

Portfolio of 3 Parts exploring Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

1. Develop an infographic to explore Maslow's model in depth.
2. Explore in depth the concepts of holistic child development with links to Maslow's model.
3. Offer three examples from early years practice to highlight Maslow's significance in understanding child development.
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Infographic exploring Maslow's theory in depth.

Abraham Maslow was a psychologist who worked with the animal psychologist Harry Harlow and later Edward Thorndike researching the attachment behaviour in rhesus monkeys. This led Maslow to become interested in the social, physiological and emotional needs of a person, which led onto him developing a hierarchy of basic needs (Maslow, 1968). Maslow discussed that in order for a person to reach the top of the hierarchy and achieve self-actualisation. A person must achieve the basic needs first. It has been discussed that if an area of a need is not fully met during childhood, it can lead to a lack of full development in a child (Pichère and Cadiat, 2015)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Model**Self-actualisation**

Self-actualisation is at the top and is seen as the goal of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Self-actualisation has been described as "the psychological process aimed at maximising the use of a person's abilities and resources" (Couture et al., 2007). This involves a person realising the holistic skills they have. Self-actualisation is still important today as every single one of us find happiness in our lives being the person we want to be, and not how others want us to be. Therefore achieving self-actualisation, after achieving the four other needs, means as a person you are able to carry on developing (Wing, 2021)

Ego/Esteem

Ego/esteem needs are second from the top of a person reaching self-actualisation. Within this need, Maslow, A (1943) talked about the need of a person to have self-esteem, power, recognition and control. It was also discussed how esteem is split into two parts, one being esteem for oneself, and the other being respect for others. Esteem for oneself refers to how an individual respects their own character and values. Whereas respect for others involves the recognition and admiration an individual has for others. Both of these characteristics are vital in achieving the esteem/ego needs in Maslow's hierarchy, which ultimately leads a person on to achieve self-actualisation.

Love/Belonging

Love/Belonging needs are at the middle of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. (Maslow, 1943) discussed how the love/belonging needs of a person can only arise after physiological and safety needs are met. This stage includes the love and belonging of a person, inclusion, relationships, family and sexual intimacy. These needs are both in person and psychological. (Abbas, 2020) discusses how love and intimacy are in a person and how they connect to self-esteem. A person needs to be able to form relationships and be able to love within these relationships in order for them to be able to move up the hierarchy of needs.

Safety

Safety needs are the second step of needs Maslow believed were important to a human in order to reach self-actualisation. The needs within this step include security of body, employment, shelter, stability, family and health. (Maslow, 1943) discusses how safety to a child is so important physically and emotionally. A child can sense threats, as well as see them. therefore for further development of a child, there needs to be safety surrounding the child. The carer of the child needs to make sure the child is always safe, whether that might be them having a permanent job, financial stability or good health. These needs are all important to survival and the well-being of a person (Taormina and Gao, 2013)

Physiological

Physiological needs are at the base of Maslow's Theory. The needs are key to personal survival, these are food, water, sleep breathing. These needs are basic and vital to a human. This stage is the most important to a human and this is why Maslow has put this need at the bottom of the Hierarchy of Needs (Pichère and Cadiat 2015). Maslow thought that psychological needs should be at the bottom because if a human is not receiving the most basic needs, how would that person then go on to move up the hierarchy of needs achieving safety and eventually reaching self-actualisation (Taormina and Gao, 2013).

This need might be seen as a basic and simple need in certain countries, however in less fortunate countries, the supply of clean water and food is very limited. This might have an impact on a person's physiological needs being met.

The Concept of Holistic Child Development

This essay is going to explore Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model (Physiological, Safety and Security, Love/Belonging, Ego/Esteem and Self-Actualization) and how it relates to holistic child development. According to UNICEF, a child's brain is built from every experience which involves them interacting with their environments. It has been found that within the first 3 years of a child's life, the experiences they have, helps their brain to develop. This provides them with weak or strong foundations for their learning, health and behaviour throughout their lives (UNICEF, no date). Holistic development has been described as dealing with an individual as a whole, by dividing the whole up into separate areas. This means the areas of development, learning and growth are all connected into one. Within practice in the early years, concentrating on a child as a whole starts at birth, looking at the growth, development and learning of the child (Brodie, 2018). It is seen that these factors are all combined into one in certain skills of a child's development. For example, 'language and thought are developmentally linked, and each promotes the development of the other' (David et al., 2003:13). It is always important to remember that one child's holistic development will always be different to another child's holistic development. This is because everyone is unique and has their own personal circumstances as to why their development might be slower. (Maslow, 1943) suggests that for a child to develop and reach self-actualisation they need to have the basic needs such as food and water first. According to Grantham-McGregor et al., (2014) children with poor nutritional health are at risk of poor holistic development. This is key in child development because in order for a child to be able to holistically develop, the most basic needs need to be met first. Maslow's work showed the importance of creating enabling environments for children, in order to support a child's holistic development (Early Years TV, no date).

Queen Margaret University (2023) refers to physical development as the advancement in development for an individual's gross motor skills, fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and the all-round wellbeing and health of a child. Both Maslow and Montessori believe that the safety needs of a child are key in holistic development. Maslow observed that children prefer their environments to be safe, predictable and organised, referring to how the 'prepared environment' plays a profound role in physical development (Weinberg, 2012). Children living in an

environment which is frequently chaotic and unpredictable, such as exposure to domestic violence and alcohol and/or drug misuse may be unable to fulfil their safety needs. This is likely to have a negative effect on their holistic development and can have a lifelong impact on reaching self-actualisation. (Langford, 2023) talks of the importance of a healthy diet within an individual's physical development. In order for a child's physical development to thrive, a child needs the correct nutrients for their body and brain to grow. The physical growth of the child will then allow the child to develop further in other areas. Maslow (1943) placed the physiological needs at the base of his hierarchy of needs, seeing this as the most important, in order for an individual to thrive.

Foundation Years (2011) discusses how social development is the ability of an individual to become aware of understanding themselves around others. This includes making friends, understanding that they must follow rules in everyday life and how to behave towards other people. Maslow (1943) named love and belonging as the third need in his Hierarchy of Needs. In order for a child to develop socially, a child has to experience love, nurture and belonging from birth and throughout their childhood. Having had this experience, this enables them to develop bonds and form positive and meaningful relationships with others. Having positive mental health enables a child to deal with life's challenges and regulate their emotions, this helps them to explore, play and learn. This in turn enables them to develop positive mental health throughout their lifetime (Hogg and Moody, 2023). It has been proven that when an individual feels loved, the brain is able to release 'feel good' and 'happy' chemicals. These chemicals/hormones such as oxytocin, dopamine, endorphins, and serotonin each have a role in helping a child's brain develop (Grimmer, 2021). When cortisol (the stress hormone) levels are high, it prevents the neurons in the brain from connecting and developing. It is known that oxytocin is the hormone that counteracts and reduces the levels of cortisol (Colleluori et al., 2022). Dopamine is responsible for many things, such as memory, learning, basic bodily movements and the brains' ability to regulate moods. The presence of dopamine is vital in order for an individual to have a healthy mind and body (The Royal Institution, 2023). Endorphins are produced by the nervous system to manage an individual's pain and stress. If endorphins are present, they are also able to counteract the effects of cortisol on the brain (UNICEF, no date). Bodily functions such as mood, sleep and

digestion are all affected by the chemical serotonin, which carries messages from the brain through the body (NHS, 2021). When there are low levels of serotonin present in a child, Maslow's basic physiological needs cannot be met, and social and emotional development can be impaired. The presence of these four chemicals also contributes to self-esteem, within Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. When a child is played with, they feel valued and are able to feel a sense of accomplishment. This positive interaction helps to boost their self-esteem, helping them to feel love and belongingness (UNICEF, no date).

At the summit of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, is Self-actualisation. This is interpreted as the ability of an individual to reach their full potential (Maslow, 1943). In order for an individual to reach Self-actualisation, all of the other four concepts of the Hierarchy of needs, need to be achieved.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has been useful in teaching; however, it faces criticism that needs to be considered (King-Hill, 2015). Wahba and Bridwell (1976) reviewed the Hierarchy of Needs and found little evidence for the Hierarchy "order" of Needs. Therefore, this questioned whether the Hierarchy of Needs applies to all. It was then argued by Hofstede (1984) that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs does not account for the differences within cultures.

This essay has explored holistic child development and how each level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs; Physiological, Safety and Security, Love/Belonging, Ego/Esteem and Self-Actualization, relate to and determine, both positively and negatively, the processes of physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of children.

Maslow's significance in understanding child development

This essay is going to explore three different examples from early years practice where Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Model could be used in interpreting the effects of different childhood experiences on holistic childhood development.

One example of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs being used in an early year's settings, is the transition of children with additional learning needs (ALN) who are in a mainstream class in school, having to move from reception to year one. As a school it is important that they offer time for the new teacher to meet the children with ALN, in order for the child to become familiar with them. Maslow's love and belonging need supports how every child should experience love and belonging bonds (1943). Reframing Autism (no date) discusses how people with autism can find it really hard to form meaningful and desirable social relations. Therefore, a lot of people with autism do not form these relationships leaving them feeling lonely and uncomfortable in social situations. Another way the school could support the child is allowing the children to become familiar with the new classroom environment, by allowing the children to have daily visits to the new classroom in small groups. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs supports how children have safety and security needs which need to be met, in order for them to develop as individuals (Maslow, 1943). Maslow also talked about when a safety and security need is met, it will lead to the individual preferring what is familiar, rather than what is unknown to them (Pichère and Cadiat, 2015). Wade (2014) discusses how autistic young people find it hard to confide in someone new about their worries and concerns. Allowing the child to feel safe and secure in their new environments, will promote the child to build nurturing and meaningful relationships, allowing them to feel that they confide in them. Another way of preparing a child with ALN with the transition of moving year groups is creating a visual support, for example a visual timetable showing the child what they are doing now, next and throughout the rest of the day. Visual supports are a way of communication that are commonly used when communicating with autistic individuals. They help to show structure to the individual, build confidence, encourage independence, improve their understanding and prevent anxiety and frustration in an individual (National Autistic Society, 2020). If the child has visual support in place, it promotes the child's security and safety needs being met, as they will become more comfortable in their surroundings. Once the child has achieved

their security and safety needs, they are more likely to achieve Self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).

Another example within early years practice which has links to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory is a child aged six, who is attending school despite just been removed from their mother due to safeguarding issues. As early years practitioners, it is important that the child is offered regular nurturing sessions in order for the child to have regular opportunities to express their feelings in a trusted environment. Maslow (1943) advocated that love and belonging are one of the key concepts within the Hierarchy of Needs. A child's love and belonging within a school environment, helps to underpin future positive relationships. It has been identified that school belonging has a positive impact on a child's mental health, well-being, identity development and overall holistic development which is then continued into adulthood (Goodenow and Grady, 2010). Early years practitioners can also ensure that the child's school experience is positive and enjoyable. A child who has been removed from the family might not have received comfort and security in their life, which can have a negative effect on the child's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development (Newman, 2015). This can result in the child finding school a challenging place to be as their development could be slower than their peers resulting in low self-esteem. Maslow (1943) discussed how Ego/Esteem needs need to be met before reaching Self-actualization. In order for a child to fulfil their Ego/Esteem needs, they must have the safety and security needs met by the school first. This will enable the child to be able to learn and feel confident in their work, achieving Maslow's Ego/Esteem concept.

A third example of early years practice linking to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory is, a child with autism who arrives at school via taxi but when a teacher greets them every morning, they have a 'meltdown' and refuses to leave the taxi. The child arrives early to school so attends breakfast club every day. To ensure that the transition into school is easy for the child, the early years practitioners could ensure that the same teacher is meeting the child every morning, in order for the child to have a routine. Jolliffe (1992) expressed how everyday reality to an autistic child can be very confusing and can become chaotic in a child's mind and that it is vital that everything is kept the same to reduces fears in a child's mind. Maslow (1943) highlighted the importance of love and belonging in an individual's life, in order to reach the top of the hierarchy of needs, Self-actualization. Early years practitioners

can ensure that the food provided in breakfast club is liked by the individual child, therefore giving the child the want to come into school. According to the BBC (no date) children with autism can be very fussy with what they eat. This means being sensitive to texture, colour, tastes and smells of food. It is important that the child's likes and dislikes of food is known by the school prior to the child attending breakfast club. Maslow (1943) discussed the importance of an individual's physiological needs being met first, before the child is able to progress up through the hierarchy of needs. The physiological needs are the first needs a human relies on in order for their body to fully function (Wu and Han (2021). This emphasises the importance of food within the physiological needs, before being expected to achieve Self-actualization.

This essay has explored and analysed how the concepts of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory is intertwined daily within early years practice. Holistic child development is dependent on the fulfilment of each of the concepts within Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory.

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