

## Hierarchy of Human Needs: A Humanistic Psychology Approach of Abraham Maslow

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### ABSTRACT

*This research describes the multilevel needs theory in Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology. This research uses descriptive analytical method and is a literature review. Humanistic psychology is the third school in psychology after psychoanalysis as the first school and behaviorism as the second school. Unlike the previous second school, Abraham Maslow did not use people with neurotic symptoms and monkeys as objects of his observation. He made normal humans to observe personality which he later built into a theory of stratified needs. The stages in the hierarchy of needs theory are physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs. The result showed that humans have stages to reach the peak of existence which are interrelated with each other. If a stage has not been fulfilled, then he can not proceed to the next stage until the peak reaches the stage of self-actualization. This stage makes humans feel fully themselves while at the same time having fulfilled the basic needs in their lives.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Principally, humans have needs in filling their life activities. These needs psychologically become part of humans because they also have feelings for themselves and others. One of these human needs is the desire to eat, drink, have a house, get married, have a family, be part of the community, have brotherhood and sisterhood, and have a good career (McLeod, 2007).

A psychologist named Abraham Maslow assumes that humans are reasonable creatures, so they have the right to realize their identity to achieve self-actualization. They try to fulfill and express their potential and talents which are often disturbed by the conditions of society that reject them. According to Maslow, human behavior is more determined by the individual's tendency to achieve goals, live happier, and at the same time get satisfaction (Minderop, 2010).

Abraham Maslow is one of the most influential psychologists of the twentieth century (Frager, 1987). One of his contributions to psychology was his advances in humanistic psychology and his development in the hierarchy of needs (Celestine, 2017). He emphasized that although we are affected by unfortunate childhood experiences, we are not permanent victims of those experiences. We can change, grow, and achieve high psychological health. In the humanistic view, humans have more potential than they can achieve (Minderop, 2010).

Maslow became a well-known psychology figure with much of his work in the West. He completed research on self-fulfillment of their very specific original intentions, such as to identify human beings, to make outstanding contributions to society of people with similar personality characteristics, to identify some of the positive human potential values of their goals (Liu & Han, 2013).

Maslow's thoughts in the field of humanistic psychology, with his theory on the hierarchy of needs, are interesting to discuss. This is because humanistic psychology – as the word humanist- examines the real human personality (Bouzenita & Boulanouar, 2016), which is different with the psychoanalysis and behaviorism in the two previous schools of psychology. Humanistic psychology offers an approach in which each step is based on observations of humans.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

Research methods are the procedures used in research that include thinking and acting to achieve certain research objectives (Kartini, 1996). The research method used is descriptive-analytical by describing the data and then analyzing it. This research is a type of library research that collecting various kinds of information from books, magazines, articles, and various related sources (Mardalis, 2008). The author filters all of these sources to produce accurate data that can accommodate substantial and essential forms of policy.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Biography of Abraham Maslow

Abraham Maslow was the eldest of seven children. He was born in Brooklyn, New York, on April 1, 1908. All his degrees were obtained at Wisconsin University, where he studied the behavior of apes. For 14 years (1937-1951) he was on the teaching staff of Brooklyn College. In 1951, Maslow went to Brandeis University where he remained until 1969, when he became a permanent member of the Laughlin Foundation in Menlo Park, California (Hall & Lindzey, 1993).

#### 3.1.1. Abraham Maslow's Childhood

As a child Abraham Maslow was the only Jewish boy in a non-Jewish village on the outskirts of Brooklyn (Schachter-Shalomi, 2012). He stated that it was like being the first nigger to be in a school where all the pupils were white children. As soon as Maslow's youth set out to mature, he began to admire the works of philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Plato and Spinoza.

However, not all of his first years of his life were spent studying alone, because he also has practical experience. He started working at an early age as a newspaper delivery man. He spent his summer vacations in the family-owned company, which happened to be still managed by his brothers and sisters to this day (Sisodia et al., 2003). The venture is now a large and successful drum-making company, Universal Containers, Inc.

He married at a young age when he was 20 years old while his wife was 19 years old. According to Maslow, life began for him only after he married and continued studying in Wisconsin (Poston, 2009). According to him, meeting J.B. Watson made him immediately fall in love with behaviorism. It was truly an explosion of joy for Maslow. There he studied apes under Professor Harry Harlow, and wrote his dissertation on sexual characteristics and power traits in apes.

However, as his reading of Gestalt psychology and Freudian psychology grew, his enthusiasm for behaviorism began to wane. Furthermore, from the presence of his first son Abraham Maslow got an important discovery. That experience had made the behaviorism that Maslow had been fond of looking so stupid that it made him sick of it. Maslow emphasized that a person with children cannot be a behaviorist (Sisodia et al., 2003).

### **3.1.2. Abraham Maslow's Academic Journey**

In the 30s, the Maslows returned to New York, and he became a professor of psychology at Brooklyn College. At that time, New York City was a special place. He called it the center of the world of psychology. It was there that he had the most memorable learning experience of his life. At that time, New York City was fantastic. After Athens, no other city can match it. He thought that he knew more or less every single scholar there. The names of the characters mentioned in the introduction to his writings are the characters he was most grateful to and whom he knew most closely. He could not say one of them was more important than the other. He has learned from everyone and from anyone who has something to teach him. Hence, he cannot be called a Goldstein follower, From follower, Adler follower, or other followers (Richards, 2017).

December 7th, 1941, changed the course of Maslow's life, as did millions of others around the world. In contrast to the atmosphere of war-torn times, in the beginning of World War II, he decided to devote the rest of his life to a comprehensive theory of human behavior that benefited the psychology for a peaceful life based on real facts that all human beings can accept. He began to synthesize all the points of view he had studied. He wanted to prove that humans are capable of something nobler than war, prejudice, and hatred. He wants to make science something that also covers all issues that have been involved by non-scientists, namely religion, poetry, values, philosophy, and art.

A significant influence that colored Maslow's thinking was his experiences with the Northern Blackfoot Indians in Alberta, Canada. With financial assistance from The Social Science Research Council, Maslow lived among the Indians for one summer. His ethnological observations made him aware that hostility and destructiveness varied between 0% and 100% of the various primitive civilizations. And, although he admits that the scope is inadequate, the results of his research on the Blackfoot Indians have made Maslow believe that hostility towards humans is more the fruit of civilization than nature (Sisodia et al., 2003).

He said that during his stay among them, he never once experienced cruelty or other forms of covert aggression directed at him. He also observed that it was very rare for children to be physically punished, and the Indians looked down on white people for their cruelty to their children and neighbors (Goble, 1987; Richards, 2017).

### **3.1.3. Abraham Maslow' Works**

In the 30s, the Maslows returned to New York, and he became a professor of psychology at Brooklyn College. At that time, New York City was a special place. He called it the center of the world of psychology. It was there that he had the most memorable learning experience of his life. At that time, New York City was fantastic. After Athens, no other city can match it. He thought that he knew more or less every single scholar there. The names of the characters mentioned in the introduction to his writings are the characters he was most grateful to and whom he knew most closely. He could not say one of them was more important than the other. He has learned from everyone and from anyone who has something to teach him. Hence, he cannot be called a Goldstein follower, From follower, Adler follower, or other followers (Richards, 2017).

## **3.2. Humanistic Psychology**

Humanistic psychology is the third personality psychology theory after psychoanalysis and behavioristic psychology. These kinds of psychology are not satisfying with behavioristic psychology and psychoanalysis. So, it was necessary to look for an alternative psychology that focuses on humans with the characteristics of their existence. Abraham Maslow is the second important figure in humanistic psychology. Unlike Rogers, Maslow was not a therapist. His career began as a perpetrator theorist, but after the birth of his first daughter, he rejected the idea that the mysteries of child development could be explained through a simple learning process. Like Rogers, Maslow tried to find human development (Walgitto, 2010).

He was critical of Freud and other personality theorists who sought to understand the nature of personality by studying only neurotics and severely disturbed individuals. Maslow concluded that all humans are born with instinctive needs. Universal needs drive us to grow and develop, actualize ourselves, and become as far as we can (Minderop, 2010).

He has put forward a theory of human motivation that distinguishes between primary and meta needs. Basic needs include hunger, affection (affection), security, self-esteem, and so on. Meta-needs include justice, goodness, beauty, order, unity, and so on. (Hall & Lindzey, 1993).

### 3.3. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Abraham Maslow is considered the Father of Humanistic Psychology. His theory on the philosophies of humanism and existentialism proposes that the unique experience of the individual is the most important phenomenon in the study and analysis of human behavior. He was a tireless optimist, maintained a very positive view of people, and valued human kindness, dignity, and intelligence. A strong believer in free will and human power, he emphasizes the ideas of choice, value, creativity, and self-realization (*Abraham Maslow's Humanistic Psychology*, 2020).

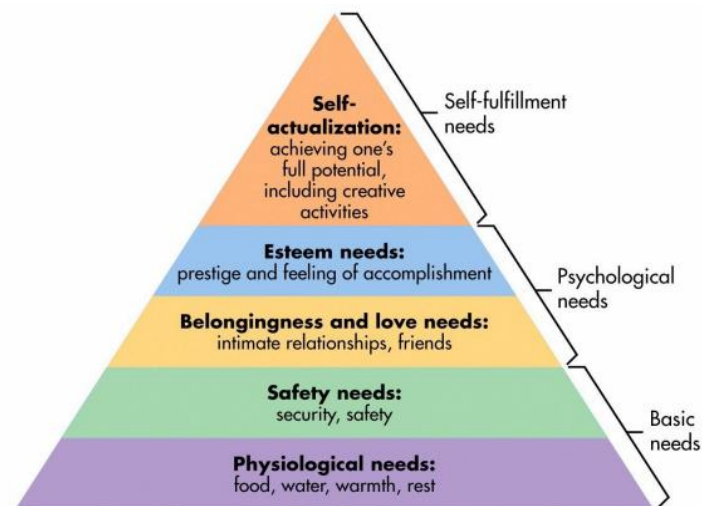


Figure 1. Maslow' Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid  
Source: (McLeod, 2007)

Maslow developed a theory of human motivation whose purpose is to explain all kinds of human needs and order them according to the level of human priority in their fulfillment. He distinguishes D-needs or deficiency needs that arise from the need for food, sleep, security, and so on, while, B-needs or being needs such as the desire to fulfill one's potential (Jarvis, 2000).

The order of fulfillment of needs from Maslow's hierarchy of needs is according to the order running from bottom to top (Wu, 2012). The basic needs are at the bottom, and the meta needs are at the top.

#### 3.3.1. Physiological Needs

As a child Abraham Maslow was the only Jewish boy in a non-Jewish village on the outskirts of Brooklyn (Schachter-Shalomi, 2012). He stated that it was like being the first nigger to be in a school where all the pupils were white children. As soon as Maslow's youth set out to mature, he began to admire the works of philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Plato and Spinoza.

#### 3.3.2. Safety Needs

Humans fulfill safety needs after physiological needs are met. This second need is closely related to the guarantee of security, stability of protection, structure, order, predictable situations, free from fear, anxiety, and others. This need can be realized after the fulfillment of physiological needs. This need for security is usually satisfied in normal and healthy adults, so the best way to understand it is to observe children or adults with neurotic disorders (Goble, 1987).

#### 3.3.3. The Need for Possession and Love

The need for affection is a need to pursue affection from others, such as family, relatives, and lovers. In addition, one will strive to achieve this goal by belonging to the group. However, when one still feels hungry, he scorns love as unreal, unnecessary, or unimportant (Goble, 1987). In other words, when the physiological and safety needs are met, the needs for love, affection, and belonging emerge.

### 3.3.4. Appreciation Needs

The need for esteem is one of the hierarchies, which is the fourth level after the three previous needs are met. Maslow found that everyone has two categories of need for esteem: namely, self-esteem and respect from others. Self-esteem includes the need for confidence, competence, assignment, adequacy, achievement, independence, and freedom. Then the appreciation needs from others include prestige, recognition, acceptance, attention, position, good name, and awards (Goble, 1987).

### 3.3.5. Self-Actualization Needs

The need for self-actualization is at the top of the hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow, these needs will usually be met after the needs for love and respect have been met. This self-actualization need is where a person can be himself as he wants without any restraints, intervention, or anything that makes him not free to express what he has. Humanistic psychology aims to help humans decide what they want and help fulfill their potential (Jarvis, 2000). Human can freely show their existence without any restraints and narrowing of thoughts and actions, so they can feel fully human, and that is the peak stage of the concept of a hierarchy of needs.

The explanation of the psychological need to grow, develop and use abilities, which Maslow called self-actualization, is one of the important aspects of the theory of motivation in humans. He also described this need as "the desire to become more and more fully oneself based on one's abilities". He found that self-actualization needs usually arise after the needs for love and esteem are met (Goble, 1987).

## 4. CONCLUSION

Based on this explanation, it concluded that Abraham Maslow is a prominent figure in humanistic psychology. Humanistic psychology is the third personality psychology theory that emerged after psychoanalysis and behavioristic psychology. Little Maslow was the only Jewish boy in a non-Jewish ghetto on the outskirts of Brooklyn. As a teenager, he began to admire the works of philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Plato and Spinoza. He married at a young age, when he was 20 years old, while his wife was 19 years old. After marriage, he continued to study in Wisconsin. He met J.B. Watson and got him interested in behaviorism. However, his enthusiasm for behaviorism began to wane as his reading of Gestalt psychology, and Freudian psychology grew. After the arrival of his first child, he became increasingly disinterested in behaviorism. Therefore, he made a theory of stratified needs. Through the theory of stratified needs, he provides a novelty in the world of personality psychology. The hierarchy of needs consists of five stages: physiological needs, security needs, belonging and belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs which make a person become a complete human being.

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