

Part 1- Academic essay

This academic essay will focus on the infancy life stage. The various and different behaviour patterns and emotions linked to this life stage and how researched theories link to this by exploring the developmental psychology that occurs throughout it.

Developmental psychology is known to be a scientific approach used to explain growth or change and consistency through an individual's life; hence, as this essay will be about infancy, it will be presented and discussed how thinking, feeling, and behaviour change throughout infancy specifically. A life stage is a specific period or phase which an individual goes through in their life. Every single and specific life stage is related to different physical, intellectual, emotional and social changes. Additional changes are slightly more significant than others which are referred to and known as milestones. The crossroads' importance during infancy and how one goes about influencing them, and what impact the surrounding environment has on infants generally is crucial.

Many changes occur during infancy. Physical changes, to begin with, are incredibly significant. During infancy, babies begin to have control of larger muscles in their bodies. Therefore, this leads to them gradually and eventually being able to control the muscles in the neck and back, allowing them to begin to roll, sit and crawl. Moreover, the muscles in their legs and feet also slightly develop, and it eventually starts to enable them to stand and finally walk. As their control and coordination of small muscle groups improve, infants can begin to grip and manipulate objects. This means that during infancy, many gross motor skills milestones develop. Gross motor skills are skills, and they are actually less exact movements that mainly use large muscle groups such as the head and torso—for example, running and jumping.

The actions of the mother can actually impact this during pregnancy. Meaning, babies who are actually exposed to alcohol in the womb can potentially develop a disorder known as fetal alcohol spectrum (FASD). This disorder involves an extensive range of physical, behavioural, and learning problems, the most critical type being fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). FAS is caused by heavy drinking during pregnancy, and it leads to brain damage and growth problems. From the other changes known to take place, intellectual changes lead to the ability to speak or babble as well as the use of language in concise phrases containing no more than two or three words. Infancy is a more

complex and challenging life stage to understand, meaning it is pretty tricky to work with infants and develop the ability to understand them or teach them things. Infants learn new things through their senses. This is because they are unable to comprehend rules; therefore, they learn by mimicking what they see other individuals surrounding them do. Infants also begin to develop feelings such as love or affection for parents and other people. This, therefore, leads to a sense of security in the infant.

Moreover, many social changes are faced during infancy as babies actually begin to develop relationships with people around them, including family members, acquaintances, primary carers or siblings. Babies are very astute social learners and are primed to engage and talk/ communicate with people straight away; how exactly early on in their life as well as how often they do so relies on how good as well as how often adults engage with them. These relationships are incredibly significant and fundamental as they are the basis of how the infant will develop future relationships, meaning the initial ones designed to act as a model. Learning to be able to recognize facial expressions and how they evolve is extremely important. The reason for this and effort other nonverbal cues of emotion is that it gives individuals another way of communication when infants' behaviour, actions, or vocal utterances are absent or sometimes might be unclear. This channel shows the infant's arousal level, and it might also help explain other aspects of motor, postural, and behavioural responses. Therefore, interpreting infants' expressive signals is essential to parents or caregivers to promote mutually satisfying interactions. Another way infants' expressions can be helpful to the caregivers is that they provide clues to the neurological as well as the cognitive status of the infant. Although the initial appearance of facial expression is organized at the brain's subcortical level, the changes reveal that the infant's higher cognitive and motivational systems are becoming integrated as brain maturation proceeds;

In addition, many theories apply to the different life stages out there. This essay will include two of these and how they relate to infancy specifically. Firstly, Sigmund Freud had a theory. He firstly believed that events that occur in our childhood have a massive influence on our adult lives eventually, meaning it has the power to shape our

personality. Freud also believed that personality development in childhood occurs in five psychosexual stages: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital stages. During these stages, libido is shown in various ways, through many parts of the infant's body. In the initial phase of psychosexual development, the libido is in a baby's mouth, meaning the baby gets satisfaction from putting things in its mouth (such as sucking, breastfeeding, orbiting). This is exceptionally significant as over oral stimulation. If the carer taking care of the child allows the child to do it for too long and too much, in his theory, Freud said that could lead to an oral fixation in later life meaning, those who overdo it as infants could become nail-biters, finger-chewers, smokers, as well as thumb suckers.

Moreover, another stage that applies to the life stage discussed is the anal stage. In this stage, the libido mainly focuses on the anus, meaning the infant has excellent pleasure from defecating. The infant, fully aware that their wishes can cause conflict with the outside world's demands, is now fully aware they are their person. Freud stated that this type of conflict is significant as adults impose those restrictions on when and where the child can defecate, leading to determining the infant's future adult relationship with all forms of authority. Hence, if potty training is quite early on, or harsh it could lead to the infant becoming an anal-retentive personality who, as an adult, is obsessively tidy, punctual as well as respectful of authority.

Like Freud, another theory by Erikson stated that toilet training was a highly vital part of infancy. Erikson noted that learning how to control one's bodily functions can potentially later lead to a feeling of power and an increased sense of independence. Meaning, infants who struggle or are shamed for accidents may eventually be left without a sense of personal control. On the other hand, infants who successfully complete this stage would feel more secure as well as confident—those who do not develop a sense of inadequacy as well as self-doubt. Erikson also stated that trust and mistrust develop during infancy and relies directly on how the caregiver/ people around the infant act with them. The infant trusts adult caregivers to provide things including food, safety, love, warmth, as well as nurturing. Hence, If those fail to be provided, it will lead to the child feeling they cannot trust as well as or depend on their later experiences with adults in

their life. This usually happens from those caregivers that are emotionally unavailable as well as inconsistent. Failure to gain trust early on will lead to fear and a sense of insecurity in their adult life. However, if a child successfully develops confidence, he or she will eventually feel more safe and secure in the world.

Many types of research have been done on infancy and illnesses related to infancy as a life stage. Firstly, in a study carried out in 2012, it has been concluded that among intrauterine antipsychotic exposure, antidepressant exposure or no psychotropic exposure of the mother during her pregnancy caused immensely significantly decreased scores on a standard test of neuromotor performance on six-month-old infants. This, therefore, emphasized the need for further scrutiny of reproductive safety and neurodevelopmental sequelae during pregnancy. Disentangling medication effects on the fetus taken by the mother during pregnancy remains a critical challenge.

In another study carried out in 2007, maternal asthma and maternal smoking during pregnancy were researched. Following that, it has been concluded that these actions are independently associated with the evolution of bronchiolitis; the risk of bronchiolitis among those infants with mothers who have asthma as well as smoke during their pregnancy is shown to be 50% greater compared to those infants who were exposed to neither risk factor. This discovery is hugely significant, and more efforts to decrease the illness associated with both of these mentioned risk factors will need to be done to diminish morbidity from bronchiolitis. This is mainly even more significant because bronchiolitis is currently the main, first leading reason for hospitalization for lower respiratory tract infections during infancy.

Finally, Dr David J. Barker, a British epidemiologist, is known to have studied and shown the relationship between infant birth weight as well as later onset of hypertension, insulin resistance, coronary heart disease, and type II diabetes. The discovered data presented that fetal exposure to dysregulation, excessive glucocorticoids, maternal hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, as well as inflammation with resulting epigenetic changes at not only placental but also fetal levels are significant areas. More research

on this topic is therefore definitely needed to be carried out to understand better the effects the mother's actions and health have on the baby.

In conclusion, the infancy lifestage is acted upon, impacted as well as influenced by the outside environment, not only when the infant is born and gets exposed to those things directly but also even before it is born, while in the womb. From the theories linked to this life stage as well as the researches found, it is safe to conclude that infants are extremely sensitive to everything they are exposed to and those exposures directly affect their later adult life. During pregnancy mothers are therefore advised to stay away from certain medication or drugs, be free from stress or depression as much as possible and have a healthy lifestyle as well as diet in order for the born baby health to be to its best potential. During early life, not only mothers but also everyone the baby is exposed to are advised to act accordingly and treat the infant with care, as those exposures as mentioned above could have a massive impact later on. Moreover, those who the infant gets exposed to should have a basic understanding of how infants express their feelings and emotions. The reason for this mainly being that it is harder to determine how infants feel as they express it extremely differently to other ages, as they are unable to speak.

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