

Health, Wellbeing and Lifestyles

ECEY5009 2197 Words 2306265

Introduction

This poster will look at social, health, and care issues that pertain to the welfare, well-being, and healthy living of infants and young children. The ideas of health, well-being, and lifestyles will be examined and defined, along with the reasons why they are crucial in the early years. Furthermore, many theories and paradigms will be examined and connected to early childhood education. In addition, there will also be a discussion of the practitioner's role in early childhood practice, including various approaches to promoting young children's development by supporting their health, well-being, and lifestyles.

Health

A definition of Health laid fourth in the Cambridge Dictionary is described as; the state in which the body is in good health, or the extent to which it is free from disease (Cambridge Dictionary, no date). However, according to (World Health Organization (WHO), 2024) health is more than just the lack of illness or disability; it is a state of whole physical, mental, and social well-being. Furthermore, viewing health as a resource for daily living rather than the goal of life, therefore it is a holistic positive idea that emphasizes both physical and social resources. The (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, no date) also have a holistic view believing that health depends on experiences; it is a whole person being able to achieve potential regardless of situation and disability.

(Bircher & Kuruvilla, 2014) however, suggest an individual's health is complicated and multifaceted, relying on a variety of variables and influencing factors. Thus, numerous methods and options exist for assessing health. (Kaiser, et al., 2023), provide a straightforward and understandable comprehensive depiction of the pertinent health determinants and influencing elements such as emotional, psychological, and social well-being being dimensions to assess one's ability to measure health.

(Rees & Main, 2011) believe that a person's mental health encompasses their emotional, psychological, and social well-being, all of which influence their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence to maturity. It affects our ability to make decisions, manage stress, and interact with others (WHO, 2022). The (NSPCC Learning, no date) state that a child's connections, experiences, and the surroundings in which they grow up all have an impact on their development and mental health and wellbeing. Moreover (Musgrave, 2017) states that early emotional support lowers the likelihood of delayed growth and development in children as well as the risk of poor physical, mental, and emotional functioning as adults.

The Early Years

(Marmot, 2010) describes the Early Years to be the most important years of a child's life and lay the groundwork for almost all aspects of human development, they are the most significant and if we get it right children will grow into well balanced adults. Additionally stating the experiences that happen during the early years have a lasting impact on a variety of health and wellness factors, including obesity, heart disease, mental health, academic success, and socioeconomic standing. This statement is mirrored by (NSPCC Learning, no date) who believe the whole wellness of children is shaped by all facets of their growth and health.

According to (Public Health England, 2016) the effects of pregnancy and early life have an impact on a person's physical and mental well-being into maturity, so it is crucial to support the health of the mother. Thus, an infant's early experiences, which start in the womb, influence how their brain develops. (Unicef, no date) further states we lay the physical, mental, and emotional groundwork for our future lives before the age of five, when our brains develop more quickly than at any other point in our lives.

(WHO, 2017) believe everyone has the fundamental right to the highest attainable level of health, regardless of colour, religion, economic class, or social standing. This belief has been at the heart of WHO's identity and mission. This is a definition mirrored by the experiences of (Musgrave, 2017). However, the ideal that we have the right to enjoy the highest standards of health and should have economic and social comfort, is not always achievable due to circumstances that affect how people are born, grow up, live, work and age which, are widely referred to as the 'social detriments of health' (Public Health England, 2017). People in poverty have lower health outcomes than people in affluence because many health-related issues have a socioeconomic gradient. These include housing, education, health care, finances, security, and the environment.

The Rainbow model is a method for identifying health disparities that charts the connection between a person's environment, health, and themselves. It was created in 1991 by Göran Dahlgren and Margaret Whitehead, and it centres people, with a variety of health-related elements surrounding them, including personal lifestyle choices, community impacts, living and working circumstances, and broader society circumstances. In principle, professionals and policymakers working in a variety of fields beyond the health sector have found the model to be very beneficial (Dahlgren & Whitehead, 2021). The study undertaken by (Likhar, et al., 2022) demonstrates how early childhood development has an impact on lifetime health issues. By examining the countless socioeconomic factors that influence early childhood development, they state there is a complex link between the various levels at which social variables function.

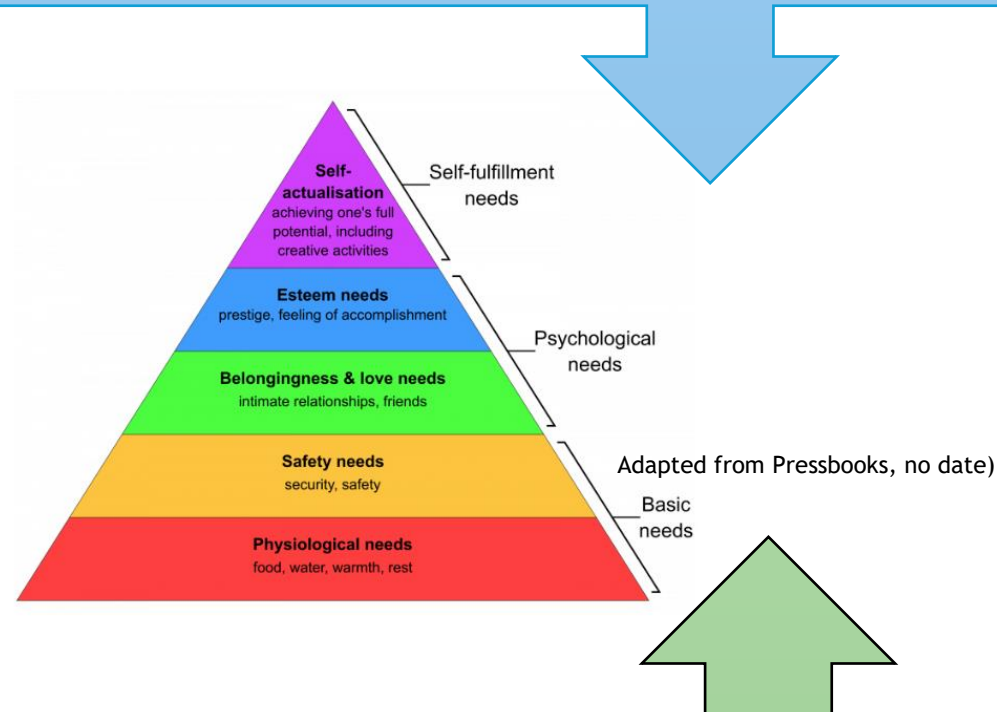


(Adapted from Dahlgren & Whitehead, 2021)

Wellbeing

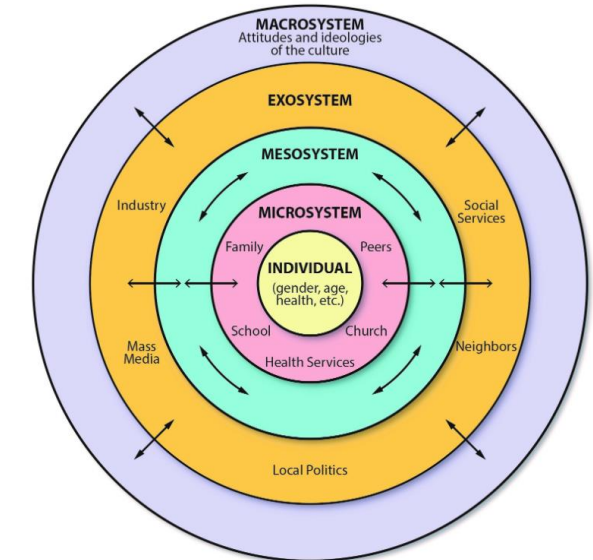
Cambridge dictionaries define wellbeing as a state of feeling healthy or happy (Dictionary, no date). This definition is mirrored by that of the (Welsh Government, 2024) who say that being happy, healthy, and content with one's life and activities are all indicators of well-being. However, according to (Mental Health Foundation, 2015) well-being is a far more expansive idea than enjoyment in the present, which also encompasses other elements including people's feeling of purpose, level of control, and overall life satisfaction. Thus, making is a comprehensive concept that encompasses physical, emotional, and social welfare and is centred on children's lives now and in the future, according to (Statham & Chase, 2010).

Human motivation is formed from a hierarchy of five fundamental categories, according to Abraham Maslow's idea of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. A theory which gives us a better understanding of human behaviour and offers insights into personal drive which cannot be fulfilled until one's basic needs have been met (Taormina & Gao, 2013). In addition to the fulfilment of needs the wellbeing of a child is also greatly influenced by their relationships according to (NSPCC Learning, 2023), whom state that while bad relationships can have long-term detrimental effects, positive connections can give a child a sense of security and support. (NHS Fife, no date) stipulate that having healthy connections provides us with a sense of connection and belonging, which can promote mental wellness.

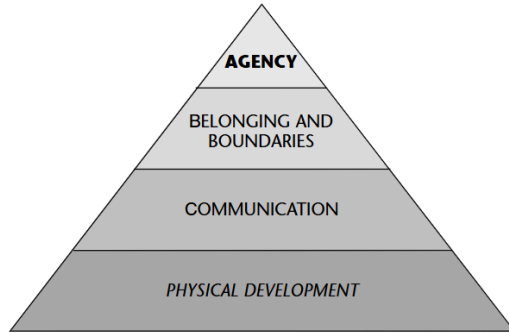


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Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory sees child development as a complex web of relationships influenced by the environment at many levels. Children's health and Thus, well-being will improve when they live in a secure setting with parents or other caregivers with whom they get along well and who provide them with care and nurturing (Crawford, 2020) (Marmot, 2010).



(Adapted from Open Library, no date)



(Adapted from: (Roberts, 2010))

(Roberts, 2010, p. 28) believes it is problematic to discern between the factors that affect wellbeing and the outcomes that follow. Her book delineates the theory of a holistic model of wellbeing that encompasses the development of agency, the concept of belonging and boundaries, the necessity of communication, and physical wellbeing which emphasizes the model.

Lifestyles

Lifestyle is defined as a style, manner of life, or the distinctive way that a someone conducts their life according to the (Dictionary, 1915).

Lifestyles can impact a child's health and wellbeing and the way we live has an impact on how children feel about themselves, their fears and happiness as stated by (NSPCC Learning, 2021). According to research (University of Cambridge, 2023) suggest that adopting healthy lifestyle practices can help prevent and treat mental health illnesses, thus promoting mental health and wellness.

A person's lifestyle can be influenced by a variety of elements, including their home environment, nutrition and diet, money, connections, exercise, community, parenting skills, and service utilization (WHO, 2024). Furthermore, (Cockerham, 2005) maintains that lifestyles are a combination of structure and agency since people frequently select from a variety of lifestyle options that fall within their social category. The Marmot Review in particular details how the social gradient on health disparities is mirrored in the social gradient on income, employment, educational achievement, and neighbourhood quality. Moreover, it states that health disparities are a result from social injustices (Marmot, 2010).

According to research by (Mollborn, *et al.*, 2021) early childhood intervention may be especially crucial for influencing healthy choices throughout life and for future generations. As (Mollborn & Lawrence, 2018) suggests maintaining a healthy lifestyle is crucial for both social identity and school readiness, which is directly related to future academic performance.

Application to Early Years Practice

(Musgrave, 2017) believes that the health of children is the duty of all professionals and understanding the factors that influence children's health is essential to supporting their well-being. (Department for Education, 2021) agree claiming that involving parents and caregivers in their children's education is essential to helping certain people succeed regardless of their background. (Care Learning, 2024) believe this can be achieved through building positive relationships, and an understanding of the child's background and family dynamic. To help parents understand the kind of support that is available to them and their child, practitioners must ask the appropriate questions in a tactful manner if they have any suspicions that their child may be struggling (Department for Health and Social Care, 2024).

Practitioners need to educate all about the benefits of developing good habits and positive ways of thinking according to (Thomas & Lewis, 2016). The Foresight Project capital and wellbeing provides simple strategies for enhancing patient and individual well-being in health and social care environments (Government Office for Science, 2008). (Bradshaw, 2016) maintains that a smart method to do this is to promote a child's whole growth and make sure they are healthy. The importance of providing a peaceful, supportive atmosphere for children to relax both mentally and physically must be understood. Furthermore, this will aid the development of early skills like behaviour, communication and emotion control. Additionally, (Musgrave, 2017) maintains that practitioners could enhance children's wellbeing by giving them chances to play outside, allowing them to be creative and explore in an environment in which they feel safe. Play is highly valued by the Welsh Government, which recognizes its significance in the lives of children in our society, the idea that every child has the right to play served as the foundation for the producing the Welsh Government Play Policy, based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The conventions Article 31 makes it clear that children have the right to play (Play Wales, no date).

There are numerous further policy documents that describe ways to enhance young children's health and wellbeing, such as: Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan which, outlines a commitment to enhancing every child's life chances and results in Wales (Welsh Government, 2013). The plan is intended for all those who oversee, commission, and provide services for families and children from pregnancy until age seven. The Welsh Government put children's development and well-being at the centre of early childhood play, learning, and care in Wales to give all children the best start in life. Under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, they are legally protected (Welsh Government, 2023) (Welsh Government, 2024).

In addition to policies there are many tools a practitioner could use such as the Leuven Scale for wellbeing which enables the assessment of children's emotional wellbeing (Learning Journals, no date).

Conclusion

The significant information in this poster makes it abundantly evident that health, well-being, and lifestyle decisions are all interconnected and significantly influenced by one another. It is now clear, as was previously said, that early experiences have a long-lasting impact on a number of aspects of health and wellness. Young children must lead healthy lifestyles, with a focus on the value of affectionate and encouraging relationships for their development and growth.

To better assist children's development and guarantee their well-being, it is crucial to adopt a holistic approach which, can be achieved by utilising the many government framework and policies currently in place to promote health and well-being within early years practice.

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