


# Chapter 9

## Exploring the Influence of Humanistic Psychology on Adult Education Practices

**Adnan Mohammad Farah**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7986-2479>

*University of Bahrain, Bahrain*

### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter explores the premise that humanistic psychology has demonstrably influenced adult education practices, including the background of humanistic psychology, key figures, theoretical frameworks, core principles, humanistic psychology and adult learning theory, the impact of humanistic psychology on adult teaching and learning, impact on pedagogical practices, promoting self-directed learning, adult learning autonomy, enhancing learning motivation and engagement, and challenges and future directions for applying humanistic psychology to adult education.*

### **BACKGROUND OF HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY**

Humanistic psychology, developed in the 1950s, is often regarded as the “third force” in American psychology. At the time, behaviorism—a well-researched and documented psychological approach—and psychoanalysis, which primarily focused on unconscious processes and chaotic behavior, dominated the field as the leading mental health systems. Psychodynamic psychotherapy emerged as the therapeutic method of psychoanalysis. However, despite years of research and practice, these two approaches failed to gain widespread acceptance, leading to the rise of human-

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istic psychotherapy as a mid-20th-century innovation. The growing popularity of humanistic psychology helped the ideas of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow reach a wider audience than traditional psychoanalysis.

Humanistic psychology was influenced by philosophers and psychologists such as Carl Rogers, Clara Ful Heeren, Erik Erickson, William Glasser, Abraham Maslow, George Thompson, and Wayne Orna. It advocates for the study of healthy mental functioning, with Maslow identifying the hierarchy of human needs: physiological, safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. After the 1960s, humanistic psychology became increasingly influential in psychological and self-help teaching circles (Andersen, 2020; Bland, 2023; Frank, 2021; Snyder et al., 2002).

## **Key Figures**

In response to the limitations of behaviorism and psychoanalysis, humanistic psychology emerged in the mid-20th century. This approach offers a more positive and holistic view of human nature, emphasizing the inherent goodness of people, personal growth, and self-actualization. Several influential figures, including Rollo May, Abraham Maslow, and Carl Rogers, played pivotal roles in the development and acceptance of humanistic psychology. Each of these theorists brought unique perspectives and approaches that helped shape the field.

### **Carl Rogers: The Person-Centered Approach**

Carl Rogers (1902–1987) is arguably the most well-known figure in humanistic psychology. His person-centered approach to therapy revolutionized the field by prioritizing the client’s perspective over the therapist’s interpretations. Rogers believed that a supportive therapeutic environment—characterized by genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and empathetic understanding—was essential. In such an environment, individuals are more likely to achieve self-actualization and personal growth (Rogers, 1961).

### **Abraham Maslow: The Hierarchy of Needs**

Abraham Maslow (1908–1970) is best known for his hierarchy of needs theory, which provides a framework for understanding human motivation. Maslow (1943) proposed that motivation is driven by a hierarchy of needs, starting with physiological requirements and progressing through safety, love and belonging, esteem, and ulti-

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