

The Application of Maslow's Theory to The Work Motivation of Village Heads

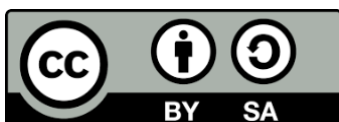
Siti Adira Kania¹, Leni Rohida²

Public Administration Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Cirebon, Indonesia^{1,2}
abdillahsiti001@gmail.com^{1*}, leni.rohida@ugj.ac.id^{2*}

Abstract

The problem in this study is to determine how the application of Abraham Maslow's theory can explain the work motivation of village officials, especially hamlet heads, in Maniskidul Village, due to the imbalance in the fulfillment of work needs at each hierarchy of needs according to the theory. The objective of this study is to identify the elements that determine the work motivation of hamlet heads. This study adopts an interpretive qualitative methodology, including participatory observation, in-depth discussions, and a review of archives relevant to the research. The results indicate that financial compensation, health insurance, and employment security relatively fulfill physiological and safety needs. Harmonious village-community relations and mutual cooperation enable the fulfillment of social needs. However, there are no adequate competency development and reward mechanisms to fulfill the needs for self-actualization, esteem, and beauty. This condition shows that social affiliation and cultural legitimacy have a greater influence on the motivation of hamlet heads than formal incentives. According to the study, village bureaucratic reform must accommodate the fulfillment of higher-level needs by implementing a reward system, work environment management, and training. For more comprehensive and measurable results, it is recommended that the study be expanded using a mixed method.

Keywords: Work Motivation, Maslow's Theory, Village Officials, Regional Heads, Village Bureaucracy



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INTRODUCTION

Villages are the cornerstone of the nation's social, economic, and cultural life, legally recognized under Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages as legal community units with the authority to regulate and manage the interests of their residents based on ancestral rights, customs, and local potential. This strong recognition of villages reflects the view that villages are no longer seen as passive objects, but rather as active key actors driving development from the grassroots level. Article 1, paragraph (1), defines a village as a legal community with defined territorial boundaries that has the authority to regulate and manage government affairs and the interests of the local community based on community initiatives, ancestral rights, and/or traditional rights that are recognized and respected within the system of government of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, 2014). So that villages can tap into their potential and culture and build a self-reliant economy.

The Village Law positions villages as the vanguard of public service—the frontline where basic services directly intersect with the lives of the community. As the spearhead, villages have the responsibility to facilitate the aspirations of villagers and local and central governments, as well as ensure access to basic services such as health, education, and infrastructure. With this autonomy, villages become the driving force of development from the grassroots level, promoting self-reliance, community participation, and the strengthening of local identity, thereby contributing to national development. However, realizing village development requires effective human resource management (HRM). Human Resource Management (HRM) is both a science and an art that governs the relationships and roles of the workforce to ensure they are effective and efficient in helping achieve the goals of the organization, employees, and the community (Hasibuan, 2016).

Effective management can create a workforce that is organized effectively and efficiently. Human resources are defined as the results of work in the form of services or the physical and intellectual contributions an individual makes toward achieving the organization's goals (Hasibuan, 2016). Human resources are an essential asset in any organization because they contribute both labor and intellect; consequently, at the village level, the quality of the village administrative staff plays a central role in determining the success of governance. Village governance is a system for managing resources and exercising authority at the village level (Sulistyo, 2018). Consequently, without a skilled administrative staff, the risk of abuse of authority and program failure will increase, meaning that the village autonomy granted by the law cannot be fully realized.

The village head is the highest-ranking official and the primary person responsible for the administration of village government. Structurally, the village apparatus consists of the village head, the village secretary, the treasurer, department heads, and hamlet heads, each with their own core duties and functions to perform. The village official closest to the community is the hamlet head (Kadus), who serves as the lifeblood of service delivery the fundamental component that bridges community needs to the village level. The hamlet head is often described as a bridge for communication and implementation between the village government and the community in the hamlet. (Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation No. 84 of 2015) Village heads serve as members of the regional task force responsible for assisting the village chief in carrying out duties within their respective areas. They are the frontline personnel who receive complaints and mediate conflicts to ensure that village programs run smoothly. The success of development and problem-solving in the hamlet depends heavily on the performance and motivation of the hamlet head. The hamlet head is required to carry out the functions specified in paragraph 2, which include maintaining peace and order, implementing community protection measures, managing population mobility, and organizing and managing the area. In addition, the hamlet head must also oversee the implementation of development projects in their area and carry out other duties assigned by the Village Head.

The government officials of Maniskidul Village face similar challenges. Maniskidul Village is a governmental entity located in Kuningan Regency and falls within the administrative region of West Java Province. With a total population of over 5,000, Maniskidul Village is one of the most densely populated villages in Kuningan Regency. The large population is commensurate with the challenges the village government must address. Maniskidul Village consists of 5 hamlets and 25 neighborhood units (RTs), reflecting the complexity of the area and the responsibilities of the Hamlet Heads in coordinating services and development.

Civil servants are the human resources that serve as the backbone of an organization. As explained (Rohida & Setiadin, 2020) that “Human Resources (HR) is one of the crucial factors that cannot be separated from an organization, whether it be an institution or a company.” Therefore, village governments are expected to assist the state in managing the community at the village level. Here, the role of human resource management (HRM) is crucial for the Maniskidul village government to optimize the potential of existing hamlet heads. Human resource management involves not only recruitment, training, and employee development, but also effective motivation strategies to increase the productivity and commitment of officials in resolving community issues.

However, the critical issue of work motivation among village administrative staff, including hamlet heads, poses a major challenge that must be addressed to ensure they can fulfill their roles to the fullest. Village heads frequently face a significant disparity between high work demands and minimal compensation—both in financial terms and in terms of supporting resources which has the potential to significantly reduce their motivation and work performance. Village heads are expected to be ready to assist residents at any time, including at night or in the early morning, which significantly disrupts their work schedules. (Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 2 of 2022 on Job Creation, 2022) Regarding the Job Creation Law, pursuant to Article 81(23), which amends Article 77(1) of the Labor Law, every employer is required to comply with the working hour regulations, namely 8 hours for a 5-day workweek and 7 hours for a 6-day workweek. Meanwhile, village heads face working hours that exceed ideal limits—more than 8 hours a day or 40 hours a week and often work 24 hours a day for compensation equivalent to the Regional Minimum Wage (UMR), creating an imbalance in work-life balance. This is therefore not ideal from the perspective of meeting physiological needs and ensuring well-being. Furthermore, although village heads demonstrate total dedication and 24-hour readiness, the value of such sacrifices is sometimes diminished and viewed merely as a logical consequence of the position. This results in their service efforts receiving insufficient recognition.

To ensure that the services provided to the community remain top-notch, strong work motivation is essential. Therefore, the village head of Maniskidul must provide work motivation to each hamlet head, as this can serve as a catalyst for achieving the organization’s goals. As Mamun explained in (Vo et al., 2022) “employers, therefore, need their employees to work with complete motivation rather than just showing up at their workplaces”.

Mangkunegara in (Zainuddin, 2025) points out that there are two techniques for motivating employees: the technique of meeting employees’ needs and the technique of persuasive communication. If these techniques for motivating employees and persuasive communication can be fully applied to village heads, they can indirectly foster a willingness to work, which in turn leads to the successful completion of tasks.

Work motivation is a key factor in organizational psychology for explaining behavior within an organization. As explained by (Ones et al., 2017) “work motivation remains a vital factor in organizational psychology, as it helps explain the causes of individual conduct in organizations”.

Therefore, a holistic strategy is needed to optimize human resource management while prioritizing the well-being of village government officials. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs can be applied to conceptualize the needs of government officials as a progressive pyramid implemented in stages, starting with physiological needs, safety, belonging, esteem, self-actualization, and aesthetic needs. Thus, the application of Maslow's Theory can be used to analyze the level of work motivation among village heads in the Maniskidul village government. The purpose of this research is to help readers understand how the fulfillment of needs relates to the optimization of human resources among the village officials of Maniskidul Village.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs serves as the primary conceptual framework in the study titled "The Application of Maslow's Theory to the Work Motivation of Village Heads in Maniskidul Village" because it explains how motivation influences organizational performance. In *Motivation and Personality*, 3rd edition, (Maslow, 2015) describes needs as a progressive pyramid: basic physiological needs (food, sleep) as the foundation; safety (physical, financial, and emotional stability); social needs (interpersonal relationships, a sense of belonging); esteem (achievement, recognition); self-actualization (fulfilling one's full potential through creativity and growth); and aesthetic needs, which refer to beauty.

This hierarchy emphasizes that basic needs must be met first before individuals can pursue higher-level needs, reflecting a humanistic view of human potential. (Maslow, 2015) proposes that human motivation is structured into a hierarchy of needs consisting of six levels: physiological needs (such as food and water), safety, social, aesthetic, esteem, and self-actualization.

In the field of management, this theory has been applied to employee motivation, such as in the model (Herzberg et al., 1959) which integrates elements of Maslow's hierarchy with intrinsic motivational factors. Nevertheless, modern criticism highlights its limitations regarding culture and individuality, with cross-cultural research showing that this hierarchy is less relevant in collectivist societies.

Theory of Human Resource Management

Hasibuan (2016) defines human resource management as the process of managing people as a strategic asset of the organisation, with a focus on functions such as planning, recruitment, development, remuneration, and retention of employees.

According to Marwansyah, human resource management can be defined as the utilization of human resources within an organization, carried out through the functions of human resource planning, recruitment and selection, human resource development, career planning and development, compensation and benefits, occupational safety and health, and industrial relations.

(Hasibuan, 2016) enriching the application of Maslow's theory in human resource management in Indonesia by bridging Western theory and the local context to enhance the effectiveness of public organizations. In this study, Hasibuan's book provides a methodological foundation for analyzing the implementation of Maslow's theory among the human resources of the Maniskidul Village administration, incorporating cultural values such as mutual cooperation to achieve holistic well-being.

Theory of Village Governance

The issue of village governance has been a central focus of research since the enactment of Law No. 6 of 2014, given that this legislation grants villages significant

autonomy in managing their resources and affairs. According to (Sulistyo, 2018), Good governance in villages is a synthesis of formal regulatory requirements and on-the-ground practices, namely the integration of universal principles of good governance with the values cherished by the local village community.

(Sulistyo, 2018) In *Village Governance: Theory and Practice* integrates motivation theories such as Maslow's with village autonomy based on (Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, 2014), highlights human resource challenges in village administrations, such as a lack of competence and motivation resulting from unmet needs in Maslow's hierarchy (for example, security concerns stemming from funding uncertainty and social conflicts). This book is relevant to this study because it emphasizes the application of Maslow's theory in Maniskidul Village through practical approaches, such as establishing a human resources team to monitor needs, thereby fostering human development-oriented governance.

Work Motivation

Work motivation is an important aspect and a key driver in employee management. According to Hamid in (Yasin et al., 2024) explains that work motivation is a driving force that inspires individuals to collaborate, work efficiently and purposefully, and achieve job satisfaction.

Work motivation, as explained by Pinder in (Vo et al., 2022) "a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behavior, and to determine its form direction intensity and duration".

Journal on the Work Motivation of Village Officials in Sambo by (Zainuddin, 2025) used Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to describe the motivation levels of village officials and found that, in general, most needs from basic needs to self-actualization—have been met, with the exception of Esteem Needs. This finding is highly relevant because it validates the application of Maslow's theory in the context of village officials and reinforces the argument that deficits in recognition, status, and appreciation constitute a central weakness in village government human resource management, which can hinder initiative and performance even when physiological needs are already met.

RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this study is qualitative. Qualitative research is a research method that provides a detailed overview of phenomena occurring in society. This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of applying Maslow's theory to the work motivation of village heads in Maniskidul Village. (Creswell, 2018) states that qualitative research is a method used to understand and explore the meanings developed by individuals or groups in the context of humanitarian or social issues. This process involves posing questions or employing procedures to gather specific insights from participants, conducting inductive data analysis on specific topics to identify common themes, and deeply understanding and interpreting the data.

This study employed data collection methods that included interviews, document analysis, and observation. Observations were necessary to gather firsthand information regarding the application of Maslow's theory to the work motivation of village heads in Maniskidul; interviews were conducted to explore the experiences and perceptions of the village heads in Maniskidul; and document analysis was used to help understand the policies and supporting documents related to the application of Maslow's theory to the work motivation of village heads.

To test the validity of the data collected, the researchers employed a data triangulation approach to enhance the accuracy and consistency of the findings. This data triangulation was conducted through interviews with the village head and five hamlet heads. The collected data

was then analyzed, interpreted, and supplemented with additional information to strengthen the research findings.

Using this methodology, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Maslow's theory of motivation is understood, applied, and responded to by various stakeholders in the context of village head motivation in Maniskidul Village, and to generate functional strategies to support the achievement of Indonesia Emas 2045 and the development of a prosperous and sustainable society.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research on the application of Maslow's theory to the work motivation of village heads in Maniskidul Village indicates that the fulfillment of the needs of village officials, particularly village heads, is not entirely consistent across every level of the hierarchy of needs. Based on the six dimensions of Maslow's needs, the research can be categorized according to the results of observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis.

The conscious or unconscious drive to direct one's actions toward a predetermined goal is known as work motivation. Work motivation plays a crucial role, not only in education and social life, but also in the workplace, as the energy it generates can accelerate and facilitate work. Forno & Merlone in (Riyanto et al., 2021) "Work motivation theory is typically associated with justification, not ability; that is, some people, when compared to others, are able to perform their jobs well." Forno and Merlone highlight that work motivation has shifted from being based on ability to being based on justification, which refers to a person's reasons or motivations for working.

The diversity of desires among employees makes work motivation an essential tool for management in its efforts to align organizational goals. (Virgiawan et al., 2021) "Measuring work motivation helps determine the goals, behavioral persistence, and work-related intensity that the organization seeks." This is because organizational goals are easier to achieve when employees are motivated. This point aligns with what was explained (Sunardi & Awaliah, 2025) bahwa "When employees feel motivated and satisfied with their job, especially in terms of compensation, career advancement, job security, and working conditions, they are likelier to perform at their best".

Maslow describes work motivation as being related to the fulfillment of employees' needs within an organization. These needs include physiological, safety, social, aesthetic, esteem, and self-actualization needs. The fulfillment of the most basic needs—from physiological aspects to self-actualization—has an impact on employees, leading them to have strong work motivation and enabling them to achieve the organization's goals. This is also emphasized by the Village Head of Maniskidul, who notes that the fulfillment of basic, appropriate needs can serve as a driving force for them, resulting in high-quality work due to sustained work motivation.

Baridam in (Ihensekien & Joel, 2023) explains that Maslow based his theory of motivation on three assumptions, namely

- a. Individuals have specific needs that influence their behavior, only discontented needs can influence one behavior, and mollified needs do not act as motivators,
- b. Needs are prescribed in an order of importance or hierarchy from the basic physiological to the complex self actualization needs,
- c. An individual's needs at any level on the hierarchy transpire only when the lower needs are reasonably satisfied".

The researcher conducted a study by applying Abraham Maslow's theory to village heads in Maniskidul Village, Kuningan Regency. The study utilized Maslow's six dimensions: physiological needs, safety, social needs, aesthetic needs, esteem, and self-

actualization. Regarding these six aspects, the findings can be explained based on the results of the study as follows:

1. Physiological Needs

Maslow places physiological needs at the base of the hierarchy as the primary drive. Basic needs such as clothing, food, shelter, housing, and rest must be met reliably and consistently for a person to live a normal life. These needs are considered essential and constant, driving every individual to engage in various forms of work in order to earn compensation in the form of financial or material rewards.

The interview results revealed that the hamlet heads in Maniskidul Village, Jalaksana Subdistrict, Kuningan Regency have no issues regarding the income they receive, which is sufficient to cover their daily needs. Additionally, the secretary of Maniskidul Village stated that the amount of income received by village officials, including village heads, is stipulated in the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBDes) at Rp2,187,000 per month, equivalent to the income of a civil servant in Grade IIA. The amount of income provided is in accordance with Kuningan Regent Regulation No. 18 of 2025 concerning guidelines for the preparation of the village revenue and expenditure budget for the 2026 fiscal year.

In (Kuningan, 2025) Kuningan Regent Regulation No. 18 of 2025 on Guidelines for the Preparation of the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 states on page 31 that “Income is allocated proportionally according to the following proportions:

- a. Village Chief: Rp3.261.000,00
- b. Village Secretary: Rp2.592.000,00
- c. Village Officials: Rp2.187.000,00”

The distribution of income among village officials is governed by Kuningan Regent Regulation No. 18 of 2025 on guidelines for the preparation of the village revenue and expenditure budget for the 2026 fiscal year, as there are currently no specific internal village regulations governing this matter. Therefore, the village administration fundamentally implements the regent’s regulation as the primary normative framework for determining the income amounts for all village officials.

In addition, the researchers discovered an interesting phenomenon: the income levels specified in Kuningan Regent Regulation No. 18 of 2025 differ from the 2026 Regency/Municipal Minimum Wage (UMK) levels established by West Java Governor’s Decree No. 561.7/Kep.862-Kesra/2025. Based on (Decision of the Governor of West Java, 2025) Regarding the 2026 Regency/Municipal Minimum Wage, it is stated that the Governor of West Java has set the minimum wage for Kuningan Regency at Rp2,369,380, effective throughout 2026 across the entire territory of Kuningan Regency.

In addition, it was found that there are no operational vehicles available, so each hamlet head uses their personal vehicle for transportation while performing their daily duties, including covering the cost of fuel. This automatically reduces their income to cover daily transportation costs. They also experience a lack of rest due to the responsibilities placed on them, which leaves them exhausted the following day.

The research findings indicate that there are income disparities established by regent and governor regulations; these differences in income levels are so significant that a fundamental revision of the regulations is necessary to ensure administrative coherence and effectiveness. Based on these critical findings, the researchers have taken proactive steps by formulating a series of solution-oriented strategic recommendations. Specifically, the researchers urge the local government of Kuningan Regency to immediately take action to update and harmonize regulations with the aim of aligning

laws so that the administration of government at the village level can function more effectively.

2. Security Needs

The fulfillment of physiological needs serves as a motivator for individuals to move on to the next level of needs, namely the need for safety. The need for safety encompasses both physical and emotional security while serving as a village head. Examples of safety include protection from threats such as violence, illness, and other potential hazards that may arise while performing duties within the community.

The research findings indicate that the hamlet head has never experienced threatening physical violence during his tenure as hamlet head in Maniskidul Village. This is because the communities in each hamlet are generally peaceful and orderly, making it easier for the hamlet head to coordinate with the residents. Additionally, the village head noted that the village government provides several health insurance benefits to village heads, including the Social Health Insurance Agency (BPJS Kesehatan), the Social Security Agency for Workers (BPJS Ketenagakerjaan), and old-age pension coverage. Consequently, the need for a sense of security has been met for every village head, and the system is functioning effectively.

3. Social Needs

Humans are social beings who crave interaction with others because it is a social need. This interaction can take the form of conversation, friendship, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging within a community, including the workplace. Although it may seem trivial, the failure to meet these social needs can have a significant impact on work motivation. In the context of village administration, every hamlet head seeks harmonious and healthy social interaction among colleagues and superiors, making social needs a crucial factor.

The interview results indicate that relations among the hamlet heads are very good, including their relationships with the village head, program coordinators, and other village officials. Furthermore, all hamlet heads reported that their relationships with the community are also very good, enabling constructive discussions with hamlet residents.

Given the village head's significant responsibilities in organizing and managing the village residents, social support specifically moral support—is also provided by the village chief of Maniskidul in his capacity as the leader. This indicates that the village head's social needs have been met.

With regard to affiliation, the research findings indicate that the needs of village heads are largely met. A high level of cohesion is evident in the communication and interaction among village heads, community members, and village chiefs. The fulfillment of these social needs is supported by local values such as mutual cooperation. Strong social relationships, as part of the work culture of Indonesian public organizations, are reinforced by these field findings, according to Hasibuan (2016).

4. The Need for Recognition

Recognition is the fourth level in Maslow's hierarchy, following social needs. Recognition can take the form of praise or certificates from others in acknowledgment of improvements or achievements. For example, village heads who have demonstrated dedication in carrying out their duties efficiently and effectively deserve recognition. This is important for boosting the motivation of village heads so that every community development and empowerment program is more effective and optimal.

In (Mustofa, 2022) “The need for recognition is one of the levels in the hierarchy of needs, specifically the fourth level, which arises after the first three needs have been met. Maslow found that everyone has two categories of recognition needs: self-esteem and recognition from others. Self-esteem encompasses the need for self-confidence, competence, responsibility, adequacy, achievement, independence, and freedom.” Maslow explains that recognition has two categories: self-esteem and recognition from others. Recognition related to self-esteem tends to be associated with an individual’s abilities, such as the self-confidence to complete tasks competently. Meanwhile, Goble in (Mustofa, 2022) “The forms of recognition sought from others include prestige, recognition, acceptance, attention, status, a good reputation, and awards.” This indicates that recognition from others can take the form of praise or certificates of recognition.

The research findings indicate that all hamlet heads in the village of Maniskidul receive only verbal praise from their superiors for their achievements, and there is currently no system of tangible rewards, such as certificates or similar items. However, they state that this does not affect their work motivation, even though they receive only verbal praise, because they view their work as hamlet heads as a form of service.

Although dedication is a fundamental motivator, formalizing appreciation through tangible elements such as certificates holds substantial significance. Certificates of appreciation serve as official validation of the performance achievements attained by the hamlet heads in the village of Maniskidul. From a psychological perspective, this physical artifact fosters a lasting sense of pride and can serve as a marker of institutional recognition from the village government for their concrete contributions.

The researchers highlighted the absence of a system for physical recognition in Maniskidul Village as an issue that needs to be addressed immediately. Although a spirit of dedication motivates hamlet heads to maintain their productivity even when they receive only verbal appreciation, the researchers argue that physical recognition plays a crucial role as a tangible manifestation of acknowledgment from leadership. Through these findings, the researchers aim to convince village authorities of the urgency of award certificates or other forms of tangible appreciation, which are vital for enhancing the professionalism of village heads and ensuring accountable performance records.

5. Aesthetic Needs

Aesthetic needs are at the highest level of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. The need for beauty refers primarily to a pleasant environment that allows individuals to focus on their tasks. It is important to understand that, in addition to meeting basic needs, village heads must also have their aesthetic needs addressed. In this context, beauty refers to the orderliness, cleanliness, and tidiness of the office area and the village grounds. Given that the village head’s duties also include village administration, a conducive work environment is needed at the village government office to support full concentration. The availability of adequate workspace within the work environment will ensure precision in the management of village administration. Nitisemito in (Sariwulan & Ghofar, 2024) The work environment refers to everything surrounding an employee that can influence them in performing their assigned tasks.

In (Maslow, 2015) “The needs for order, symmetry, closure, the completion of an action, a system, and structure may be indiscriminately attributed to cognitive, conative, or aesthetic needs, or even to neurotic needs.” Therefore, it is important for village heads to fulfill the need for beauty, as it influences neurotic tendencies. Howell in (Świątek et al., 2024) menjelaskan kebutuhan akan keindahan bahwa “Seberapa lama transformasi ini akan bertahan masih belum diketahui, tetapi kami berasumsi bahwa interaksi dengan

keindahan yang dirasakan secara subjektif dapat, atau seharusnya, menjadi salah satu aspek dari proses aktualisasi diri”.

The research findings indicate that three out of five hamlet heads feel they lack focus when performing administrative tasks at the village government office because their desks are very close together and separated only by small partitions. Additionally, the open layout of the village head's desks is very close to the entrance of the village government office, so village heads often reflexively glance at anyone entering or exiting the door. Village heads also explained that because the desks are so tightly packed, they must move to another room when residents wish to discuss confidential matters.

Unlike other village officials, who have their own offices, hamlet heads are still housed in the same area without any formal partitions. In fact, dedicated workspaces for each hamlet head are necessary to help them focus on their work and achieve optimal performance.

6. The Need for Self-Actualization

Self-actualization is the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy because it signifies that a person has achieved optimal self-development and realized their full potential. Feist in (Ziyadul Haq Annajih & Sa, 2023) explains that “Achieving self-actualization also leads to improved psychological well-being, such as changes in perception and motivation to continually grow and develop”.

Maslow argued that self-actualization represents the highest need that humans must fulfill. Feist in (Ziyadul Haq Annajih & Sa, 2023) He also added that self-actualization has several levels: “According to Maslow, there are several characteristics of people who have reached the level of self-actualization, namely: first, moving beyond the hierarchy of needs; second, holding firmly to B-values or meta-motivation; third, being free from metapathology; fourth, fulfilling the need to grow and develop.”

Village heads who have reached the stage of self-actualization tend to demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm and creativity because they have reached a stage where they accept themselves, others, and their environment, enabling them to easily implement ideas in the form of work programs. To encourage and motivate self-actualization, technical guidance and training are needed in various fields deemed relevant to the duties of a village head.

The research findings indicate that the hamlet heads in Maniskidul village have been granted autonomy by the village head to manage their respective hamlets, while still maintaining coordination and reporting on programs implemented in each hamlet. Furthermore, any ideas proposed for improving the hamlets are always received positively, which serves as motivation for the hamlet heads to continue improving their areas. However, on the other hand, the hamlet heads have never received training relevant to their work. So far, capacity building has been limited to technical guidance (bimtek) and has not yet addressed in-depth training relevant to on-the-ground needs.

Hamlets are the foundation of village development, so their management requires skilled human resources. Providing training to hamlet heads is an investment in human resources, as trained hamlet heads can better utilize their potential to advance their hamlets. As explained by (Abnisa et al., 2025) “Human resources (HR) are the most vital asset in an organization because the organization's success and sustainability depend heavily on the quality and performance of the individuals working within it.” Therefore, the researchers identified an urgent need for technical capacity building. These findings confirm that effective village administration requires more than just motivation and moral support; it also necessitates training that is specific and relevant to operational challenges.

Researchers recommend that village governments not only grant autonomy in managing hamlets but also facilitate substantive capacity-building programs to support the success of regional programs.

CONCLUSIONS

According to a study conducted on the application of Abraham Maslow's Theory to the work motivation of village heads in Maniskidul Village, the fulfillment of village officials' work-related needs is uneven across each level of the hierarchy of needs. The study's findings indicate that financial compensation, health insurance, and employment security have relatively well met physiological needs and the need for safety. Harmonious village and community relations based on the value of mutual cooperation result in a high level of fulfillment of social needs. However, capacity-building mechanisms and recognition have not yet met the needs for self-actualization, esteem, and beauty. This situation indicates that social affiliation and loyalty, rather than management schemes or formal incentives, motivate a village head to work.

To date, research on work motivation within the context of village administrations has primarily focused on the formal public sector at the city level or local government agencies. This study helps to expand the scope of this research. Furthermore, this study extends the application of Maslow's theory by applying it to a bureaucracy rooted in local communities and culture. Additionally, the findings indicate that the motivation of village officials is influenced by economic compensation, as well as the social structure and cultural legitimacy granted to village heads as micro-level representatives of the government.

Research shows that there are tangible benefits to village governance, particularly in terms of improving human resource management systems. Village bureaucratic reform must take into account the needs of village officials for recognition, fulfillment, and self-actualization. To continue improving employee performance and motivation, interventions may include performance evaluations, formal recognition, competency training, and workplace environment improvements.

This study is limited to a single village and employs an interpretive qualitative approach. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to other areas with different social and administrative characteristics. Furthermore, the absence of quantitative measurement tools makes it impossible to calculate the degree of need fulfillment numerically or to compare it with other subjects in a measurable way.

To obtain a more comprehensive picture and to measure motivation levels quantitatively, the study should be expanded and employ a mixed-methods approach. In addition, village and local governments are encouraged to improve the performance and motivation of hamlet heads by establishing a reward system, providing professional training, and improving the working environment for village officials.

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