



Achievement, Power and Affiliation: Exploring McClelland's Theory of Motivation.

Dr. Dipmala Bhawal

Assistant Professor, Gangarampur B.Ed College, Gangarampur, Dakshin Dinajpur

Abstract

According to McClelland's motivation theory, individuals are primarily driven by three learned needs: the need for achievement, the need for affiliation, and the need for power. These needs influence how individuals set goals, interact with others, and respond to challenges. In the context of higher education, students with a strong need for achievement tend to seek academic success, set challenging goals, and strive for excellence in their studies. The present investigation was about to study students' motivation as per McClelland's need theory of motivation in the higher education level and to measure the different component (power, achievement, and affiliation) of motivation among students of higher education on the variation of gender. A quantitative approach was adopted for the present study. Study was descriptive survey in nature. Data was collected from three different districts of West Bengal. Analysis shows that the male students (mean = 131.607) were not significantly different from the female students (mean = 130.203) with respect to the students' motivation. And the male students (mean = 38.498) were significantly different from the female students (mean = 36.991) with respect to the power component of students' motivation, again male students (mean = 53.603) were significantly not different from the female students (mean = 53.748) with respect to the Achievement component and male students (mean = 39.506) were significantly not different from the female students (mean = 39.465) with respect to the affiliation component of students' motivation.

Keywords: Achievement; Power; Affiliation; Need; Higher Education Students

INTRODUCTION

Student motivation plays a crucial role in determining the success and engagement of learners in higher education. Understanding what drives students to pursue academic goals, overcome challenges, and achieve excellence has been a central concern for educators and researchers. Among the various motivational frameworks, the Need Theory proposed by David McClelland provides a significant perspective for examining the underlying psychological drivers of student behavior in academic settings.

According to McClelland's motivation theory, individuals are primarily driven by three learned needs: the need for achievement, the need for affiliation, and the need for power. These needs influence how individuals set goals, interact with others, and respond to challenges. In the context of higher education, students with a strong need for achievement tend to seek academic success, set challenging goals, and strive for excellence in their studies. Those with a high need for affiliation often value collaborative learning environments and meaningful relationships with peers and instructors, while students with a high need for power may be motivated by leadership roles and opportunities to influence others within academic or organizational contexts.

Higher education institutions provide a dynamic environment where these motivational needs can manifest in different ways. Academic competition, group projects, leadership opportunities, and recognition systems can either enhance or hinder students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. By applying McClelland's motivational framework, educators can better understand the diverse motivational patterns among students and design learning environments that support their psychological needs.

Therefore, examining higher education students' motivation through the lens of McClelland's theory offers valuable insights into how different motivational drivers shape academic engagement, persistence, and performance. Such an understanding can help institutions develop strategies that foster effective learning, encourage student participation, and ultimately enhance educational outcomes.

REVIEW RELATED LITERATURE

Mahyuddin, Elias, and Noordin (2009) studied on 'Emotional intelligence, achievement motivation and academic achievement among students of the public and private higher institutions'. Results from this study shows significantly low positive relationship between students' achievement motivation and their academic performance.

Veena and Shastri (2013) studied on 'Achievement motivation among college students'. The results of this study revealed a significant difference in achievement motivation among pure science and applied science students. However, the study showed the absence of significant difference in achievement motivation between high and low achievers. Similarly, the finding mentioned that Boys and girls varied significantly on achievement motivation.

Sharma and Sharma (2018) studied on ‘Relationship between motivation and academic achievement’. The study found that there were significant correlations between self-concept, motivation and academic achievement of late childhood school students. It was also found that female students are significantly more motivated than their male counterparts. And the study concluded that the findings justify the importance of self-concept and motivation to academic achievement, and some recommendations were made regarding the enhancement of motivation and self-concept of late childhood school students.

Abu Bakar and Taemizi et al. (2010) studied on the ‘Relationships between university students’ achievement motivation, attitude and academic performance in Malaysia’. The findings of their study revealed the positive significant correlation between students’ attitude towards learning and achievement motivation. The study also revealed that students’ attitude and academic achievement were correlated positively. Conversely, the finding also indicated that a low and negative correlation exist between students’ achievement motivation and their academic performance.

RESEARCH GAP

After reviewing many studies related to the topic researcher found that no investigation was done on the mentioned area. After considering the gap, the present research was finalized as “**Achievement, Power and Affiliation: Exploring McClelland’s Theory of Motivation.**”

OBJECTIVES

1. To study students’ motivation as per McClelland’s motivation theory in the higher education level based on the variation of gender.
2. To measure the different component (power, achievement, and affiliation) of motivation among students of higher education on the variation of gender.

HYPOTHESIS

Ho.1: There is no significant difference in the mean score of higher education students’ motivation in relation to gender (Male and Female) variation.

Ho.2: There is no significant difference in the mean score of component (Power, Achievement, and Affiliation) wise higher education students’ motivation in relation to gender (Male and Female) variation.

Ho.2 (i): There is no significant difference in the mean score of students’ Power motivation of higher education in relation to gender (Male and Female) variation.

Ho.2 (ii): There is no significant difference in the mean score of students’ Achievement motivation of higher education in relation to gender (Male and Female) variation.

Ho.2 (iii): There is no significant difference in the mean score of students’ Affiliation motivation of higher education in relation to gender (Male and Female) variation.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach was adopted for the present study. Study was descriptive survey in nature and aimed to explain at the status of higher education students Motivation as per McClelland's theory.

DATA COLLECTION

Population of the study:

The population consisted of all under graduate and post graduate students who are studying in various colleges and universities of the districts Malda, Uttar Dinajpur, and Dakshin Dinajpur of West Bengal.

Sample of the study:

From the districts of Malda, Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur the list of colleges and universities was prepared. Thereafter, six under graduate colleges and two universities were selected randomly. In the present study, random sampling technique was used to select the sample of 560 under graduate and post graduate students from institutions of Malda, Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur districts.

Sample structure:

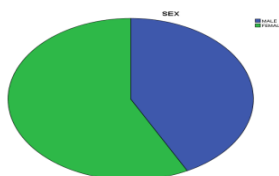


Fig. I : Pie Chart of Gender-wise Sample Details

Tools Used: Students' Motivation Scale (SMS)

Self developed 'Students Motivation Scale' (SMS) was used for the study. The reliability calculated for the items of the SMS using Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.822. Apart from this the face validity was also determined by expert's opinion.

DATA ANALYSIS

Testing of Hypothesis:

Ho.1: There is no significant difference in the mean score of higher education students' motivation in relation to gender (Male and Female) variation.

In order to study the significant differences, if any, in the level of motivation of male and female students the 't' test for equality of means using independent samples test was adopted. For this, it was required to calculate the Group Statistics like Mean, Standard Deviation along with Standard Error of Mean. These along with the sample number were presented in **table 1**.

Table 1: Group Statistics of Students' motivation as Per Gender variation

Group Statistics	Variation		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Students' Motivation	Gender	Male	235	131.607	13.59	0.879
		Female	325	130.203	11.72	0.650

From the **table 1**, it was observed that gender variation wise there was difference in the mean scores and standard deviation of the categorical variable. Therefore, it was thought obligatory to study the significance of difference between the two sub samples of each of the categorical variable. Therefore, the independent sample test was adopted to find out the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances and 't' test for equality of means.

Table 2: Independent Samples Test of Students' Motivation-Male vs. Female

Students' Motivation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gender Variation (Male vs Female)	Equal Variances not Assumed	6.295	.012	1.283	467.110	.200

(*Not Significant at 0.05 level)

Table 2 shows that in case of Levene's Test for equality of variances of male and female calculated F value is 6.295 and p value is 0.012 ($p < 0.05$), so equal variances not assumed between the groups. For testing the significance of difference between the mean score of students' motivation of boys and girls students, the calculated $t_{(467.110)} = 1.283$ and $p = 0.200$ ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, 't' was not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the **Ho.1** is not rejected. So it can be safely said that the male students (mean = 131.607) were not significantly different from the female students (mean = 130.203) with respect to the students' motivation.

Ho.2: There is no significant difference in the mean score of component (power, achievement, affiliation) wise students' motivation of higher education in relation to gender (boys and girls) variation.

In order to study the significant differences, if any, in the component wise level of motivation of male and female the 't' test for equality of means using independent samples test was adopted. For this, it was required to calculate the Group Statistics like Mean, Standard Deviation along with Standard Error of Mean. These along with the sample number were presented in **table 3**.

Table 3: Group Statistics of Component wise Students Motivation as per Gender variation

Group Statistics		Variation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Students' Motivation	Power	Gender Male	235	38.498	5.6389	.3648
		Female	325	36.991	5.2725	.2925
	Achievement	Gender Male	235	53.603	6.6665	.4312
		Female	325	53.748	5.6299	.3123
	Affiliation	Gender Male	235	39.506	5.4794	.3544
		Female	325	39.465	5.7416	.3185

From the **table 3** it was observed that gender variation wise there was differences in the mean scores and standard deviation of the categorical variables of students' motivation's component wise. Therefore, it was thought obligatory to study the significance of difference between the two sub samples of each of the categorical variable. Therefore, the independent sample test was adopted to find out the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances and 't' test for equality of means.

Table 4: Independent Samples Test of Students' Motivation-Male vs Female

Students' Motivation		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means		
Variation	Component		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gender (Male vs Female)	Power	Equal Variances Assumed	3.612	.058	3.257*	562	.001
	Achievement	Equal Variances Not Assumed	5.307	.022	.273**	460.138	.785
	Affiliation	Equal Variances Assumed	0.584	.445	.087**	562	.931

(*Significant and **Not Significant at 0.05 level)

Table 4 shows that in case of Levene's Test for equality of variances of boys and girls students on students' motivation's component of Power calculated F value is 3.612 and p value is 0.058 ($p > 0.05$), so equal variances can be assumed between the groups. For testing the significance of difference between the mean score of students' motivation's component of Power of boys and girls students, the calculated $t_{(562)} = 3.257$ and $p = 0.001$ ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, 't' was significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the **Ho.2 (i)** is

rejected. 0.022 ($p < 0.05$), so equal variances not assumed between the groups. For testing the significance of difference between the mean score of students' motivation's component of Power of male and female students, the calculated $t_{(460.138)} = 0.273$ and $p = 0.785$ ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, 't' was not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the **Ho.2 (ii)** is not rejected. So it can be safely said that the male students (mean = 53.603) were significantly not different from the female students (mean = 53.748) with respect to the Achievement component of students' motivation.

In case of Levene's Test for equality of variances of male and female students on students' motivation's component of Affiliation calculated F value is 0.584 and p value is 0.445 ($p > 0.05$), so equal variances can be assumed between the groups. For testing the significance of difference between the mean score of students' motivation's component of Affiliation of male and female students, the calculated $t_{(562)} = 0.087$ and $p = 0.931$ ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, 't' was not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the **Ho.2 (iii)** is not rejected. So it can be safely said that the male students (mean = 39.506) were significantly not different from the female students (mean = 39.465) with respect to the affiliation component of students' motivation.

So it can be safely said that the male students (mean = 38.498) were significantly different from the female students (mean = 36.991) with respect to the power component of students' motivation.

In case of Levene's Test for equality of variances of male and female students on students' motivation's component of Achievement, the calculated F value is 5.307 and p value is

CONCLUSION

The analysis of students' motivation in relation to gender indicates that there is no significant overall difference between male and female students. Therefore, it can be concluded that while gender does not significantly influence overall motivation, it may have a limited effect on specific motivational components such as Power. **McClelland's Motivation Theory** remains highly relevant in the present educational and social context. The theory emphasizes three key motivational needs—**achievement, power, and affiliation**—which continue to influence individuals' behavior, performance, and interpersonal relationships in modern learning environments. In the current situation, students are increasingly motivated by the need for achievement as they strive for academic success, career opportunities, and personal development in a competitive world. At the same time, the need for affiliation is reflected in students' desire to build meaningful relationships, collaborate with peers, and feel a sense of belonging within educational institutions and social networks.

Furthermore, the need for power is visible in students' aspirations to take leadership roles, influence others, and participate actively in decision-making processes within academic and social settings. Educational institutions today also recognize these motivational needs by encouraging leadership programs, group activities, and achievement-oriented learning opportunities. By understanding these three motivational components, educators can design teaching strategies and learning environments that effectively nurture students' potential and engagement.

REFERENCES

- Abu Bakar, and K., Tarmizi, R.A., et al. (2010). *Relationships between University Students' Achievement Motivation, Attitude and Academic Performance in Malaysia*, *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 2, pp. 1536-1542.
- McClelland, D. C. (1961). *The achieving society*. Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand.
- Mahyuddin, R., Elias, H. and Noordin, N. (2009). *Emotional intelligence, achievement motivation and academic achievement among students of the public and private higher institutions*, *The International journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations*, Vol. 9 (4), pp. 135-144.
- Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. A. (2017). *Organizational behavior* (17th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Sharma, D. and Sharma, S. (2018). *Relationship between motivation and academic achievement*, *International Journal of Advances in Scientific Research*, Vol. 4(1), pp. 01-05. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.7439/ijasr on 10.11.2018>
- Steers, R. M., Mowday, R. T., & Shapiro, D. L. (2004). The future of work motivation theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 29(3), 379–387. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2004.13670978>
- Veena, N., and Shastri, S. (2013). *Achievement Motivation among Students*, *Paripex-Indian Journal of Research*, Vol. 2(8), pp. 2250-1991. Retrieved from <http://theglobaljournals.com/paripex/file.php?val=August 2013 1377499672 773b1 87.pdf on 11.10.2018>