Financial Success Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Survey-Based Evidence

(Student Name)

Middle Tennessee State University

Undergraduate Research Center Grant Proposal

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Murat Arik

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Tom Brinthaupt

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Preface

In January of 2023, I submitted a proposal titled "Financial Success based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Evidence from a Survey of Tennessee University Alumni," for which I received the Silver Award. These funds made available through the Undergraduate Research Experience and Creative Activity supported the first phase of the research project contributing to my thesis. As outlined in the timeline from the spring 2023 project, I am currently on track to complete the initial stage of my research in May. This proposal is to support the continuation of my research.

Introduction

The definition of "financial success" varies based on who is offering the definition. Moreover, someone can view financial success from a subjective and an objective angle. For my research, I will be assessing both subjective and objective financial success in relation to the achievement of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Tully and Sharma said, "objective wealth measures aim to capture consumers' actual financial resources." Subjective financial success can vary, however. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau expresses financial well-being as "A state of being wherein you have control over day-to-day, month-to-month finances; have the capacity to absorb a financial shock; are on track to meet your financial goals; and have the financial freedom to make the choices that allow you to enjoy life" (2015).

Researchers commonly use several theories to measure factors that drive an individual's motivation. Abraham Maslow established one well-known motivation theory, "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs," in 1943. Maslow (1968, p. 22) says that something becomes a need if "1. its absence breeds illness, 2. its presence prevents illness, 3. its restoration cures illness, 4. under certain (very complex) free choice situations, it is preferred by the deprived person over other satisfactions, 5. it is found to be inactive, at a low ebb, or functionally absent in the healthy person." Maslow (1968, p.22) also defined needs as "an unconscious yearning and desire, and feeling of lack or deficiency, as of something missing on the one hand, and, on the

other, palatability." His theory outlines five levels of needs: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs.

Physiological, safety, love/belonging, and esteem needs are deficiency needs because they may lead to being disadvantaged in fundamental aspects of life. Self-actualization is a growth need because it is tied to an individual's positive desire to achieve accomplishments versus being motivated by deprivation.

Considering life satisfaction from a financial perspective reveals similar observations supported by research. Tully and Sharma said, "research shows that consumers with more wealth experience greater life satisfaction than people with less wealth." Indeed, financial satisfaction has shown to be one of the strongest determinants of overall life satisfaction." My research aims to draw a connection between the two studies. If life satisfaction does, in fact, rely on financial wealth, then there must be a financial component to each of Maslow's levels that affects satisfaction at that level.

Maslow also expressed that it is difficult for individuals to move on to the next higher level when experiencing more pressing needs on other levels (Maslow, 1968). Therefore, if an individual struggles to move on to the next higher level, it will be difficult to achieve financial success, whether subjective or objective. Linkages between levels as outlined in Maslow's theory and financial success include examples such as:

- 1. To satisfy physiological needs, an individual requires items such as food, shelter, and clothing –all items that require financial means.
- 2. To satisfy safety needs, an individual must experience security, employment, and health. To be employed, one must have the means to get to work and maintain good health.
- 3. To satisfy needs related to love and belonging, particularly in a social context, an individual must have the means to participate in social activities.
- 4. At the esteem level, factors such as recognition, freedom, and respect come into play. Tang and Baker assert that "there is reason to believe that high self-esteem leads to responsible financial

- behavior" and "high self-esteem operates as a positive emotional resource for individuals to draw upon during various stages of the financial management process" (2016).
- 5. Self-actualization equates to an individual reaching their full potential. Financial elements on the previous four levels related to success, so necessarily, that will be the case on the fifth level. As previously stated, it is difficult for individuals to move on to the next higher level when experiencing more pressing needs on other levels (Maslow, 1968). Further analysis of the financial element at the self-actualization stage and filling the related literature gap is a significant focus of my study.

A study performed by Taormina and Gao (2013) supports the notion that "the satisfaction of any given need was positively and significantly correlated with the need immediately below in the hierarchy." This means that the closer an individual gets to self-actualization, the more satisfaction can be found on other levels. The preceding information and study are some of the key reasons for the hypotheses below.

Background

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a motivation theory established in 1943 that is still applied in research today. Much has been written about financial success/wealth. Likewise, considerable research exists applying Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in areas such as employee performance, adolescent depressive symptoms, and attitudes toward money based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Jerome, 2013; Crandall et al., 2020; Oleson, 2003). However, a literature gap exists. There has been no study based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs about how an individual's adolescence relates to their financial success today.

Purpose

My proposed research will continue to investigate the relationship between factors in adolescence and financial success in later years using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Specifically, this research stage will statistically analyze two major competing hypotheses (1) having more/higher levels of needs met in adolescence leads to greater financial success in adulthood; (2) compensating for not having needs adequately met can lead to greater financial success. The expected outcome of my research is that financial success is, in fact, tied to having needs met in adolescence; however, there is also the possibility that some

individuals are motivated by the desire for change in life circumstances. In other words, it is possible for individuals to not score high on certain levels and yet be financially successful. Holding two competing hypotheses allows for the exploration of any potential outliers. By assessing all five levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, it will be interesting to consider factors at play in cases where not having needs adequately met might lead to financial success. Moreover, this research will consider objective and subjective financial success, allowing us to see how someone's subjective view of financial success coincides with their objective financial success.

Methods

My initial proposal anticipated using college graduates as study survey respondents. However, I have broadened the potential survey pool based on input from faculty mentors and contacting the alumni offices at the University of Knoxville, Tennessee, and Belmont University. The survey platforms under consideration were Qualtrics, SurveyMonkey, and Amazon Turk. Qualtrics offers the best value for associated costs and desired outcomes. For \$3150, Qualtrics Panel guarantees 500 responses. A Qualtrics representative explained how responses are vetted such that 500 "good" responses are guaranteed. Qualtrics uses automated fraud detection as well as manual data cleaning. I have requested support from the Honors College, Finance, Management, and Business and Economic Research Center to cover the cost. The Honors College will support me with \$1750, and the others will cover up to 1/3 of the remaining costs each. I informed each sponsor that I would also apply for the material funds from the Undergraduate Research Center through this proposal.

The three survey components will remain as listed in the spring of 2023 proposal. The first will assess the levels of Maslow's Hierarchy (dating back to adolescence); the second will contain questions about current financial situations; and the third will include demographic variables. The targeted survey group is adults between 35 and 45. My research focuses on early-to mid-career. Super and Hall state that individuals who are in their forties "cut any remaining ties with mentors and enter midcareer" (1978). I

include potential participants younger than 40 to take into consideration that they might have gone to trade school, gotten a certificate, or participated in an apprenticeship.

With the help of faculty advisors, it was agreed that the objective financial questions would be based on a dichotomous scale. The questions related to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs will be based on a Likert scale model with five items. Dr. Brinthaupt and I determined that using a 5-item Likert scale will maintain the integrity of Taormina and Gao's (2013) survey that is being used as the framework for Maslow's component of my survey. Questions related to financial success were initially established with the help of Dr. Arik and previously named studies. Since I am establishing my own scale evaluating "financial success," I consulted with several Economics/Finance professors at MTSU before finalizing the finance component of the survey. The control variables in this research remain age, education levels, and employment status. This research's independent variables are the five needs levels, whereas the dependent variable is financial success. The software "IBM SPSS Amos" remains the chosen instrument to conduct the survey analysis. Part of the previous project timeline was to set up survey questions on the platform of choice. A document with the survey questions is attached in the appendix.

Collaboration with Faculty Mentors

Dr. Arik, associate professor of Management and director of the Business and Economic Research Center, and Dr. Brinthaupt, professor in the Psychology department, agreed to continue to serve as my mentors throughout this project. Dr. Brinthaupt specializes in areas such as personality psychology, psychology of the self, and health psychology. Dr. Arik continues to guide me through the finance portion of my research, and Dr. Brinthaupt continues to assist me with the psychological component of my survey. Both will help me with data cleaning and analysis. The goal is to meet weekly to review those processes.

References

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Timeline

- May 22nd: Start of Project.
- May 22nd June 4th: Publish Qualtrics survey by May 26th. The turnaround time for the Qualtrics Panel (500 responses) is approximately 7 days. Perform research and familiarize myself with how to clean survey data and expand knowledge on SPSS. Meet with Dr.
 Brinthaupt and Dr. Arik to establish a plan for how to filter through responses.
- **June 5th 18th:** Filter through the responses and identify unfit survey responses. Meet with Dr. Brinthaupt and Dr. Arik to discuss the unfit survey responses. Collaboratively decide which responses Qualtrics should be informed about and request for those responses to be replaced. Assess new responses with the help of Dr. Arik and Dr. Brinthaupt. Create structure for my thesis write-up.
- **June 19th July 2nd:** Meet with Dr. Brinthaupt and Dr. Arik during the week of June 19th to thoroughly learn how to reliably clean the survey data. Spend the full two weeks to clean data and periodically inform with Dr. Arik and Dr. Brinthaupt about the status of the data cleaning.
- July 17th 30th: Analyze findings and carefully take notes of those findings. Consult Dr.
 Arik and Dr. Brinthaupt for advice and validation of findings.
- July 31st August 11th: Write-up findings and meet with Dr. Arik and Dr. Brinthaupt to receive guidance. Make revisions according to the advice of my advisors. Submit project report to URECA.

Default Question Block

Study Title: Financial Success

Protocol Number: IRB-FY2023-129

Approval Date:

Principal Investigator: (Student Name)

Institution: Middle Tennessee State University

You are being asked to participate in a research project. The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your participation in it.

- 1. Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study is to assess an individual's life experiences in adolescence as well as their financial state as an adult today.
- 2. Description of procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the study: This survey will have a series of agree and disagree questions and fill in questions about a variety of behaviors, feelings, and attitudes.

The approximate duration of the study is 15 minutes.

Compensation for participation: If you are completing this survey as part of the Qualtrics Panel, you will receive \$6.30.

Here are your rights as a participant:

- a) Your participation in this research is voluntary.
- b) You may skip any item that you don't want to answer, and you may stop the research at any time. Note that if you leave an item blank, you will be warned that you missed one, just in case it was an accident. You can still click that you don't want to answer. Some items may be required in order to accurately present the study.
- c) There are no risks associated with your participation besides possible discomfort with some of the questions.
- d) There are no real benefits to you from participating besides possibly learning something about the research.
- e) You will NOT be asked to provide any identifiable personal information.
- f) All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private, but total privacy cannot be promised. Your information may be shared with

people at MTSU (such as the MTSU Institutional Review Board) or other agencies (such as the Federal Government Office for Human Research Protection) if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

Contact Information: If you should have any questions about this research study please contact:

Principal Investigator: (Student Name) Contact Information: (Student Email)

Faculty Advisor: Thomas Brinthaupt, Murat Arik

Contact Information: tom.brinthaupt@mtsu.edu, murat.arik@mtsu.edu

For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) Office of Compliance at 615-494-8918 or via email at irb information@mtsu.edu. (http://www.mtsu.edu/irb) If you're ready to get started, please make your choice below before clicking the arrow button. Thanks again for volunteering your time to this project! I have read the information above. I am at least 18 years old. I believe I understand the purpose, risks, and benefits of the research, and I know what I will be expected to do as a study participant.

\bigcirc	I consent
0	I do not consent
Are	you between the ages of 35 and 45?
0	Yes
\bigcirc	No

Block 1

For purposes of the study we would like you to refer back to your adolescence period (ages 10-18). Please rate the items for that specific time period ONLY. The following items refer to many possibly aspects of your adolescence. If any one item does not apply to you or you do not remember, please select "neither disagree nor agree."

I <u>WAS</u> completely satisfied...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The quality of food I ate every day	0	0	0	0	0
The quality of house/apartment I lived in	0	0	0	0	0
The amount of rapport I shared with people I knew	0	0	0	0	0
The admiration that was given to me by others	0	0	0	0	0
I was totally comfortable with all facets of my personality	0	0	0	0	0
The amount of food that I ate every day	0	0	0	0	0
The space available for me in my house/apartment	0	0	0	0	0
The quality of the relationships I had with my friends	0	0	0	0	0
The honor that many people gave me	0	0	0	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel that I was completely self-fulfilled	0	0	0	0	0
The quality of water I drank every day	0	0	0	0	0
How secure I was in my house/apartment	0	0	0	0	0
The intimacy I shared with my immediate family	0	0	0	0	0
How much other people respected me as a person	0	0	0	0	0

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I was the person I always wanted to be	0	0	0	0	0
The amount of water I drank every day	0	0	0	0	0
How safe I was from being physically attacked	0	0	0	0	0
The camaraderie I shared with my friends	0	0	0	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The prestige I had in the eyes of other people	0	0	0	0	0
I realized all of my innermost desires	0	0	0	0	0
The amount of heating I had when the weather was cold	0	0	0	0	0
The safety of my neighborhood	0	0	0	0	0
How much I was welcomed in my community	0	0	0	0	0
How highly other people thought of me	0	0	0	0	0
I indulged myself as much as I wanted	0	0	0	0	0
The amount of cooling I had when the weather was hot	0	0	0	0	0
How safe I was from catching any diseases	0	0	0	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The warmth I shared with my relatives	0	0	0	0	0

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The high esteem that other people had for me	0	0	0	0	0
I enjoyed everything I ever wanted from life	0	0	0	0	0
The quality of air I breathed every day	0	0	0	0	0
How secure I was from disasters	0	0	0	0	0
The emotional support I received from my friends	0	0	0	0	0
The recognition I received from various people	0	0	0	0	0
I completely accepted all aspects of myself	0	0	0	0	0
Every aspect of my physical health	0	0	0	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
How protected I was from dangers in the environment	0	0	0	0	0
The feeling of togetherness I had with my family	0	0	0	0	0
The high regard that other people had for me	0	0	0	0	0
My actions were always according to my own values	0	0	0	0	0
The amount of sleep I got to feel thoroughly	_				\circ
relaxed	0	O	O	O	O
	0	0	0	0	0
relaxed The protection that the	0	0	0	0	0

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
How much I liked the person I was	0	0	0	0	0
I lived my life the way I wanted	0	0	0	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The quality of sleep I got to feel fully refreshed	0	0	0	0	0
The protection that the law provided for me	0	0	0	0	0
The sympathy I received from my confidants	0	0	0	0	0
How sure I was of myself	0	0	0	0	0
I did the things I liked to do whenever I wanted	0	0	0	0	0
The amount of exercise I got to keep me healthy	0	0	0	0	0
How safe I was from destructive terrorist acts	0	0	0	0	0
The enjoyment I shared with friends	0	0	0	0	0
How much respect I had for myself	0	0	0	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I was actually living up to all my capabilities	0	0	0	0	0
The type of exercise I got to keep my body toned	0	0	0	0	0
How safe I was from acts of war	0	0	0	0	0

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The affection that was shown to me by my friends	0	0	0	0	0
All the good qualities I had as a person	0	0	0	0	0
I lived my life to the fullest	0	0	0	0	0
My overall physical strength	0	0	0	0	0
My financial security	0	0	0	0	0
The closeness I felt with my friends	0	0	0	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My sense of self-worth	0	0	0	0	0
The amount of esteem I had for myself	0	0	0	0	0
How positive I felt about myself as a person	0	0	0	0	0
Finance Questions					
Do you believe that you	are financial	ly successful?	?		
O Yes					
○ No					
Do you compare your fi	nancial situat	ion to better-c	off peer?		
O No					
O Yes					
Does your financial stat	e align with y	our values an	id goals?		
O No					

4/6/23	3:17 PM	

O Yes

Qualtrics Survey Software

Is your monthly income adequate to meet your personal needs? O No O Yes	
Do you have an emergency savings worth at least 3 months of your monthly expenses O No O Yes	;?
Have you missed any bill payments due to the inability to pay over the the past 12 months? O No O Yes	
Do you save at least 20% of your monthly income? O No O Yes	
Is your credit score above 670? (Credit scores about 670 are considered good) O No O Yes	
Do you find yourself living paycheck-to-paycheck? O No O Yes	

Are your current retirement savings adequate for someone in your situation?

4/6/23, 3:17 PM	Qualtrics Survey Software
O No	
O Yes	
Is your current debt something you can	easily manage on a monthly basis?
O No	
O Yes	
Do you have insurance policies that cove	er unexpected health related issues?
O No	
O Yes	
Demographics	
What are your monthly expenditures (Re	ent, Groceries, Insurance, etc.)
Please select YOUR education level?	
O Less than high school diploma	
High school diploma or equivalent (GED)	
Some college, but no degree	,
Associate Degree	
O Bachelor's Degree	
Master's Degree/Professional Degree	
O Doctorate Degree	
Please select your PARENT's education	level?
O Less than high school diploma	
O High school diploma or equivalent (GED	()
O Some college, but not degree	
Associate Degree	
O Bachelor's Degree	

0	Master's Degree/Professional Degree Doctorate Degree
Wha	at is your yearly gross household income?
0	Less than \$20,000
0	\$20,000-\$34,999
0	\$35,000-\$49,999
0	\$50,000-\$74,999
0	\$75,000-\$99,999
0	\$100,000-\$125,999
0	More than \$126,000
0	Prefer not to say
Wha	at is your gender?
\bigcirc	Male
\bigcirc	Female
\circ	Prefer not to say
How	many children do you have?
0	None
0	1
0	2
0	3
0	More than 3
Wha	at is your age?
	35
0	36 37
\bigcirc	38
\bigcirc	39

4/6/23, 3:17	PM	Qualtrics Survey Software
O 4	0	
O 4	1	
O 4	2	
O 4	3	
O 4	4	
O 4	5	
O P	Prefer not to say	
Which	n race or ethnicity best describes you?	
O A	American Indian or Alaskan Native	
O A	Asian/Pacific Islander	
ОВ	Black or Afro American	
O F	lispanic	
O V	Vhite/Caucasion	
\bigcirc N	/lultiple ethnicity/Other	
O P	Prefer not to say	

Powered by Qualtrics

Budget Justification

Qualtrics Panel: \$3,150. Please find a copy of the email from one of the Qualtrics representatives:

