
UNIT 1 DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

As reflected from the title, this block will deal with the influence of family environment and culture on the mental health of the individuals. The present unit will focus on the developmental theories which deal with the development of an individual in all aspects since child hood. It is interesting to know that human beings change with varied experiences of their life. Developmental theories attempts to understand; explain and predict behaviour that occurs throughout a person's life span. Erikson's and Piaget theories are two such theories.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

With the help of this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the stages of Psycho Social Development as propounded by Erik Erikson; and
- describe the stages of Piaget's theory of Cognitive Development.

1.2 ERIK ERIKSON'S THEORY OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Erik Erikson has a significant contribution in the theories of personality development. The theory of psychosocial development is a well-known theory of Erikson which tries to explain the development of personality which takes place through a series of stages since childhood. The theory of Psycho social development describes the impact of social experience across the whole lifespan. In the process of social interaction, a person develops a sense of identity of oneself. *Ego identity* is one of the important concepts of Erikson's theory. This is term given to the conscious sense of self that one develops through social interaction. According to Erikson, this sense of self changes, as one goes through the various stages of personality development. In every stage of life there is new information and experience that are present in one's life. These are the challenges one faces to the sense of self or ego identity. The experience of facing these challenges determines one's ego identity and shapes one's perception of life. There are challenges which one faces in daily interactions in society and how one deals with it forms part of one's personality. In addition to ego identity, Erikson also believed that a sense of competence motivates behaviors and actions. Each stage in Erikson's theory is concerned with becoming competent in an area of life. If the stage is handled well, the person will feel a sense of mastery, which is sometimes referred to as *ego strength* or ego quality. If the stage is managed poorly, the person will emerge with a *sense of inadequacy*.

In each stage, Erikson believed people experience a conflict that serves as a turning point in development. In Erikson's view, these conflicts are centered on either developing a psychological quality or failing to develop that quality. During these times, the potential for personal growth is high, but so is the potential for failure. The stages of psychosocial development have been discussed accordingly in the sub sections below:

1.2.1 Psychosocial Stage 1 - Trust vs. Mistrust (Approx. 0-2 yrs.)

This is the first stage of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. This stage occurs in between birth to two years of age of a child. It is a significant stage because at this phase of life, an infant is totally dependent on quality of care given. If the proper care is given a child will develop *trust*. This is considered important as this basic trust in the caregiver will make a child feel safe and secure in most of its future interactions. If care-giving is inconsistent, not dependable and rejecting in nature, the child develops a *sense of mistrust* which is carried over in future interactions.

Thus, when the child develops basic trust in the care-giver, a sense of hope and confidence in the world is developed. This would result in the child having an optimistic view of the world. The opposite is true for those children who fail to develop trust. Their sense of mistrust leads them to experience depression and they could be withdrawn from people and may even develop paranoia at a later point of time.

1.2.2 Psychosocial Stage 2 - Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt (Approx. 2-4 yrs.)

The second stage of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development occurs during early childhood. At this stage, children are focused on developing a greater sense of personal control. Erikson believed that toilet training was a vital part of this process. He believed that learning to control one's bodily functions leads to a feeling of control and a sense of independence. Likewise developing control over the choice of food, toys or clothing is important in personality development. If a child is able to have a sense of personal control, he/she will feel secure and confident and if they do not succeed, then it might lead to a sense of inadequacy and self-doubt.

Thus, *autonomy* develops if a child is guided positively through praise, firmness, encouragement and gentleness to become independent. This will result in the child having a sense of will and good self esteem. If parents are too permissive, harsh, or demanding, the child can feel defeated, and experience extreme *shame and doubt*. This might result in maladaptive ways of gaining a feeling of control, power, or competence. For instance, following strict rules and regulations might give a false sense of competency. This could result in a form of obsessive behaviour. If the child is given no limits or guidance, the child can fail to gain any shame or doubt and be impulsive in its behaviour.

1.2.3 Psychosocial Stage 3 - Initiative vs. Guilt (Approx. 3-5 yrs.)

The third stage occurs during the preschool years, when a child starts asserting his/her power and is able to get a control over the world (his/her surroundings) through directing play and other social interactions. Children who are successful at this stage feel capable and able to lead others. Those who fail to acquire these skills are left with a *sense of guilt, self-doubt, and lack of initiative*.

Hence, if parents are understanding and supportive of a child's efforts to show *initiative*, the child develops *purpose*, and sets goals and acts in ways to reach them whereas if children are punished for attempts to show initiative, they are likely to develop a *sense of guilt*, which in excess can lead to *inhibition*.

1.2.4 Psychosocial Stage 4 - Industry vs. Inferiority (Approx. 5-12 yrs.)

This stage covers the early school years and is a latency stage. At this stage of lifespan, a child starts developing a sense of pride in their accomplishments and abilities with the help social interactions. And if the child is encouraged and praised by parents and teachers then he/she develops a feeling of *competence* and belief in their skills. Those who receive little or no encouragement from parents, teachers, or peers will doubt their abilities to be successful. If caretakers do not support the child, feelings of *inferiority* are likely to develop and this might lead the child to become underachiever. Encouraging the child to feel over competent might make a child a shallow person not being able to reflect on personal deficits.

1.2.5 Psychosocial Stage 5 - Identity vs. Confusion (Approx. 13-19 yrs.)

The fifth stage of development occurs at the stage of adolescence. At this stage, children explore their independence and develop a sense of self. Those who receive proper encouragement and reinforcement through personal exploration will emerge from this stage with a strong sense of self and a feeling of independence and control. Those who remain unsure of their beliefs and desires will feel insecure and confused about themselves and the future.

When an adolescent resolves this crisis, then a sense of *fidelity* would develop. This is described as a sense of identity regarding who they are and what is the objective of their life. If they are unable to resolve they develop *identity diffusion*. These adolescents may have an unstable sense of self and may need to belong to some group in order to develop a sense of identity. If this becomes a serious issue for the adolescent then might have oppositional views and may join hate cults etc.

1.2.6 Psychosocial Stage 6 - Intimacy vs. Isolation (Approx. 20-24yrs. / 24-39 yrs.)

This stage covers the period of early adulthood. This is a stage in which people start exploring personal relationships. Erikson believed it was vital that people develop close, committed relationships with other people and have an ability to experience intimacy. Those who are successful at this stage will form relationships that are committed and secure. This will also depend on previous stages of development, such as developing a strong sense of personal identity. Persons with poor sense of self are observed to have a tendency to have less committed relationships and are more likely to suffer emotional isolation, loneliness, and depression.

1.2.7 Psychosocial Stage 7 - Generativity vs. Stagnation (Approx.25-64/40-64 yrs.)

During middle adulthood, people continue to build their lives through various ways such as building a career and bringing up or caring for a family. Those who are successful during this phase will feel that they are contributing to the world by being active in their home and community. Those who fail to attain this skill will feel unproductive and uninvolved in the world. If a person has experienced a sense of creativity and success, then the person develop a sense of *generativity*. People who do not feel this develop a sense of *stagnation*. They become self absorbed, do not connect easily to others and do not offer much to society.

1.2.8 Psychosocial Stage 8 - Integrity vs. Despair (65 yrs. till death)

This is a phase that occurs during late adult hood or old age and is focused on reflecting back on life. Those who face conflicts at this stage will feel that their life has been wasted and will experience many regrets. The individual will be left with feelings of bitterness and despair. Those who feel proud of their accomplishments will feel a sense of integrity. Successfully completing this phase means looking back with few regrets and a general feeling of satisfaction. These individuals will attain wisdom, even when confronting death.

This entails facing the ending of life, and accepting successes and failures, ageing, and loss. People develop *ego integrity* and accept their lives if they succeed, and develop a sense of wisdom and those who do not, feel a sense of *despair* and dread their death.

Table: Psycho social Stages of Development by Erik Erikson

Stage	Psycho-social crisis	Approximate age	Important relations at the stage	Criteria dominating the development at the stage
1	Trust vs. Mistrust	0-2 years	Mother	Hope
2	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt	2-4 years	Parents	Will
3	Initiative vs. Guilt	3-5 years	Family	Purpose
4	Industry vs. Inferiority	5-12 years	Neighbour, school	Competence
5	Identity vs. Confusion	13-19 years	Role model	Fidelity
6	Intimacy vs. Isolation	20-24 years / 24-39 years	Life partners, friends	Love
7	Generativity vs. Stagnation	25-64 years/ 40-64 years	Workmates	Care
8	Integrity vs. Despair	65 years till death	Humanity, mankind	Wisdom

Self Assessment Questions 1

State Whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':

- 1) *Fidelity* is described as a sense of identity regarding who they are and what is the objective of their life
- 2) *Autonomy* develops if a child is guided negatively through blames, punishments and curse become independent
- 3) If the proper care is given a child will develop *mistrust* towards the caretakes.....
- 4) Erikson believed it was vital that people develop close, committed relationships with other people and have an ability to experience intimacy.....

1.3 PIAGET'S THEORY OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

After knowing the theory of Erikson, it is important for you to know the significant contribution of Piaget. Piaget also tried to explain the development that takes place at different stages of development of child but from a

perspective of cognitive development. The Piaget's theory of cognitive development focuses on the child thoughts, perception and acquisition of knowledge at each stage. The stages of cognitive development propounded by Piaget have been explained in the following sub sections:

1.3.1 Stage I: The Sensorimotor Stage (Birth to 2 years)

This stage of cognitive development takes place since birth to about two years of age. At this stage the child tries to make sense of the world through its senses and motor ability. Some abilities are innate behaviour which greatly assists the infant. Sucking, looking, grasping, crying and listening are such innate behaviours that enhance learning. In the beginning the infant uses only reflexes and innate behaviour. As they become mobile, their cognitive ability increases slowly. Towards the end of this stage, the child uses a range of complex sensori-motor skills.

According to Piaget there are two mental representations a child must develop. One is the concept of *Object Permanence*. This is an important accomplishment for an infant in this stage, as their memory power increases. This is the ability to understand that objects continue to exist even if they cannot be seen or heard. As the child matures towards the end of this stage, it develops the ability to mentally represent the object in their mind, leading to exploration for an object even if it is moved. Another concept that Piaget states is important to achieve in this stage is *Deferred Imitation*. This is simply the imitation of behaviour a child has seen before. As child can mentally represent behaviour they have seen, they are able to enact it through playing and in other situations. So a child might 'talk' into a toy telephone or 'steer' a toy car around the room.

1.3.2 Stage II: The Pre-operational Stage (2-7 years)

The pre operational stage occurs in between the age of two to seven years. During the age range of toddler hood to early child hood, there is a smooth transition from the previous stage. The major accomplishment during stage is language ability, memory and imagination power. A child is also able to symbolically use one object for representing another. For example, a child swinging their arms in a circular motion might represent the wheels on a train. This shows the relationships children can form between language, actions and objects at this stage.

A major characteristic of this stage is *egocentrism*. This is the ability to perceive the world only in relation to oneself and how the child perceives things. They find it difficult to see it from another person's perspective. Another feature of this stage is *conservation*. Children struggle to understand the difference in quantity and measurements in different situations. For example, if a liquid in one container that is broad based is poured into taller and narrower container, the child is unable to see that the quantity of liquid is the same. They see the taller glass as containing more liquid.

1.3.3 Stage III: The Concrete Operational Stage (7-11 years)

This stage sees another shift in children's cognitive thinking. It is aptly named "concrete" because children struggle to apply concepts to anything

which cannot physically be manipulated or seen. Children have difficulty in understanding hypothetical and abstract concepts. However, they now begin to understand that other people have different perspectives from them. For example, simple Maths, such as addition/subtraction becomes much easier but they struggle to apply any prior knowledge to abstract situations.

1.3.4 Stage IV: The Formal Operational Stage (11 onwards)

Children at this stage acquire the ability to think hypothetically and think about abstract concepts. For example, children begin to have the ability to think about consequences and outcomes before taking an action. Verbal information becomes adequate for them to come to a decision or conclusion. They do not require “concrete” physical objects to do take a decision or act on something. When a problem is presented to them, they can think logically and consistently and solve the problem or come to a conclusion. Their thinking becomes more like an adult.

1.4 ASSIMILATION AND ACCOMMODATION

It is worth to mention that, Piaget basically focussed on two processes- assimilation and accommodation. *Assimilation* is a process in which with the help of experiences an individual assimilates or fits new thoughts and information in to an existing old thought or idea. It is a process of integrating external elements into definite structures through experience. It is process with the help of which an individual adapts new information. It leads to fitting of new information into pre-existing cognitive schemas. It gradually occurs when an individual faces new or unfamiliar information and then the individual refers to previously learned information in order to make sense of it. *Accommodation* is totally opposite of assimilation. In the process of accommodation, an individual takes new information in one's environment and alters the pre-existing schemas in order to fit in the new information. That is, when the previously existing information or cognitive schema does not work then the individual needs to change the existing information in order to deal with the newer object, information or experience. Amongst the two, accommodation is more significant because with the help of accommodation only people will continue to interpret new concepts, schemas and frameworks. Although, he proposed that both the processes- assimilation and accommodation work together and go in hand by hand. In order to assimilate an object into an existing mental schema, one first needs to take into account or accommodate to the particularities of this object to a certain extent. For example, in order to recognize (assimilate) a car as a car, an individual first needs to focus (accommodate) on the boundaries of this object. To do this, one needs to roughly recognize the size of the object. Development increases the balance, or equilibration, between these two functions. When both assimilation and accommodation are well balanced then mental schemas of the operative intelligence takes place. When one process dominates over the other, they generate representations which belong to figurative intelligence.

Self Assessment Questions 2

Fill in the blanks:

- 1) *Assimilation* is a process in which with the help of an individual assimilates of fits new in to an existing old thought or idea.
- 2) The pre operational stage occurs in between the age of years.
- 3) Children at stage acquire the ability to think hypothetically and think about abstract concepts.
- 4) In the process of , an individual takes new information in one's environment and alters the pre-existing schemas in order to fit in the new information.

1.5 LET US SUM UP

In this section we have discussed about two of the major theories of development - Erik Erikson's theory of Psychosocial Development and Piaget's theory of Cognitive Development. Erikson's stages of psychosocial development as articulated by Erik Erikson explain eight stages through which a healthily developing human should pass from infancy to late adulthood. In each stage the person confronts, and hopefully masters, new challenges. Each stage builds on the successful completion of earlier stages. The challenges of stages not successfully completed may be expected to reappear as problems in the future.

However, mastery of a stage is not required to advance to the next stage. Erikson's stage theory characterizes an individual advancing through the eight life stages as a function of negotiating his or her biological forces and sociocultural forces. Each stage is characterized by a psycho social crisis of these two conflicting forces (as shown in the table below). If an individual does indeed successfully reconcile these forces (favoring the first mentioned attribute in the crisis), he or she emerges from the stage with the corresponding virtue. For example, if an infant enters into the toddler stage (autonomy vs. shame & doubt) with more trust than mistrust, he or she carries the virtue of hope into the remaining life stages.

Piaget's theory of cognitive development is a comprehensive theory about the nature and development of human intelligence. It deals with the nature of knowledge and how humans come gradually to acquire, construct, and use it. To Piaget, cognitive development was a progressive reorganization of mental processes as a result of biological maturation and environmental experience. Children construct an understanding of the world around them, then experience discrepancies between what they already know and what they discover in their environment. Moreover, Piaget claims the idea that cognitive development is at the center of human organism and language is contingent on cognitive development.

1.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What could be the consequences of developing a sense of mistrust in an infant?
- 2) How does an infant develop a sense of autonomy?
- 3) How does a sense of guilt develop in a child?
- 4) How does developing a sense of intimacy help in future interactions?
- 5) What is meant by ego integrity according to this theory?
- 6) What are the major mental representations that children develop in the sensorimotor stage?
- 7) How do the mental representations in stage 1, help in the next stage or preoperational stage in Piaget's theory of cognitive development?
- 8) How do young children's ability to think in abstract terms help in problem solving tasks given to them?

1.7 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Self Assessment Questions 1

- 1) True
- 2) False
- 3) False
- 4) True

Self Assessment Questions 2

- 1) experiences; thoughts and information
- 2) two to seven
- 3) Formal Operational
- 4) accommodation

1.8 REFERENCES

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