

ERIKSON'S THEORY

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INTRODUCTION

- **Psychology**

"The study of the mind and behavior" (American Psychological Association, 2022)

" Psychology is the scientific study of the mind and how it dictates and influences our behavior, from communication and memory to thought and emotion" (British Psychological Society, 2022).

- **Lifespan developmental psychology**

"The study of psychological and behavioral change across and within individuals from birth through death" (APA, 2022)

- **Developmental psychology**

"Developmental psychology is a scientific approach which aims to explain growth, change and consistency through the lifespan" (McLeod, 2017).

- **Goals**

"To describe development, to explain how change occurs throughout the lifespan and to optimize development through the application of theory to real life" (Nursing, 2022).

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Today we are going to present the Erikson's theory. I would like to start with the definitions of psychology, lifespan developmental psychology, developmental psychology and its goals. The American Psychological Association defines psychology as "the study of the mind and behavior" (APA, 2022).

According to the British Psychological Association, "psychology is the scientific study of the mind and how it dictates and influences our behavior, from communication and memory to thought and emotion" (BPA, 2022).

APA (2022) also defines lifespan developmental psychology as "the study of psychological and behavioral change across and within individuals from birth through death."

According to McLeod (2017), "developmental psychology is a scientific approach which aims to explain growth, change and consistency through the lifespan".

The main goals of developmental psychology are "to describe development, to explain how change occurs throughout the lifespan and to optimize development through the application of theory to real life" (Nursing, 2022).

ERIKSON'S THEORY

- Erikson has complimentary descriptions of personality and view mankind as a social being in nature, having a desire to belong and motivated for significance in their social environment in order to handle with inferiority.
- Also suggests that four main areas should be taken in consideration during the counselling process: Work, friendship, sexual love, and optimism.
- Erikson's key identity concepts: Identification, identity formation process, identity achievement, identity crisis.
- Erikson acknowledges the importance of personality development during childhood and also individual's personality may develop in a process involving all of life. But this development process is not so easy also individual is bound to live binary, opposite conflicts.
- According to Erikson crisis consisting of eight phases contain in each period (turning points) must be overcome in a healthy way.
- Each stage is binary because it represents two opposite poles. Erikson elaborated the stages and embrace the whole life with his psychosocial theory.
- Erikson has accented the theme of socio-cultural influences in human development. Erikson stressed the development of self-identity within a social context that provides an orientation toward or against constructive communal living.
- Erikson believed that human beings are rational creatures and their thoughts, feelings, and actions are largely controlled by the ego.
- Erikson consider the social as well as the creative self or ego processes as being not less important than biological-self. Erikson designated development as the evolution of "ego identity".
- The environment that children live in was one of the important aspects of his theories. Erikson in his studies, focused gave importance to child development in terms of interpersonal and cultural influences. Besides, Erikson, had emphasized the importance of the ability of social cooperation. According to Erikson, ego is their past. Each theorist advocates this by taking a different perspective from his own life. Key Words: Erik Erikson, identity, stages of psycho-social development, identity status, identity crisis, turning point.

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STAGES

Stage	Basic Conflict	Important Events	Key Questions to be answered	Outcome
Infancy (0 to 18 months)	Trust vs. Mistrust	Feeding/ Comfort	Is my world safe?	Children develop a sense of trust when caregivers provide reliability, care and affection. A lack of this will lead to mistrust.
Early Childhood (2 to 3)	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt	Toilet Training/ Dressing	Can I do things by myself or need I always rely on others?	Children need to develop a sense of personal control over physical skills and a sense of independence. Success leads to feeling of autonomy, failure results in feelings of shame and doubt.
Preschool (3 to 5)	Initiative vs. Guilt	Exploration/ Play	Am I good or bad?	Children need to begin asserting control and power over the environment. Success in this state leads to a sense of purpose. Children who try to exert too much power experience disapproval, resulting in a sense of guilt.
School Age (6 to 11)	Industry vs. Inferiority	School/ Activities	How can I be good?	Children need to cope with new social and academic demands. Success leads to a sense of competence, while failure results in feeling of inferiority.
Adolescence (12 to 18)	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Social Relationships/ Identity	Who am I and where am I going?	Teens need to develop a sense of self and personal identity. Success leads to an ability to stay true to yourself, while failure leads to role confusion and a weak sense of self.
Young Adult (19 to 40)	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Intimate Relationships	Am I loved and wanted?	Young adults need to form intimate, loving relationships with other people. Success leads to strong relationships, while failure results in loneliness and isolation.
Middle Adulthood (40 to 65)	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Work and Parenthood	Will I provide something of real value?	Adults need to create or nurture things that will outlast them, often by having children or creating a positive change that benefits other people. Success leads to feelings of usefulness and accomplishment, while failure results in shallow involvement in the world.
Maturity (65 to death)	Ego Identity vs. Despair	Reflection on life	Have I lived a full life?	Older adults need to look back on life and feel a sense of fulfillment. Success at this state leads to a feeling of wisdom, while failure results in regret, bitterness, and despair.

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Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory is comprised of eight stages, ranging from birth through adulthood (Berk, 2014). Central to each stage is a crisis where individuals work toward a positive or negative resolution. Although a negative resolution of a stage does not guarantee negative resolutions for future stages, a negative resolution could influence the outcome of future stages. Erikson is considered a neo-Freudian and used Freud's theory of personality as a foundation for his own. However, Erikson's theory is termed a psychosocial theory because the focus is on individuals' relationships with others.

The first stage is basic trust versus basic mistrust (Erikson, 1963). Beginning at birth, infants develop either trust or mistrust about their surroundings. Infants with responsive caregivers will develop a sense of trust about their environment whereas those without responsive caregivers will develop a sense of mistrust.

The second stage is autonomy versus shame and doubt (Erikson, 1963). From 1 to 3 years old, children begin to make their own decisions. When caregivers offer choices, children will develop autonomy. However, when caregivers are too restrictive or punish children's decisions, children will develop shame and doubt about their decisions.

The third stage is initiative versus guilt (Erikson, 1963). From 3 to 6 years old, children interact with other children, children develop a sense of purpose. Children with supportive caregivers will develop initiative. Children with parents who are too restrictive will develop guilt.

The fourth stage is industry versus inferiority (Erikson, 1963). From 6 to 11 years old, children must learn about societal rules. Children who learn the rules of society develop industry whereas those who do not learn the rules of society develop inferiority. Learning typically occurs in the context of school.

The ages for the remaining four stages follow developmental periods rather than precise ages. During adolescence, individuals enter the identity versus role confusion stage (Erikson, 1963). Adolescents who develop an understanding of who they are will develop identity whereas those who do not will develop role confusion.

During early adulthood, individuals enter the intimacy versus isolation stage (Erikson, 1963). Individuals in early adulthood develop intimacy when they form close relationships with others, such as in marriage. Those not able to establish close relationships with others develop isolation.

During middle adulthood, individuals enter the generativity versus stagnation stage (Erikson, 1963). Individuals in middle adulthood develop generativity when their focus shifts to the next generation. Those who focus on themselves instead of children or those younger than themselves develop stagnation.

Finally, during late adulthood, individuals enter the ego integrity versus despair stage (Erikson, 1963). In the last stage, individuals are reviewing their lives. Those who do not have regrets develop ego integrity. Those with regrets develop despair.

PRINCIPAL ASSUMPTIONS ERIKSON'S THEORY

- Erikson believed that personality develops in a series of stages
- 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
- 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
- Erikson (1982) posited that every individual experiences eight developmental stages each with its own unique crisis or conflict that results from interaction of biological, psychological, and cultural forces

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IMPORTANCE OF ERIKSON'S THEORY

- Its importance lies in the fact that it provides a holistic view of development throughout the entire lifespan. It also stresses on the influence of social relationships on development.
- Application of Erikson's theory is more biased towards boys than girls, and more importance is given to infancy and childhood than to adult life, despite the fact that it is supposed to encompass the entire lifespan.
- Erikson's theory of family is still relevant today as it was when it was first developed over seven decades ago. The theory is even more relevant today, given the increasing pressures on family life and relationships, and the quest for personal development and fulfillment in life.
- Erikson believed that the trust vs mistrust stage is the most important period in a person's life because it shapes one's view of the world.

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ADOLESCENCE - IDENTITY VS CONFUSION

Identity vs Confusion

- ❑ Identity versus confusion is the fifth stage of ego in psychologist Erik Erikson's theory.
- ❑ This stage occurs during adolescence between the age of 12 and 18.
- ❑ **IDENTITY** - Erikson defines identity as a "fundamental organizing principal which develops constantly throughout the lifespan.

Role confusion

& How to decrease role confusion

▪ Consequences of role confusion

- ❑ Difficulties with commitment
- ❑ Worse mental health and wellbeing
- ❑ Weak sense of self ❑ Lack of confidence

▪ How to decrease role confusion

- ❑ Build on your strengths ❑ Try new things to discover what you like
- ❑ Make commitments and set goals
- ❑ Participate in activities that are related to your interests

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EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

▪ Benefits of Identity

There are numerous benefits behind shaping and forming an identity.

Commitment :committing to a career path, deciding what social group to associate with and even developing a sense of personal style.

- Self-confidence: sense of trust in abilities, qualities and judgements
- Sense of independence :
- Fidelity
- Causes that contribute to form a strong Identity: friends, family, schoolmates, other social groups, societal trends, pop culture.

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LIFESPAN PSYCHOLOGY IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Knowledge of lifespan psychology can:

- ❖ enhance empathy towards family members and friends and thus maintain good relationships (Uzefovsky & Knafo-Noam, 2017);
- ❖ increase parents' awareness of the developmental crises;
- ❖ help parents understand their children's development (cognitive–intellectual and personal–social–emotional) and behaviour (e.g. anti-social behaviour) (Eysenck, 2000);
- ❖ help us understand why some young people experience difficulty in controlling their own behavior and managing emotions or why they get involved in anti-social behaviors (Tatlilioglu, 2018) .

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Lifespan psychology can contribute to people's everyday life. Knowledge of lifespan psychology can enhance our empathy towards family members and friends and thus maintain good relationships (Uzefovsky & Knafo-Noam, 2017). For example, knowledge of Erikson's stages and developmental crises can help us develop our empathy. We, as parents or adults can empathize with our children and adolescents when they experience problems related to learning social rules or their identity. We can provide our children with the support they need to develop strong self-regulation skills. Considering the cognitive development of the children and adolescents (Piaget's theory), we can use appropriate verbal and non-verbal language while communicating with them (Medical News Today, 2021). Lifespan psychology can also help parents understand their children's development and behavior (Eysenck, 2000). For example, since some adolescents have identity confusion or negative identity, they have difficulty controlling their own behavior and managing emotions or they get involved in anti-social behavior such as crime (Tatlilioglu, 2018)). Thus, instead of provoking or blaming them, we can try to listen to them and treat them with respect and dignity. And if they are involved in anti-social behaviors, we can try to find out the reasons for these behaviors considering the moral (Kohlberg's theory) and psychosocial developmental stages (Erikson's theory). Knowledge of lifespan psychology also can help parents grow as nurturing adults, who are warm, supportive, rational, willing to allow an interactive level of communication.

IMPORTANCE OF LIFESPAN PSYCHOLOGY IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Knowledge and understating the lifespan approach can:

- help healthcare workers understand the patients (Nursing, 2022);
- facilitate effective therapeutic communication between the healthcare professionals and patients (Nursing, 2022);
- help healthcare workers identify patients' concerns (Nursing, 2022);
- promote accurate mental health assessment and thus plan and provide individually focused care (Nursing, 2022);
- raise awareness about challenges that may contribute to vulnerability (Nursing, 2022).

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Understanding lifespan psychology is important in health and social care. Knowledge of lifespan theories such as Piaget's, Kohlberg's, and Erikson's can help healthcare professionals understand their patients who can be children, adolescents, young adults or elderly ones (Nursing, 2022). Considering their moral, cognitive, emotional and psychosocial development, healthcare staff can maintain effective communication with them using appropriate language so that they can understand and respond. Moreover, lifespan approach can help healthcare workers identify patients' concerns. For example, there might be middle aged patients who are withdrawn, distant and reserved, unwilling to communicate or cooperate with the healthcare staff. In these situations, healthcare workers, considering the intimacy versus isolation crisis at this stage, can approach them with understanding and patience. In addition, knowledge and understating the lifespan approach can promote accurate mental health assessment (Nursing, 2022). This can help mental health workers plan and provide individually focused care to their patients. For example, those children at school age who cannot cope with new social and academic demands, can feel inferior and this may result in anxiety disorder (Erikson's industry versus inferiority). Another example can be depression that is observed among adolescents who experience role confusion and fail to develop their personal identities (Erickson, 1963). Further, it is argued that "disruption in development can create vulnerability in an individual's mental health" (Nursing, 2022). Understanding lifespan approach may raise healthcare professionals' awareness about challenges that may contribute to vulnerability. For instance, inappropriate verbal and body language, dominant and provoking behaviours can lead to vulnerability in patients had problems related to their moral, emotional and psychosocial development.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF ERIKSON'S THEORY - STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

Strengths

- Provides insight into the directions of healthy development across the lifespan.
- The ability theory to conceptualize the influence relationships have on individuals and society is a strength.
- Theory demonstrates middle and late adulthood are active and significant periods of personal growth.
- Theory shows that people can relate to the various stages through their own experiences.

Weaknesses

- Erikson's theory is more applicable to boys than it is for girls.
- Each culture has its social clock.
- The theory falls short of explaining how and why development occurs.
- The theory is dated, as it does not address the influence of single-parent households on a child.

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Strengths. One of the strengths of Erickson's Theory is that it is the basis for a review of human development throughout life. This allows us to identify the important impact of social relations on our development most of Erickson's research focuses on his personality and his views on adolescence. His Theory is based on the fact that the crisis of early adulthood can be successfully resolved if the crisis of adolescence has been resolved. Stages of development of Erikson even in modern life can be used by health professionals in the treatment of patients experiencing periods of adaptation or turning points in their lives theory besides it should be taught to everyone it will help people of all ages to understand the connection between life experience and human behaviour.(Darling-Fisher, 2019).

Weaknesses. Erickson's theory shows that time in different cultures is compared differently. An example is teaching a child to potty, in some cultures children are taught to potty up to 9 months. In others, the process takes several years. Another example is that people in some cultures marry before the age of 30 and have children. Today in our culture we tend to postpone marriage until the age of 30 many theorists have pointed out that the theory is more focused on boys than girls. This can be attributed to biological differences Erickson's theory tended to pay more attention to childhood, despite the so-called assertion that all its 8 stages are a lifelong theory. (Malone JC, Liu SR, Vaillant , 2016)

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF ERIKSON'S THEORY

Application in medical practice, help nurses promote personality traits during the care of their patients

For the development of children in school, which helps to develop independent decision making.

Application in the family, solving the problem by trusting each other.

For the older generation of people by taking care of their present life.

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The application of Ericsson's theory helps in the analysis of traumatic past experiences of patient behaviour and the fight against current development challenges. For the development of children in school, for example, there may be a library where the child can decide which book to choose to read. This will allow for the development of independent decision making. Help the patient identify his or her strengths to help maintain / recover and improve his or her health. (Cherry K. 2017).

CONCLUSION

- Erickson's work is as relevant today as it was then and continues to be an active centre of research. In fact, given the current pressure on the family, relationships, society and the desire for self-realization and development, his ideas are relevant even now.

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