

# COVID-19 Pandemic: A Survival of the Fittest, Smartest, or the Richest?

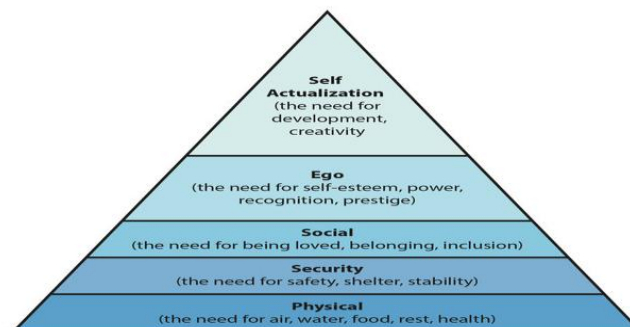
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*“If you deliberately plan on being less than you are capable of being, then I warn you that you’ll be unhappy for the rest of your life.” A. Maslow (1908-1970) American Psychologist*

**Abstract** - Pandemic really creates an existential question in everyone’s mind, in all walks of life, no exception. May a person belong to an affluent class, or the middle working class, or the disadvantage group, everyone experienced difficulties in sustaining their acquisition of deficiency needs. Maslow called the bottom four levels of the pyramid ‘deficiency needs’ because we do not feel anything if they are met but become anxious or distressed if they are not. Thus, physiological needs such as eating, drinking, and sleeping are deficiency needs, as are safety needs, social needs such as friendship and sexual intimacy, and ego needs such as self-esteem and recognition. In times of crises, everyone experience hardship in accessing deficiency needs. No one is immune from the difficulties brought by the pandemic and the community quarantine. This is the occasion when you can measure how strong a person is, how good a leader is, how strategic a manager is because their survival instincts become apparent in their decision-making process.

**Keywords** – Pandemic, Maslow Hierarchy, financial resources, physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization, nation’s wealth

In times of pandemic, Maslow Hierarchy of needs are more highlighted and are being observed. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory in psychology comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards, the needs are physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.



Maslow subsequently expanded the idea to encompass his observations of humans’ innate curiosity. His theories match many other theories of human developmental psychology, some of which focus on explaining the stages of growth in humans. He then created a categorization system which mirrored the universal needs of society as its base and then continuing to more acquired emotions. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is used to study how humans intrinsically take part in behavioral motivation. Maslow used the terms “physiological”, “safety”, “belonging and love”, “social needs” or “esteem”, and “self-actualization” to describe the pattern through which human motivations generally move.

This means that in order for motivation to arise at the next stage, each stage must be satisfied within the individual themselves. Additionally, this theory is a main base in knowing how effort and motivation are correlated when discussing human behavior. Each of these individual levels contains a certain amount of internal sensation that must be met in order for an individual to complete their hierarchy. The goal in Maslow’s theory is to attain the fifth level or stage: self-actualization.

Put in terms of Maslow's hierarchy: While the financial fallout of the corona pandemic will be nothing short of immense, that must take a back seat to the more imminent health crisis that we are facing as a broader community. We cannot worry about higher-level needs when we have got physiological and safety needs that need to be addressed. Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a powerful and useful model for understanding the large-scale psychological effects of the coronavirus. For many of us, if not all of us, the uncertain future of the effects of this virus are weighing heavily on our minds. In terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, you may have gone from working on love needs to safety needs readily. And such an abrupt and unanticipated change in one's basic needs can, of course, be stressful.

Pandemic really creates an existential question in everyone's mind, in all walks of life, no exception. May a person belong to an affluent class, or the middle working class, or the disadvantage group, everyone experienced difficulties in sustaining their acquisition of deficiency needs. Maslow called the bottom four levels of the pyramid '**deficiency needs**' because we do not feel anything if they are met but become anxious or distressed if they are not. Thus, physiological needs such as eating, drinking, and sleeping are deficiency needs, as are safety needs, social needs such as friendship and sexual intimacy, and ego needs such as self-esteem and recognition. In times of crises, everyone experience hardship in accessing deficiency needs. No one is immune from the difficulties brought by the pandemic and the community quarantine. This is the occasion when you can measure how strong a person is, how good a leader is, how strategic a manager is because their survival instincts become apparent in their decision-making process.

Covid-19 is particularly a good litmus test to validate the competence of a person in terms of decision-making. Some people may be losing hopes, others are beginning to deteriorate in their temper, other dilutes in their critical thinking, other wane in their faith and trust in the system, and even more shrinks in their spiritual vigor. People are dying and experiencing anxiety and stress because of boredom of being locked down and the fear of the unknown. Real unknown, in this matter since everyone is not sure of the enemy they are up against, and in this case, the covid-19 virus. Even our families are at risk of being a carrier of the virus and every place is considered a battlefield of this unseen and unknown enemy.

This is the time where the people's capacity is being tested not only in terms of monetary resources, but also on different front: intellectual, emotional, motivational, spiritual, and adverse intelligences. Based on the reflections and experiences of people for the last three months in community quarantine, the following model has been developed according to their needs. The people whether rich, poor or in-between are facing difficulties in all aspects of life. May it be in acquiring food, accommodations, family arrangement, business operations, observance of the rules and regulations, communications, transportations, and other social and emotional relationships.

The situation is not just a survival of the fittest where social status and intellectual abilities are being dignified to stay and maintain the status quo but also of subsistence to maintain one's status of being human, thriving and healthy, constrained by the limited financial resources and personal strategy one has to stay alive and cope with the corona virus. This contemplation is being measured through wealth and level of experience one has. According to some people, financial resources can save lives because it creates an opportunity to involve and engage others in your pursuit of your deficiency needs, one can create an affiliations and sphere of influences that monetary resources can help to established. You can pay the most expensive doctors, stay in the most comfortable hospitals, you can buy foods, you can have the luxury of staying at home with your family, and use all the electronic gadgets to support your daily existence both for work and leisure, with less of the stress worrying where to get your deficiency needs.

Though financial resources are not a guarantee that you can survive the pandemic, it gives you a fighting chance to prolong your life, to stay healthy, and to have the faith and hope to stay alive in this uncertain times. It also gives you the capacity to control your personal situation. Others had gone ahead because of lack of financial resources to spend to maintain their existence. Whether we like it or not, in our society those who can afford were given priority to be treated first in reputable tertiary hospitals than those who do not have the necessary financial resources, and universal health care is limited. The ending could be tragic for everyone who have less in life. This is the proof that this pandemic situation is not just about the survival of the fittest and brightest, but tilts unevenly to the survival of the richest.

### THE PANDEMIC MODEL OF MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

In times like these, the more financial resources you have the longer the period you can stay alive because money can provide you access to better health support and facilities and food for nourishment. This situation is best described in the following model. It shows that if you can afford you can survive.

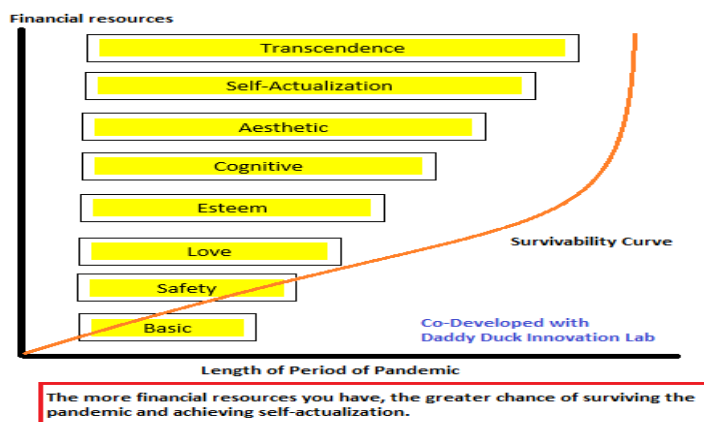
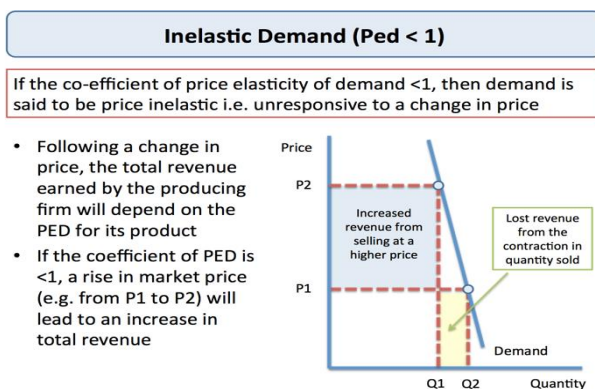


Diagram 1. The Pandemic Model of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs was co-developed by Dr. Catalino Mendoza and Daddy Duck Innovation Lab

Likewise, the model also shows how the pandemic can create a lot of opportunity for the enterprising people to exploit. The rich people or the people who can afford seems to be less averse to price of goods during this time, because they tradeoff access to the goods vis-a-vis for the cost of goods. Access to the goods is more important than the price of goods sold. All demand for goods and services seems to behave inelastic during this pandemic situation. **Inelastic** means that when the price goes up, consumers’ buying habits stay about the same, and when the price goes down, consumers’ buying habits also remain unchanged.



This creates an opportunity for small vendors and micro business to sell their goods at a reasonably higher price to provide door-to-door service and fill the **deficiency needs** of the affluent class and the work-preoccupied salaried middle class, without the hassle of getting into crowded markets and groceries. This will also ensure physical distancing can be enforced and ensure moneyed people from not getting exposed in the crowded places and to the virus.

This scenario creates an opportunity for the vendors and small businesses to improve their lot by offering good and services to the people who are looking for door-to-door delivery of goods to avoid getting exposed to the virus. By participating in the market to create an opportunity in the redistribution of wealth through business engagement even in a quite simple, micro-type of business and creating a niche. Still it proves the chance to earn a steady stream of revenue with the appropriate behavior and dedication. This drive and attitude will eventually contribute to the growth of the nation's wealth.

This also shows the opportunity to grow as entrepreneur, realizing the pandemic as the appropriate period to launch your ideas and create opportunity and business. And those who have seen these much earlier, were ahead in the curve and have started to create and formulate strategies to start the business right away. Being confident that redistribution of wealth will start soon to grow from the grassroots, from the micro-industry to small-time businesses of which those who have little capital can invest to in a way of backyard industry aligned to the needs of the new normal condition, limited contact, but highly personalized services.

In conclusion, the pandemic serves as a litmus test of resiliency for small businesses and the disadvantaged sector. It also challenged the leadership and enterprising abilities in each one of us to face the daunting task ahead and to be creative to address the hardships brought by this plague. But it also opens doors for everyone to innovate and be more creative to make a service niche to address the needs of the communities during pandemic.

Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, argued that individuals possess three different assets necessary for social mobility: economic capital (available monetary resources/property), cultural capital (possessed knowledge, skills, and behavior), and social capital (accessible human networks). However, we have different starting points on these three assets, and their interplay determines our capacity to move up the social ladder. Financial resources may be limited, but ideas and determination to survive this pandemic abound. In closing I will leave to you a statement of one of my students before with an economics background.

*"Poverty is not the lack of resources but the absence of choice. We all have a choice and we chose to live and thrive in this life (pandemic)." JFVA, AB Econ, MM*

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