal of particular motives in a specific setting. A motive is a reason for a person to act in a certain manner or to undertake a specific course of action. It drives, directs and selects the behavior of an individual. He stipulated that three particular motives are useful in understanding most work-related behavior; the need for achievement, the need for power and the need for affiliation. The work of McClelland and his colleagues established that while such needs exist in every individual, their dominance varies. It is the pattern of a person's motive strength that is often the most indicative of occupational performance and success.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design employed for this research was a descriptive survey. A descriptive research attempts to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. However, it does not answer why, when or how the characteristics occur. For this purpose, a sample of individuals is taken so that attributes of a larger population can be described.

The target sample size was 100. They were a mix of people working either in the corporate sector or running their own businesses while a few others were still studying.

This selection was made so that comparisons could be made with regard to the most dominating need among the groups.

A standardized questionnaire was taken and fifteen questions were asked, each pertaining to one of the three needs as per David McClelland. These needs are categorized as follows:

- a. Need for Achievement (nAch) – a drive to excel and grow
- b. Need for Power (nPow) – a drive to influence others
- c. Need for Affiliation (nAff) – a drive to establish and maintain close relationships.

A five-point Likert Scale was used for the purposes of the study where the values allotted had the following weights:

- 5 – Strongly Agree
- 4 – Agree
- 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 1 – Strongly Disagree

Responses were collected and conclusions were drawn gender-wise and occupation-wise. Of the data collected, the proportion of males and females was kept equal. However, 72% of the total number of people surveyed belonged to the Service Sector (i.e. Working Professionals), 18% were those running their own Businesses (i.e. Self Employed) and 10% were students.

The aim of the study was to understand whether any considerable differences existed in the dominance of the three needs or if any need was continuously at the forefront for all the people surveyed.

## 4. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Fifteen questions pertaining to McClelland's Three Need Theory were asked and each of these questions was equally divided into the three needs.

Questions were answered on the basis of the Five-Point Likert's Scale.

The following tables show the percentage of people who responded to each of the questions as per the scale.

TABLE 1

		Percentage of respondents for each option				
S.No.	Need for Achievement (nAch)	5	4	3	2	1
1	I try very hard to improve my past performance at work	26%	54%	16%	3%	0%
2	I enjoy a difficult challenge	22%	52%	14%	11%	1%
3	I want to know how I am progressing as I complete tasks	29%	55%	10%	4%	1%
4	I enjoy setting and achieving realistic goals	25%	50%	20%	5%	0%
5	I enjoy the satisfaction of completing a difficult task	46%	44%	5%	3%	0%
		Percentage of respondents for each option				
S.No.	Need for Power (nPow)	5	4	3	2	1
1	I enjoy competition and winning	26%	49%	18%	6%	0%
2	I enjoy being in charge	34%	42%	13%	10%	0%
3	I confront people who do things I disagree with	9%	37%	26%	27%	1%
4	I enjoy influencing others to get my way	16%	29%	27%	25%	2%
5	I often work to gain more control over the events around me	16%	38%	34%	10%	2%
		Percentage of respondents for each option				
S.No.	Need for Affiliation (nAff)	5	4	3	2	1
1	I often find myself talking to those around me about non-work matters	14%	33%	28%	20%	5%
2	I want to be liked by others	24%	52%	22%	2%	0%
3	I tend to build close relationships with co-workers	16%	41%	28%	14%	1%
4	I enjoy belonging to groups and organizations	20%	40%	27%	12%	1%
5	I enjoy working with others more than working alone	17%	36%	26%	13%	7%

From the above table, it can be seen that the majority of the responses lie towards option 4 i.e. *Agree*. Approximately one-fourth of the sample chooses to remain neutral by choosing option 3 i.e. *Neither Agree nor Disagree* while only a minute fraction seem to *Strongly Disagree* with the questions.

If we look at the individual needs, the average response rate for option 5 i.e. *Strongly Agree* is highest in the case of Need for Achievement (nAch) at 30%, followed by Need for Power (nPow) at 20%. The average response rate of Need for Affiliation (nAff) was the lowest at 18%.

**4.1 COMPARISON OF MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS**

We subdivided our sample into two categories:

- Males and Females
- Working Professionals, Business Owners and Students

Based on the responses given by them, we analyzed their mean scores and variation in responses.

While an Average or Mean helps to derive the central tendency of the data in question, the Standard Deviation helps to measure the dispersion in the data.

**4.1.1 Gender-Wise comparison of Mean and Standard Deviation**

The following table shows the mean scores and standard deviations pertaining to each of the three needs.

TABLE 2

	Males		Females	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Achievement</b>	20.42	3.08	19.76	2.45
<b>Power</b>	18.26	3.59	17.74	3.16
<b>Affiliation</b>	17.78	3.65	18.06	2.51

From the above table, it is observed that while the Need for Achievement remains a dominant need for both men and women, men have marginally higher scores than women on two fronts i.e. the need for Achievement and the need for Power. Women however, have a higher average score as compared to men when it comes to the need for Affiliation. This shows that women seem to give more importance to building inter-personal relationships at work in comparison to men. This is shown in Figure 1.

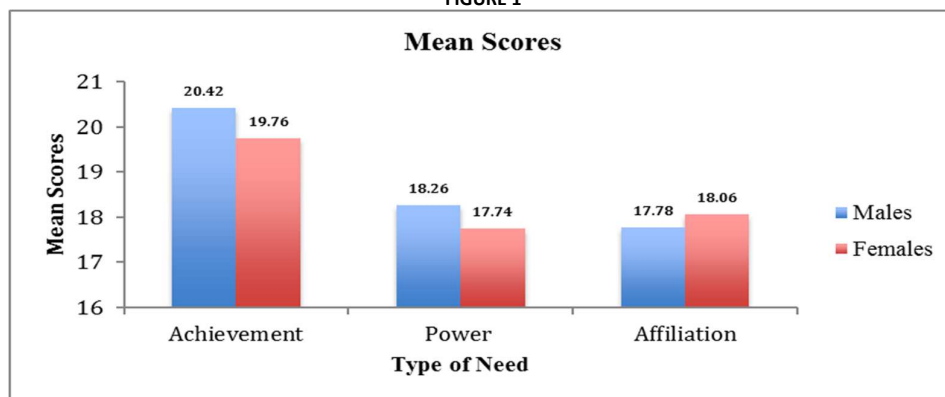
The ranking of needs as per the above table is given as follows:

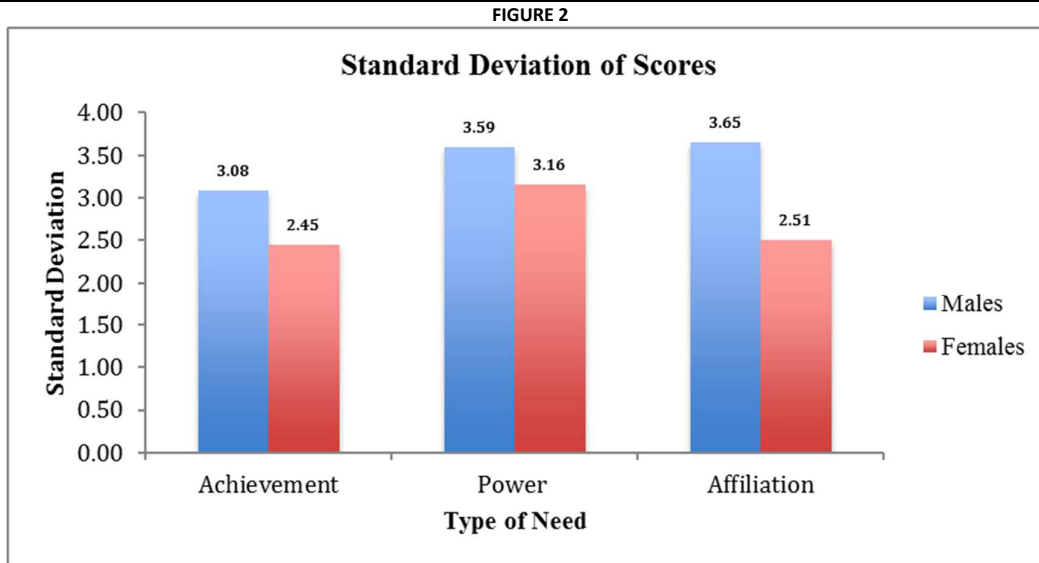
TABLE 3

	Ranking of Needs	
	Males	Females
<b>Achievement</b>	1	1
<b>Power</b>	2	3
<b>Affiliation</b>	3	2

A Standard Deviation gives a measure of dispersion. Larger the value of the standard deviation, the greater is the dispersion of data from the central value. Males have higher dispersion in terms of their responses as compared to females. Therefore, it seems that women are more prone to giving ranks centered around the mean value while men seem to give differing responses. One observation to be made here is that the standard deviation of women’s score for Need for Power is higher in comparison to the other two needs. This could imply that a few women strive for more power and influence than others. Figure 2 depicts this data.

FIGURE 1





**4.1.2 Occupation-Wise comparison of Mean and Standard Deviation**

The following table shows the mean scores and standard deviations pertaining to each of the three needs.

**TABLE 4**

	Working Professionals		Business Owners		Students	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Achievement</b>	19.99	2.91	20.78	2.62	19.60	2.07
<b>Power</b>	17.86	3.49	18.33	3.71	18.40	1.58
<b>Affiliation</b>	18.11	2.99	16.78	3.92	18.60	2.07

From the above table, it can be observed that the need for Achievement is again the top priority for every group of people. This is shown in Figure 3.

The employees from the Service Sector exhibit higher needs for Affiliation as compared to Power. This could be due to the spirit of teamwork and the dislike for conflict. Employees are usually trained on team-building as well as inter-personal skills.

Business Owners have higher needs of Power. They like to be in positions where they might have an advantage over others. In fact, their mean Affiliation score is the lowest in the group. This could be due to the nature of their work. Businessmen/ businesswomen usually have a smaller setup with limited number of employees and very few colleagues. Therefore, they might not feel the need to connect at a personal level with the people they work.

Students have similar scores in terms of their needs for Power and Affiliation. This could be due to the fact that they have not yet started working. They have a higher need to build relationships with friends and family.

The ranking of needs as per the above table is given as follows:

**TABLE 5**

	Ranking of Needs		
	Working Professionals	Business Owners	Students
<b>Achievement</b>	1	1	1
<b>Power</b>	3	2	3
<b>Affiliation</b>	2	3	2

For the people who are working, either in the professionals or the business owners, the need for Power has the highest standard deviation. However, students have the lowest among the group, which shows that most of them have responded to a universal value. (Figure 4)

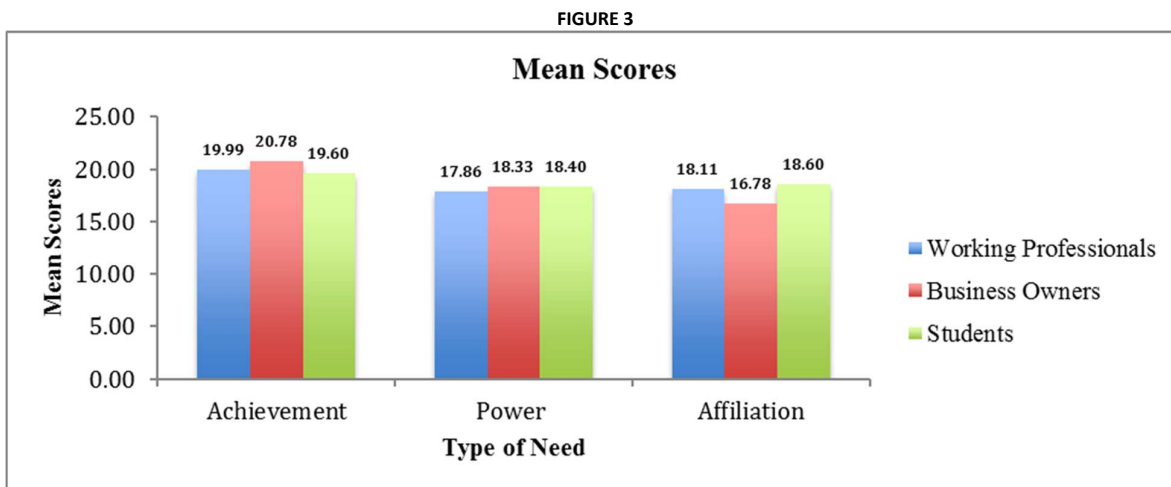
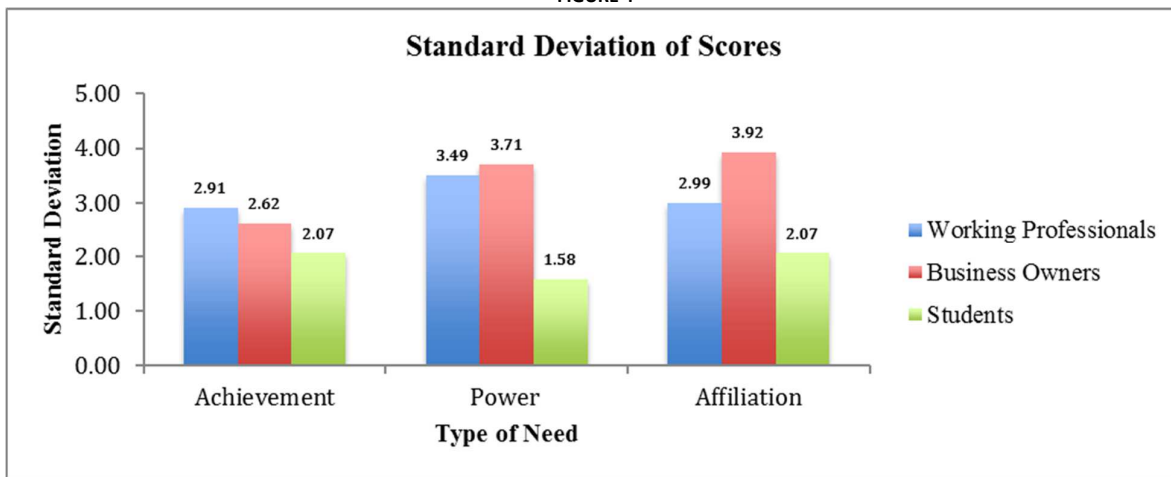


FIGURE 4



**5. CONCLUSION**

The above analysis show that across genders as well as groups, the Need for Achievement remains at the forefront. People with achievement motivation are enterprising in nature. They are usually ready to undertake calculated risks so that they can accomplish what they set out for. Such people do not like to succeed by chance; rather they choose those tasks that challenge them to realize their goals.

Men have exhibited higher motivation towards Power as compared to Women. People with a high need for power enjoy being in influential situations. They like to be "in-charge". Such people are concerned with being in positions that involve a higher status.

Women on the other hand, have a higher need for Affiliation. Such people whose needs are inclined towards affiliation have a desire to be accepted and liked by others. They prefer to be agreeable rather than being in situations of conflict. Jobs, which have a greater aspect of inter-personal relationships, are more suitable to such kind of people.

The following graphs show a comparison of each of the three needs.

FIGURE 5

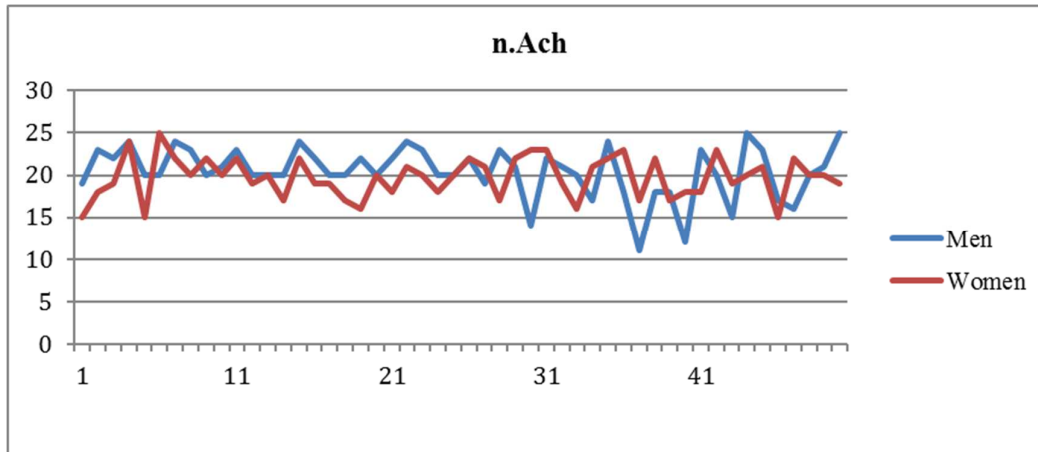


FIGURE 6

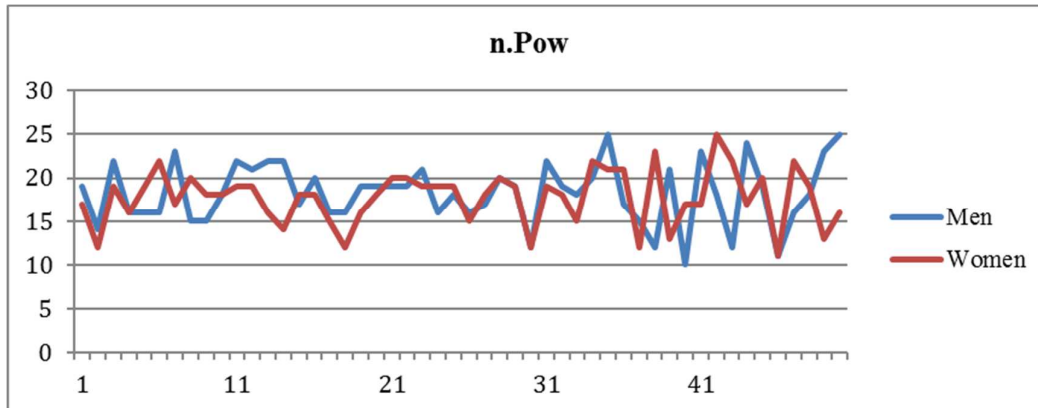
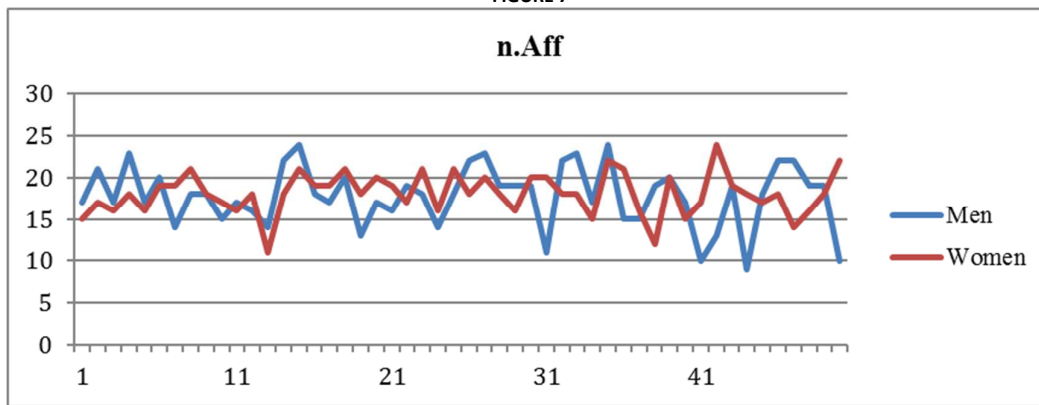


FIGURE 7



Working professionals have lower needs of Power in comparison to both, business owners as well as students. This is compensated by the highest need of Affiliation exhibited by this group of people. This implies that employees in the service sector give more emphasis to maintaining friendly relationships with their co-workers rather than gaining influence over them.

Business owners, on the other hand, have lowest needs of Affiliation. This could be attributed to the nature of their work. Some businesses are very small, like sole proprietorships or partnerships where the interaction with others is minimal. Therefore, maintaining inter-personal relationships does not seem as important as influencing some control over others. This is shown in the graphs below.

FIGURE 8

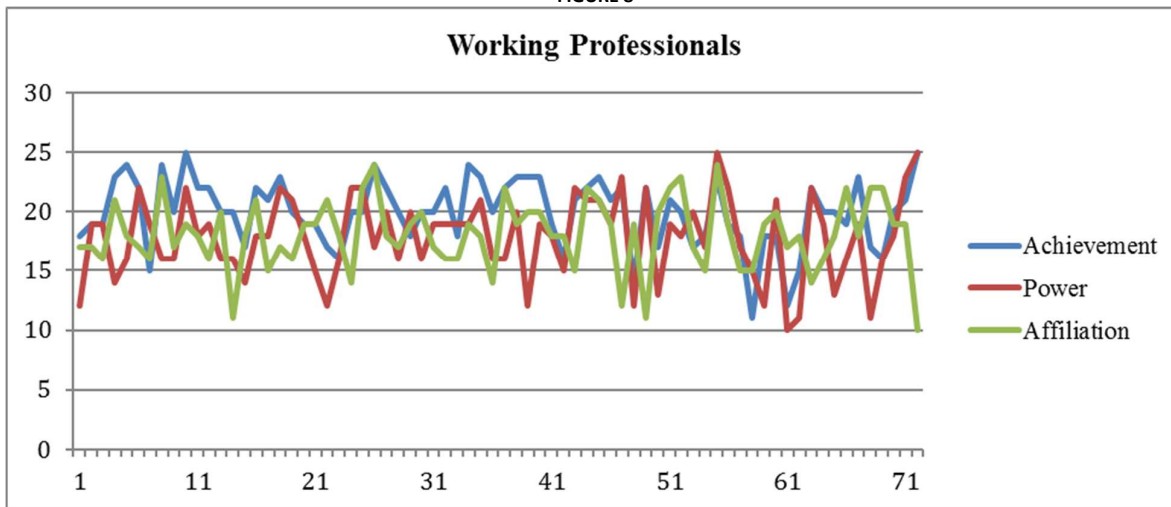


FIGURE 9

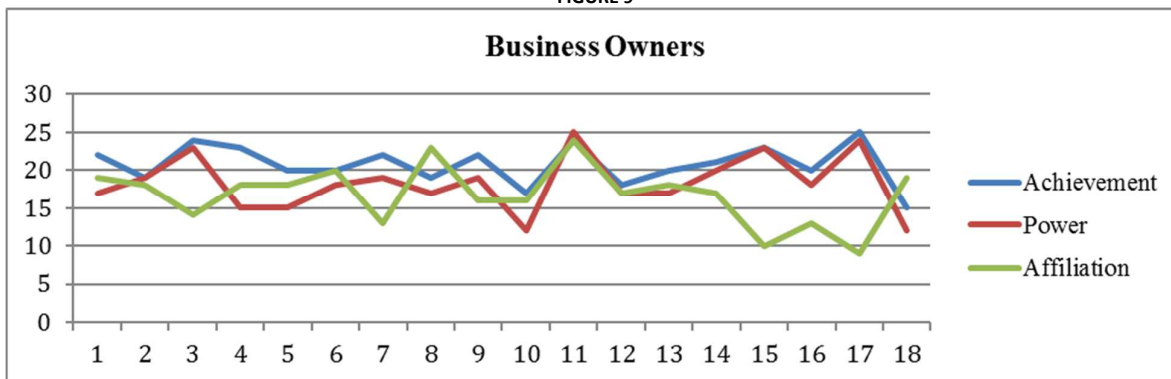
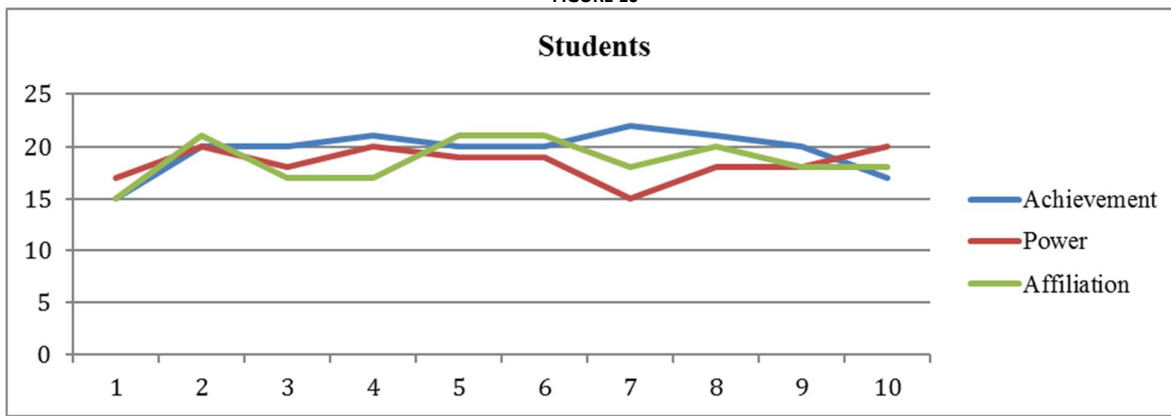


FIGURE 10



McClelland’s Three Need Theory has major implications for management. It would benefit organizations and increase productivity as well as efficiency. This study can be extended to employees working in the organized sector, employees working in small firms and employees working in start-ups. Also, a gender-wise analysis can be done within each of the occupational groups. Based on the dominating needs, jobs can be designed and structured to achieve highest possible productivity.

The analysis is important because the motivating factors are extremely important while understanding behaviors of people at work.

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