

EPIC Transformations: Redefining Career Paths for Solo Parents in the New Era by Leveraging the Te Whare Tapa Whā Framework- a Māori Healthcare Model

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the unique integration of the Te Whare Tapa Whā framework—a Māori healthcare model—into a career development program for solo parents. By blending insights from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model and contemporary research, we present a comprehensive approach that combines modern theories with indigenous wisdom. The paper details how EPIC Empower—a career development program aligned with these frameworks—offers robust support catering to the physiological, psychological, and spiritual needs of solo parents, ensuring their well-being throughout their career journey.

INTRODUCTION

Owing to their unique circumstances, solo parents often encounter significant challenges in their career development. These challenges necessitate a comprehensive support system that effectively addresses their diverse well-being needs. While traditional frameworks such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model provide foundational insights, they often fail to comprehensively address the holistic requirements of solo parents. The EPIC program, leveraging the Te Whare Tapa Whā framework—a Māori healthcare model

developed by Sir Mason Durie—offers an inclusive and effective approach to well-being. This paper delves into how the EPIC Empower program equips solo parents, enabling them to navigate and thrive in the modern job market by addressing their physical, psychological, family, and spiritual needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Model

Maslow's model, deeply rooted within Western individualistic culture, posits that individuals possess a series of hierarchical needs, from physiological and safety needs

to love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. In contrast, numerous indigenous and collectivistic cultures, such as the Māori culture, perceive the fulfilment of needs and overall well-being as a collective responsibility, emphasizing the importance of community and relationships. By leveraging the Te Whare Tapa Whā framework, the EPIC program acknowledges and respects this cultural context, offering a more comprehensive and culturally sensitive approach to career development for solo parents.

For some, esteem may outweigh love, and others may self-actualize despite challenging circumstances. Our behaviors are often motivated by multiple needs simultaneously rather than following a strict hierarchy (Tay & Diener, 2011). This observation underscores the cultural specificity of human needs, which are not universally uniform across cultures and individuals.

Te Whare Tapa Whā Framework

Developed by Sir Mason Durie, the Te Whare Tapa Whā framework comprises four dimensions of well-being: Taha Tinana (physical health), Taha Hinengaro (mental health), Taha Whānau (family health), and Taha Wairua (spiritual health). Each dimension is integral to the holistic health of an individual, akin to the four walls of a house, and the balance among these dimensions is crucial for overall well-being (Durie, 1994).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model is a well-recognized foundational model, offering a straightforward framework for understanding and addressing various levels of needs. Its integration with the Te Whare Tapa Whā framework in the EPIC program ensures a comprehensive support system for solo parents, addressing their diverse and multifaceted needs.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Objectives, Structure, and Methodology

The EPIC program aims to empower solo parents by providing comprehensive career development support. EPIC is structured into four key stages and stands for empowerment, preparation, inclusion, and collaboration, each aligning with the dimensions of the Te Whare Tapa Whā framework.

Te Whare Tapa Whā Framework

The Te Whare Tapa Whā framework conceptualizes well-being as a whareniui or meeting house, with its four walls representing the four dimensions of holistic well-being. Individuals thrive when all four walls of the whareniui or all four dimensions of well-being are balanced. When one or more walls fall out of balance, the overall well-being of the individual is affected.

Taha Hinengaro (mental and emotional health)

This dimension encompasses the well-being of the mind, heart, consciousness, thoughts, and feelings. It involves connecting with these different parts and understanding how they affect the overall well-being.

Taha Tinana (physical health)

This dimension focuses on physical health, including how the body feels, how it is cared for, and how it is nurtured. Physical health is interconnected with all other dimensions of well-being; hence, attending to the needs of these areas positively impacts physical health.

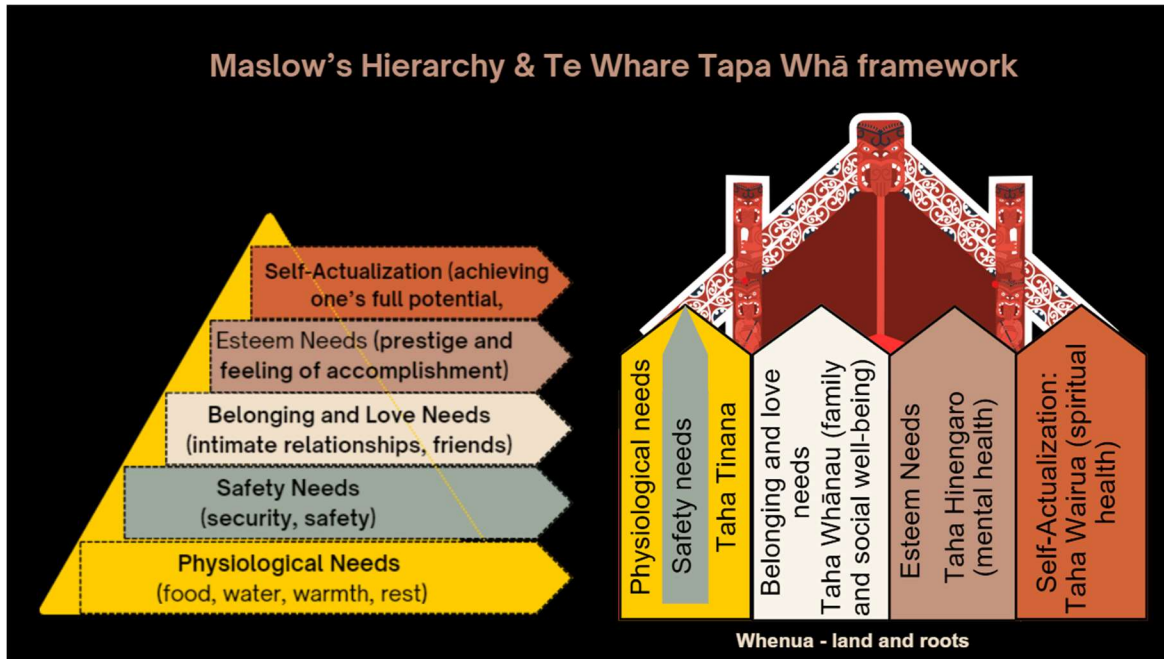
Taha Whānau (family health)

This dimension represents family/whānau, including relationships within the family, extended family, wider social circles, friends, hapū, iwi, and community. The quality of these relationships is crucial for well-being.

Taha Wairua (spiritual health)

This dimension explores an individual’s spiritual health and connection with heritage,

environment, beliefs, values, and traditions. Maintaining connections with spiritual health sources is essential for overall well-being.



Application to the EPIC Program
Empowerment—Taha Hinengaro (mental and emotional health)

EPIC assists participants in discovering their career motivators and values, promoting a healthy mindset toward the world of work. Individuals gain a deeper understanding of their life values, work values, career motivators, fields of interest, functional skills, and competencies, all contributing toward enhanced mental and emotional well-being.

The EPIC program fosters self-awareness and emotional intelligence among participants, with personal narratives highlighting significant mental and emotional growth. This development enables individuals to make more informed and confident career decisions, helping solo parents recognize and harness their strengths, build resilience, and set realistic goals.

Preparation—Taha Tinana (physical health)

The preparation stage focuses on developing essential skills for career growth. This includes curriculum vitae preparation, communication, networking, understanding workplace culture, and adapting to hybrid/remote working environments. Prioritizing physical health in career practice involves maintaining a healthy work–life balance, engaging in self-care practices, and recognizing the impact of physical well-being on job performance. Addressing physical health needs can enhance productivity and overall career satisfaction.

Inclusion—Taha Whānau (family health)

Considering family and social health in career practice involves understanding the influence of relationships, support systems, and community connections on career decisions. Recognizing the importance of social connections and family support contributes to the development of a more holistic approach to career development. The inclusion stage fosters diversity and a sense of belonging by connecting participants with the wider community and supporting them through ongoing collaboration and partnerships.

Collaboration—Taha Wairua (spiritual health)

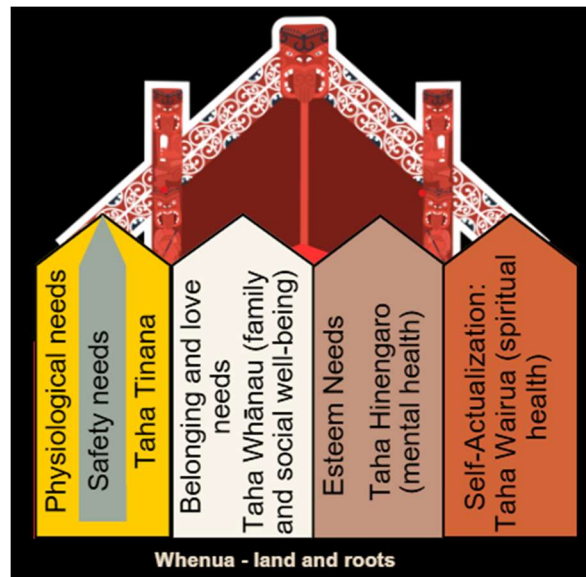
The EPIC program emphasizes the importance of connecting with one's identity by recognizing one's worth. Incorporating spiritual health consideration in career practice involves aligning career choices with one's values, beliefs, and a sense of purpose, thus fostering fulfilment and meaning in professional lives.

Mothers who derive satisfaction from their work, take pride in their achievements, and accomplish professional fulfilment can enhance their self-worth and nurture a stronger spiritual bond with their children.

This holistic approach ensures that career development is not solely about economic stability but also about enriching personal and familial connections, contributing to overall well-being. This stage also aims at building a supportive community to enhance career progression and personal growth, helping individuals find meaning and purpose in their careers.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Data and testimonials demonstrate the program's effectiveness in enhancing economic stability, workforce diversity, and personal growth. Participants report improved physical health, emotional resilience, and a stronger sense of community.



CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AND LESSONS LEARNED

The implementation of EPIC encountered several challenges, including cultural adaptation, funding, and resource allocation. However, the lessons learned from these challenges have offered valuable insights for future iterations of the program and similar initiatives.

Human needs are not universally invariant across cultures and individuals. While certain basic needs, such as food and water, are universally essential for survival, the specific hierarchy of needs may vary significantly. In Western cultures, Maslow's framework often emphasizes individual achievement and self-actualization. In contrast, numerous indigenous cultures, including the Māori, perceive well-being as a collective responsibility. The Te Whare Tapa Whā framework embodies this perspective by emphasizing physical, mental, family, and spiritual health interconnectedness. This approach highlights the importance of community and relationships in achieving holistic well-being (Durie, 1994).

More effective and culturally sensitive career development programs can be established by integrating modern psychological theories with the ancestral wisdom encapsulated within the Te Whare Tapa Whā framework. This integration acknowledges that true well-being and potential are realized through a balanced approach that respects individual needs and community connections.

CONCLUSION

Integrating the Te Whare Tapa Whā framework with career development programs such as EPIC offers a holistic and culturally sensitive approach to supporting solo parents. By addressing their physical, psychological, social, and spiritual needs,

EPIC aligns with contemporary research that challenges traditional hierarchical models and provides a comprehensive support system that can lead to more sustainable career development and overall well-being. The integration of the EPIC model with the Te Whare Tapa Whā framework provides solo parents with a holistic and culturally sensitive approach to career development. Its scalability and adaptability demonstrate its potential to serve as a global benchmark for career support. Future research and program enhancements will focus on expanding EPIC's reach and impact, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness in diverse contexts worldwide.

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