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SELF-ACTUALIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

Abstract. *Humanistic psychology has involved scientific research of human behavior since its inception. Humanistic psychology by the process of realizing and expressing one's own capabilities and creativity. Humanist thinkers argued that there is a biological essence in human nature that precedes existence. The research underlines the self-actualization theories of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. Humanistic psychology was made popular in the 1950's. In this study has been evaluated the concept of self-actualization in the Humanistic Psychology. In this context was conducted a literature review.*

Key words: *Humanist theory, A. Maslow, K. Rogers, self-actualization.*

Research Type: *Review.*

Анотація. *Гуманістична психологія займається науковим дослідженням людської поведінки з моменту свого виникнення. Гуманістична психологія розглядає процес реалізації та вираження власних здібностей та творчості. Гуманістичні мислителі стверджували, що в людській природі існує біологічна сутність, яка передує існуванню. Дослідження підкреслює теорії самоактуалізації Абрахама Маслоу та Карла Роджерса. Гуманістична психологія стала популярною в 1950-х роках. У цьому дослідженні було оцінено концепцію самоактуалізації в гуманістичній психології. У цьому контексті було проведено огляд літератури.*

Ключові слова: гуманістична теорія, А. Маслоу, К. Роджерс, самоактуалізація.

Тип дослідження: Огляд.

Introduction. Humanistic psychology gained traction due to A. Maslow in the 1950's during the time of the humanistic movement. Humanistic psychology is aimed at maximizing freedom to choose. Humanistic theorists believed that human nature is inherently good. But this was not an abstract metaphysical concept, but rather a characteristic grounded on our very biological being. Thus, they spoke of «growth» and «self-actualization», hoping that their studies would help bring out the best in us (Asikaer, 2021: 25) [1]. K. Rogers and A. Maslow introduced humanistic psychology in response to what they viewed as the overly pessimistic view of psychoanalysis (Schacter, Gilbert & Wegner, 2011) [9]. Humanistic psychology begins with the existential assumption that people have free will.

Humanistic psychology and the larger Humanistic movement have sought to explore and understand the fullness, complexity, and diversity of human experience. An individual is viewed as a whole person who possesses free-will, seeks freedom, and is capable of change. In this perspective, human nature is viewed as essentially positive and when provided supportive conditions, is oriented toward constructive personal growth (www.sciencedirect.com).

The purpose of the article is to reveal self-actualization in the context of humanistic psychology through a review of the specialized literature.

Method. In this study was conducted a literature review.

Research Results. Literature review.

Conceptual Origins. Humanistic psychology tends to look beyond the medical model of psychology in order to open up a non-pathologizing view of the person. Humanistic psychology tries to be a science of human experience, focusing on the actual lived experience of persons. Therefore, a key ingredient is the actual meeting of therapist and client and the possibilities for dialogue to ensue between them. The

role of the therapist is to create an environment where the client can freely express any thoughts or feelings; he does not suggest topics for conversation nor does he guide the conversation in any way. The therapist also does not analyze or interpret the client's behavior or any information the client shares. The role of the therapist is to provide empathy and to listen attentively to the client (Geoffrey, Douglas & Vicki, 2009) [4]. A. Maslow emphasized the necessity of a "third force" that as a critical review towards the cold and distant approach of the psychoanalysis and its deterministic way of viewing the human being (Clay, 2002; www.apa.org/monitor) [3; 12].

Five basic principles of humanistic psychology

- Human beings, as human, supersede the sum of their parts. They cannot be reduced to components
- Human beings have their existence in a uniquely human context, as well as in a cosmic ecology
- Human beings are aware and are aware of being aware—i.e., they are conscious. Human consciousness always includes an awareness of oneself in the context of other people
- Human beings have the ability to make choices and therefore have responsibility
- Human beings are intentional, aim at goals, are aware that they cause future events, and seek meaning, value, and creativity (Greening, 2006; Benjafield, 2010) [5; 2].

Major Theorists of Humanistic Psychology

These theorists include Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Otto Rank and Rollo May. However, Rogers and Maslow both describe different ways which self-actualization can be achieved. In this study are included only the views of Maslow and Rogers.

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970). In regards to humanistic theory, Maslow developed a hierarchy of needs. This is a pyramid which basically states that individuals first must have their physiological needs met, then safety, then love, then self-esteem and lastly self-actualization. Maslow developed his theory he decided to focus on the conscious (rather than the unconscious) and decided to develop a theory to explain how all individuals could reach their highest potential ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanistic psychology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanistic_psychology)) [11]. Abraham Maslow proposed many of his theories of human growth in the form of testable hypotheses, and he encouraged scientists to put them to the test (Maslow, 1962; 1967) [7; 8].

According to Maslow, people also have needs which must be met for self-actualization to be possible. The basic needs e.g. food and water have to be satisfied before the higher psychological and emotional needs. This is shown in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Self-actualization is only possible if there is congruence between the way an individual sees themselves and their ideal self (the way they want to be or think they should be). If there is a large gap between these two concepts, negative feelings of self-worth will arise that will make it impossible for self-actualization to take place.

People are motivated to self-actualize: Major humanistic psychologists such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow believed that human beings were born with the desire to grow, create and to love, and had the power to direct their own lives.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is shown in Figure 1.

From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards, the needs are: physiological (food and clothing), safety (job security), love and belonging needs (friendship), esteem, and self-actualization. Lower-level basic needs like food, water, and safety must be met first before higher needs can be fulfilled (<https://www.simplypsychology.org/humanistic.html>) [13].

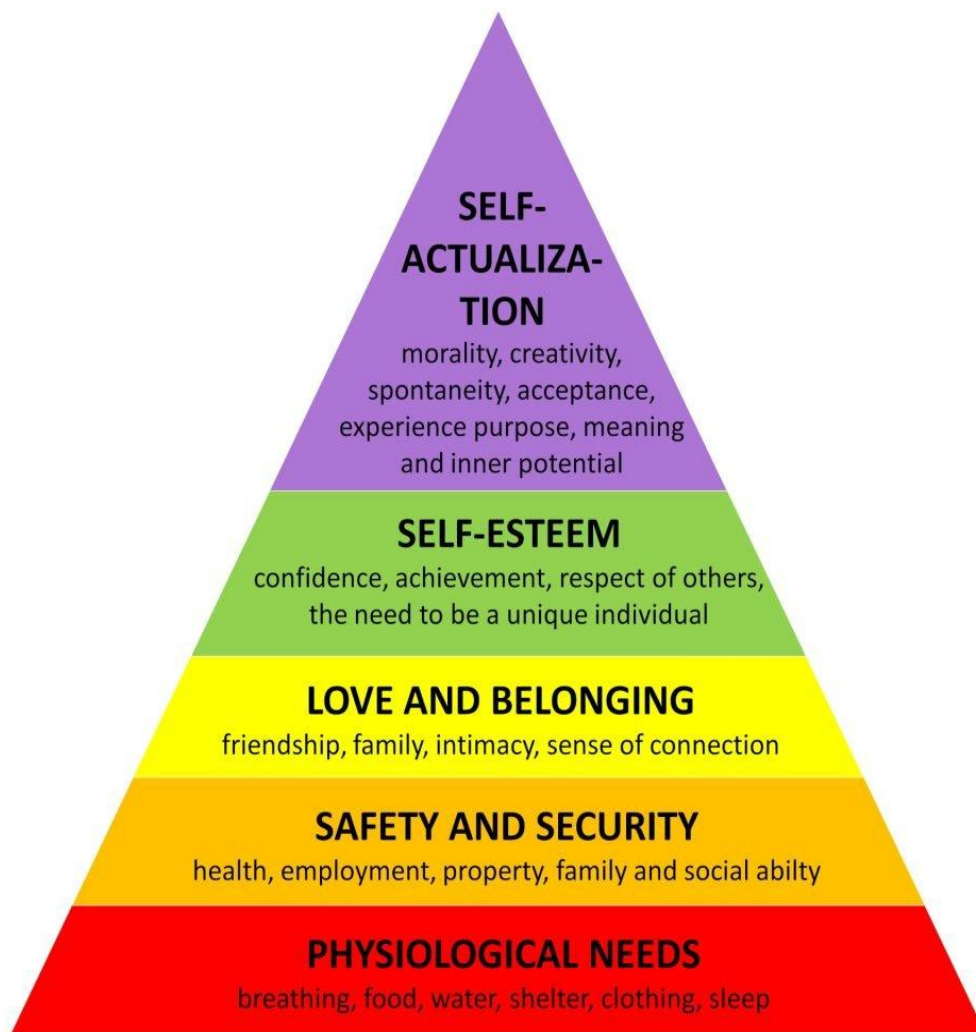


Fig. 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Carl Rogers (1902-1987). Rogers built upon Maslow's theory and argued that the process of self-actualization is nurtured in a growth promoting climate. Two conditions are required in order for a climate to be a self-actualizing growth promoting climate: the individual must be able to be their genuine self, and as the individual expresses their true self, they must be accepted by others. Carl Rogers came to believe that political life did not have to consist of an endless series of winner-take-all battles, that it could and should consist of an ongoing dialogue among all parties. If such dialogue were characterized by respect among the parties

and authentic speaking by each party, compassionate understanding and – ultimately – mutually acceptable solutions could be reached (Thorne & Sanders, 2012) [10].

Self-actualization in Carl Rogers Carl Rogers (1902–1987) was also an American psychologist who is especially well known for client-centered therapy. He emphasized the potential for good that exists within all people like Maslow. Alongside Maslow, he is one of the forerunners of humanist psychology. Rogers was given an opportunity to initiate a counseling center at the University of Chicago in 1944. Carl Rogers used a therapeutic technique known as client-centred therapy in helping his clients deal with problematic issues which lead to seek psychotherapy. He then published «*Client Centered Therapy*» (1951) in which he described the theory that highlights his approach to understanding human relationships. Rogers greatest contribution may lie in his encouraging a humane treatment of persons, which emphasized empathy. A decade later he wrote on «*Becoming a Person*» (1961) a combination of papers on a group of issues concerning his basic approach to understanding self-growth and development. Rogers tried to point out the revolutionary effect of his person-centered approach on more particularly psychotherapy, education, and family life. He, furthermore, argued the implications of his approach for the emergence of a new type of self-empowered person. Self-actualization was presented in the context of Rogers' first major theoretical statement which appeared in client centered therapy «The organism has one basic tendency striving—to actualize, maintain, and enhance the experiencing organism». «This tender of the organism to maintain itself ... and achieve the goal of selfmaintenance even when the usual pathway to that goal is blocked.... This involves self-actualization, though it should be understood» (Asikaer, 2021: 16-17) [1].

Carl Rogers adopted this self-actualization conception and integrated it into his humanistically oriented psychotherapy system. Rogers as one of the founders of humanistic psychology and the father of person centered therapy, believed the main healing force in psychotherapy is: «... man's tendency to actualize himself, to

become his potentialities... the directional trend which is evident in all organic and human life - the urge to expand, extend, develop, mature- the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism, or the self». Rogers referred to the tendency toward self-actualization, which was described as a basic motivational tendency toward optimal growth and adaptation. Rogers stated that, «Ideas similar to this proposition are being increasingly advanced and accepted by psychologists and others. The term ‘self-actualization’ is used by Goldstein (1940) to describe this one basic striving». Clients were described in terms of their struggles in therapy, concluding that, «When all the elements are clearly perceived, the balance seems invariably in the direction of the painful but ultimately rewarding path of selfactualization or growth» (Asikaer, 2021: 16 -17) [1].

«The one basic tendency and striving of the individual is to actualize, maintain, and enhance the experiencing of the individual or, in other words, an actualizing tendency. For Rogers, all organic and psychological needs may be described as partial aspects of this one fundamental need». The movement of this basic need is toward self-responsibility and autonomy and away from Control by external forces. Rogers’ theory of motivation emerged from his observations of clients’ growth and development within the therapeutic relationship. «Carl Rogers is probably the most influential humanistic psychologist. He has discovered that the therapist can provide certain conditions that help remove the conditions of worth and restore the organismic valuing process, so that individuals can become fully functioning».

The necessary and sufficient conditions for healing and wholeness are the following:

➤ **Unconditional Positive Regard.** This means accepting the clients regardless of the nature of their struggles, without judgment or condemnation. This will undo the harm of conditional positive regard and expose them to the healing power of acceptance, openness, and trust that come from unconditional love.

➤ **Empathy.** This means that the counselor is present with the clients, trying to understand the inner struggles and their world of meanings. It can be very

therapeutic when the clients experience that someone listens to them, understands them and cares about how they think and feel (Hannah, 2019) [6].

➤ **Genuineness (Congruence).** This means that the counselor is genuine and congruent and the therapeutic relationship is an honest genuine one. 36 According to Rogers, self-actualized person is a «Fully Functioning" person». It is included in Rogers' theory as «*Self-actualization Tendency*» (Asikaer, 2021: 19) [1].

Conclusions. Maslow argues that every human must fulfill his basic needs which he describes in a pyramidal system. The self-actualization as the goal of a human being is on the top of this hierarchical scheme. Maslow regards man as a growth oriented being. Other than the mentioned condition of self-actualization; Maslow refers to a healthy society to fulfill this higher goal. However, he underlines that this higher fulfillment of man cannot be achieved by any human but rather only a few of people. Carl Rogers was also an American psychologist who, like Maslow, emphasized the potential for good that exists within all people. Alongside A. Maslow, he is one of the forerunners of humanist psychology. He is especially well known for non directive or client-centered therapy. Carl Rogers adopted this self-actualization conception and integrated it into his humanistically oriented psychotherapy system. Rogers felt actualizing tendency best described the unfolding of human potential. He witnessed in his interviews with clients. This construct postulates that all living organisms are continually actualizing their potentials, even under unfavorable circumstances. «The tendency of normal life is toward activity and progress. For the sick, the only form of self-actualization that remains is the maintenance of the existent state. That, however, is not the tendency of the normal. Under adequate conditions, the normal organism seeks further activity». Rogers did not see the goal of the self-actualization tendency to be the state of peak experience or mystical union described by Maslow. Rogers contributed to our understanding of the issues involving the will to actualize when he discussed the factors involved in choice. He believed that the forward moving tendency could not operate unless there is clear awareness of the different choices that can be made, the options that are

available for actualization behaviors or for regressive ones. He emphasized the importance of the therapist in helping guide his clients in the discovery of the choices open to them in any situation.

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