

How psychological perspectives relate to child development and behaviour:

The humanistic approach

Approach and theorists

Humanistic:

Rogers, Maslow

Key words:

- Biological
- Physiological
- Fulfilment
- Esteem
- Self-actualisation

Key aspects of the approach or theory relating to children's development and behaviour

- Carl Rogers proposed a humanistic approach to psychology as he was searching for a new theory that matched his research observations and beliefs. Although he was the first to use this approach, it was Maslow who invented the term 'humanistic psychology'.
- Maslow's theory is based around the need for humans to find a state of fulfilment called self-actualisation, where a person achieves the highest level of their capability.
- Maslow's most famous theory is the hierarchy of needs; he believes that humans all have the same needs and these must be met in a certain order.
- He presents these needs in the form of a pyramid, with an individual's most basic physical needs at the bottom and the state of self-actualisation at the top. Each step of the pyramid must be fulfilled before moving on to the next higher level of needs.

Application of the approach for childcare practitioners and educators in schools and settings

For a child to be successful in school, they need to be well fed, sleeping well, feeling safe at home and have confidence in themselves. Maslow's hierarchy of needs helps practitioners understand how to meet children's specific needs. Biological and physiological needs must be met first. If children are hungry or tired, they have difficulty concentrating. Therefore, it is important to meet these needs before encouraging them to play, listen to a story or complete work.

Once basic needs are met, children may be more aware of separation anxiety or fear of new activities relating to the safety and security stage. Belongingness needs can be met in settings as children will be able to make friends or form attachments to a key person.

The fourth stage – esteem – relates to children's needs to gain independence, self-respect or achievements. Children benefit from being praised for their work or being able to accomplish something on their own, such as tying their shoes or eating their snack. Self-actualisation is the realisation of personal potential. This develops over time as a sense of contentment with one's self and situation.

All of children's developmental needs are encompassed in Maslow's theory – physical development, emotional development, social development, and cognitive and language development.