

Title: Part A: Bibliography and Part B: Short Report

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Module Name: Psychology in Health and Social Care

Module Code: LCHS4010

Assessment: Component 2

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Part A: Annotated bibliography

Source 1:

Dezutter, J., Toussaint, L. and Dewitte, L. (2020) 'Finding a balance between integrity and despair: A challenging task for older adults in residential care', *Journal of Adult Development*, 27(2), pp.147–156. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10804-019-09332-1>

This article focuses on the final stage of psychosocial development described by Erik Erikson, known as ego integrity versus despair. At this stage of life, older adults often reflect on their past experiences, achievements and relationships. The authors explore how this reflective process can influence emotional wellbeing among individuals living in residential care. Their findings suggest that older adults who feel satisfied with their life experiences tend to develop a sense of integrity and acceptance of ageing. In contrast, individuals who feel regret or disappointment about their life choices may experience feelings of despair, which can negatively affect their wellbeing.

The ideas presented in this article are important for professionals working in health and social care because they highlight the emotional needs of older adults. Encouraging residents to share memories or participate in reminiscence activities may help them reflect positively on their lives and strengthen their sense of identity. A key strength of the study is that it connects psychological theory with real experiences of people living in care settings. However, one limitation is that the research focuses mainly on care home residents, meaning the findings may not fully represent older adults who live independently in the community.

Source 2:

Erikson, E.H. (1963) *Childhood and society*. 2nd edn. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

In this book, Erik Erikson outlines his theory of psychosocial development, which explains how individuals develop psychologically throughout their lives. The theory is divided into eight stages, each associated with a particular developmental challenge. The final stage occurs in later adulthood and involves reflecting on one's life and evaluating whether it has been meaningful. Successfully resolving this stage leads to a sense of integrity and wisdom, while failure to do so may result in despair and dissatisfaction with life.

This theory provides valuable insight for health and social care professionals supporting older adults. Understanding the importance of life reflection can help practitioners provide more sensitive and person-centred care. For example, encouraging conversations about past experiences or supporting life story work can help older adults maintain a sense of purpose and identity. One strength of Erikson's theory is that it recognises development as a lifelong process rather than something that ends in early adulthood. However, some critics argue that the stages may be too general and may not reflect the diversity of life experiences across different cultures and individuals.

Source 3:

Maslow, A.H. (1943) 'A theory of human motivation', *Psychological Review*, 50(4), pp.370–396.

In this influential article, Abraham Maslow introduces the hierarchy of needs, a theory explaining how human behaviour is motivated by the desire to fulfil different types of needs. Maslow organised these needs into five levels, beginning with physiological needs such as food, water and rest. Once these are satisfied, individuals seek safety and stability. Higher levels of the hierarchy involve social relationships, self-esteem and ultimately self-actualisation, which refers to reaching one's full potential and personal fulfilment.

Maslow's model can be particularly helpful for understanding the needs of older adults in health and social care environments. Many older individuals require support with basic needs such as healthcare, housing and daily living activities. However, emotional and social aspects of wellbeing are also important. Opportunities to maintain friendships, feel respected and participate in meaningful activities can greatly influence quality of life. A major strength of Maslow's theory is its clear structure, which makes it easy to apply in practice. On the other hand, critics argue that human needs do not always follow a strict hierarchy and that individuals may prioritise different needs depending on their circumstances.

Source 4:

Taormina, R.J. and Gao, J.H. (2013) 'Maslow and the motivation hierarchy: Measuring satisfaction of the needs', *American Journal of Psychology*, 126(2), pp.155–177.

This study builds on Maslow's hierarchy of needs by examining how satisfaction of different needs relates to wellbeing and life satisfaction. The authors investigate whether

individuals actually experience these needs in a hierarchical order or whether several needs can be pursued simultaneously. Their findings suggest that the relationship between needs and motivation is more flexible than originally proposed by Maslow. Rather than progressing step-by-step through the hierarchy, people may seek to fulfil multiple needs at the same time.

The research offers useful insights for professionals working with older adults in health and social care settings. It highlights that wellbeing depends not only on meeting basic physical needs but also on supporting emotional and social aspects of life. For example, access to healthcare and safe accommodation is essential, but opportunities for social interaction and personal fulfilment are equally important. A strength of this article is that it provides empirical evidence that further develops Maslow's original theory. However, the study focuses on general patterns of motivation and does not specifically examine the experiences of older adults, which may limit its direct application to gerontological care.

Part B: Short report

Introduction

Psychological knowledge is highly valuable for professionals working in health and social care, particularly when supporting older adults in residential care settings. Understanding how individuals develop emotionally and socially throughout their lives can help staff provide more effective and compassionate care. One theory that can be especially useful in this context is Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of development. This theory explains how people face different psychological challenges at various stages of life. The final stage, which occurs in later adulthood, focuses on the conflict between ego integrity and despair. This report will provide an overview of Erikson's theory and explain how it can be applied in a care home setting to support the wellbeing of older adults.

Explanation of the theory

Erikson's psychosocial theory proposes that human development occurs across eight stages throughout the lifespan. Each stage involves a particular psychological conflict that individuals must resolve in order to develop a healthy sense of identity and wellbeing. These stages begin in early childhood and continue into old age. Successfully resolving each stage contributes to personal growth, while difficulties at any stage may create emotional challenges later in life.

The final stage of Erikson's theory, known as ego integrity versus despair, occurs during older adulthood. At this stage, individuals often reflect on their lives and consider whether they feel satisfied with their achievements, relationships and experiences. If

people are able to accept their life as meaningful and worthwhile, they may develop a sense of integrity, which is associated with feelings of peace, wisdom and acceptance of ageing. However, if individuals feel regret about missed opportunities or unresolved conflicts, they may experience despair. This can lead to feelings of sadness, bitterness or dissatisfaction with life.

This stage is particularly relevant in care home settings because older adults may spend more time reflecting on their life experiences, especially when facing changes such as retirement, declining health or loss of independence. For this reason, understanding Erikson's theory can help health and social care professionals recognise the emotional and psychological needs of residents.

Application of the theory

An understanding of Erikson's psychosocial theory can help health and social care professionals provide more supportive and person-centred care for older adults living in care homes. Staff who are aware of the importance of life reflection may encourage residents to talk about their past experiences, achievements and relationships. Activities such as reminiscence therapy, life story work or group discussions about past memories can help residents reflect positively on their lives.

Applying this theory can also help professionals better understand the emotions that older adults may experience. Some residents may feel sadness or regret about aspects of their past, particularly if they have experienced loss or major life changes. By recognising these feelings, staff can respond with empathy and provide emotional support when needed. This understanding can improve communication between staff and residents and help professionals respond more effectively to individual needs.

Ultimately, applying Erikson's theory in practice can help improve the overall wellbeing of older adults in care homes by supporting their emotional health and encouraging a positive sense of identity and self-worth.

Real-world example

For example, consider an older adult who has recently moved into a residential care home after living independently for many years. This transition may cause the individual to feel a loss of independence or social connections. As a result, they may begin to reflect on their life in a negative way and feel that they have lost control over their circumstances.

A health and social care professional who understands Erikson's theory may support the resident by encouraging them to share stories about their past experiences, family life or personal achievements. Activities such as memory groups, photo discussions or storytelling sessions can help the resident reflect on positive aspects of their life. Over time, this process may help the individual recognise the value of their life experiences and develop a stronger sense of integrity rather than despair.

This example demonstrates how psychological theory can be applied in practice to support emotional wellbeing and help residents maintain a sense of identity and dignity within the care home environment.

Challenges

Although Erikson's theory can be helpful in understanding the emotional needs of older adults, applying it in practice may sometimes present challenges. For example, some residents may find it difficult or upsetting to reflect on their past, particularly if they have experienced trauma, bereavement or other negative life events. Encouraging these individuals to revisit painful memories may lead to emotional distress.

To address this challenge, professionals should adopt a sensitive and person-centred approach. Staff should allow residents to share memories only if they feel comfortable doing so and should provide supportive environments where individuals feel safe and respected. Alternative activities such as creative expression, art or music may also help residents reflect on their lives in a more positive and comfortable way.

Conclusion

In conclusion, psychological theories such as Erikson's psychosocial theory can provide valuable insights for professionals working with older adults in health and social care settings. Understanding the stage of ego integrity versus despair helps professionals recognise the importance of life reflection and emotional wellbeing in later life. By applying this knowledge in care homes, staff can encourage meaningful conversations, support positive life reflection and help residents maintain a sense of identity and dignity. Overall, psychological theory can play an important role in improving the quality of care provided to older adults.

Reference list:

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