

PSYCHOLOGY IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

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1. Introduction

The elderly people aged 65 and above in dementia care facilities commonly face complex psychological needs relating to cognitive and emotional instability and lack of independence. Cognitive impairments including memory loss, disorientation and change in behaviours largely affect their identity, autonomy and social connectedness.

Therefore, health and social care experts must have a duty to understand both the physical needs of such individuals, as well as the psychological mechanisms that shape their ageing and dementia experiences. The psychosocial theories cannot be ignored; they provide the systematic accounts of behaviour, cognition and affective adaptation hence, enabling the professionals to offer compassionate, effective, and evidence-based care.

The current report critically examines two psychological paradigms, which are most relevant in the context of dementia care, which are the Psychosocial Development Theory by Erikson, specifically, the stage of Integrity versus Despair, and the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST). These models furnish relevant information on how to deal with emotions, social prioritization, identity formation and search of meaning in later life.

2. Theory 1 Explanation: Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory

The Psychosocial Development Theory developed by Erikson outlines eight stages throughout the lifespan that is accompanied by a crisis which individuals have to solve in order to achieve healthy psychological development (Carparelli *et al.*, 2024). Integrity versus Despair is the final stage that begins at around age of 65. At this age, the elderly judge their achievements in life, their relationships and contributions. As they feel their lives as meaning, as well as coherent, they gain implacid integrity of acceptance, prudence and emotional stability (Berkovic *et al.*, 2024). On the other hand, they can find the remarking reflection of their past regretful, not satisfied, and sense that they are deprived of a goal that they intended to achieve, which will leave them desperate, which leads to fear of death, melanchOLiness, and poor psychological health.

ERIKSON'S STAGES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

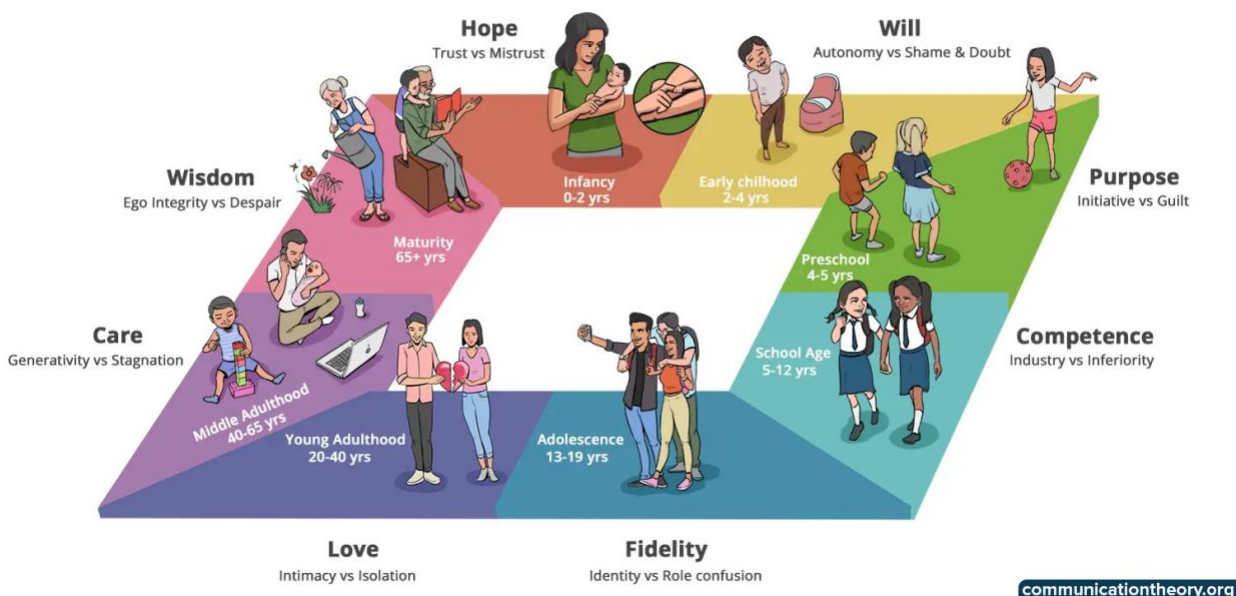


Figure 1: Erikson's 8 Stages of Psychosocial Development

(Source: communicationtheory, 2023)

Through this theory, especially when dealing with adults of 65 years and above, emotional adjustment in later life is explained well. Many such people have major changes in their lives, including retirement, grief, physical illness, and diminished autonomy (Marulappa *et al.*, 2022). The changes modify the way they make out their life stories and meaning. In addition, dementia intensifies this stage by making it more difficult to sustain memory as well as continuity of self, with a tendency to make older people not able to view their lives in a positive way (Lombard, 2021).

The theory developed by Erikson will help the professionals to realise that emotional distress, withdrawal, irritability, or anxiety can be a result of identity and life evaluation struggles. The recognition of these psychological processes helps the care staff to be more sensitive to older adults and use methods that enhance dignity, respect, and personhood (Thuesen *et al.*, 2021). The theory, therefore, provides a crucial basis of understanding the emotional needs and behaviours of the elderly individuals in dementia care environments.

3. Application of Theory 1 to Dementia Care Home Setting

The stage of integrity and despair as depicted by Erikson has a lot of significance in dementia care homes as occupants usually experience confusion, memory loss and lack of independence. Such

symptoms often have a negative impact on the ability of an individual to reflect in a coherent manner over his or her life, thus increasing susceptibility to emotional distress (Mohr *et al.*, 2021). Understanding of the Erikson theory can help the professionals to understand that their sadness, agitation or withdrawal behaviour might be due to existential issues about the individual or the loss of identity and not necessarily a cognitive deficiency. This knowing inspires employees to have supportive measures that inculcate integrity and reduce the feeling of hopelessness (Casarez and Smith, 2024).

One practical example here is the use of reminiscence therapy which involves the use of personal photographs, music or objects of significance that are used to arouse long-term memories. Even in cases of short-term memory impairment, the older adults can retain the past life experience and hence can rejoin the important parts of himself or himself. Reminiscence sessions allow the residents to feel grounded and valued thus increasing their emotional stability (Serbser-Koal *et al.*, 2024). Life-story work can also be incorporated by care workers into regular activities through learning the background and the accomplishments of residents as well as their cultural values. This practice strengthens the person-centred care and a sense of meaning.

The communication tactics based on Erikson theory include confirmation of feelings, extension of consolation, and inclusion of the residents in decision-making that facilitates autonomy. Helping the residents follow meaningful activities, e.g., familiar hobbies, spiritual activities, or social activities, could also strengthen the integrity by strengthening their purpose and belonging (Brossard Saxell *et al.*, 2021).

However, this theory may be difficult to put into practical use particularly among those who have had dementia and cannot recall their past experiences, or who have difficulty in expressing feelings. The lack of personnel, time scheduling, and lack of training may also limit the therapeutic interaction (Sunjaya *et al.*, 2025).

Care homes can invest in organized routines, provide specific training to their staff on methods of communication with dementia and multidisciplinary teamwork between psychologists, occupational therapists and families as ways of overcoming these obstacles (Moenke *et al.*, 2023). They need to be able to help people in a way that is more humane and effective by integrating theory-based methods into practice.

4. Theory 2 Explanation: Socioemotional Selectivity Theory

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST) was developed by Laura Carstensen and was used to understand the reasons why the goals and social priorities of people change with their age. The theory states that older people will view time as a limited resource and thus switch their attention towards seeking new information or a wider social network to make emotionally meaningful relationships and experiences based on the theory (Abbott *et al.*, 2021). The result of this change is the development of emotional control and closeness, the need to find people that can make their lives easier, to feel secure, and to get positive experiences. SST claims that as people grow older, their mode of interaction with others becomes more discriminating where they prefer quality rather than quantity in their interactions (Gustavsson *et al.*, 2023).

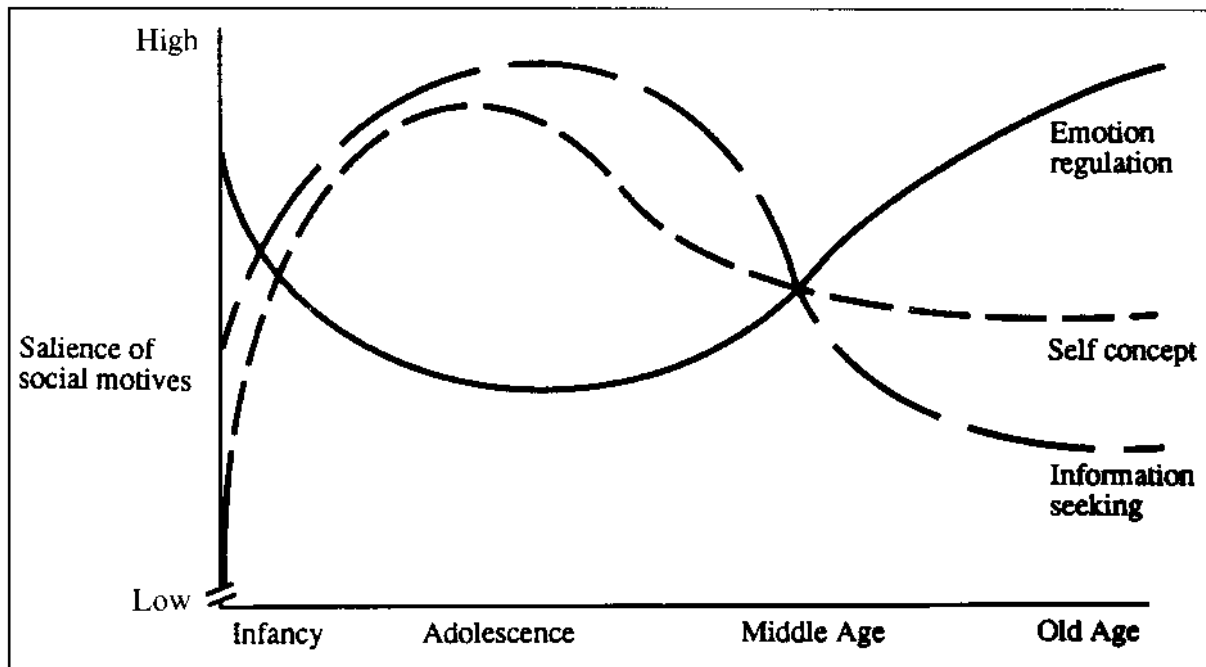


Fig. 1. Idealized model of socioemotional selectivity theory's conception of the sa-

Figure 2: Life-Span Theory of Socioemotional Selectivity

(Source: semanticscholar, 2020)

As an adult, one who is 65 years and over, this theory can be used to explain emotional preferences and social behaviour. Most of them involve the elderly and they like routine, those they trust and environments that make them feel safe. They also might escape stressful or new experiences and frequently, they also enjoy predictable relationships with regular caregivers (Anker-Hansen *et al.*, 2025). Dementia complicates these preferences in that it interferes with memory, search in social

signals as well as emotional expressiveness. Although a child loses cognitive abilities, the emotional needs outlined by SST like the need to be close to his or her parents, to be reassured and have a meaningful relationship are still quite relevant.

5. Application of Theory 2 to Dementia Care Home Setting

The utilization of the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory in dementia care homes emphasizes the significance of emotional comfort, familiarity and level relationship consistency. To most dementia patients, anxiety, confusion, or agitation may occur when they are unfamiliar with an individual or exposed to an unfamiliar environment (Oliveira, *et al.*, 2024). SST makes professionals realize these reactions are the natural love of meaningful and emotionally sustaining relationships. Consequently, care plans must focus on routine staffing, routine procedures as well as customised relationships that result in trust (Søgaard *et al.*, 2021).

Practically it means SST teaches the staff to have quality time with residents by communicating calmly, listening and providing occasional reassurances. Emotional validation can be used by care workers they should remain warm and in a positive position to minimize distress. The familiarity can be enhanced by placing key workers with the identified residents, which will build secure attachments and minimise behavioural, e.g., wandering or care resistance, symptoms (Bartolomeu Pires *et al.*, 2024). Emotional-satisfaction based activities like music therapy, sensory stimulation, and social interaction with individuals of trust can also help in the wellbeing.

The psychological symptoms like withdrawal or apathy are also addressed by using the theory. To illustrate, small-group or individual activities as opposed to the large and overstimulating group activities are more compatible with the emotional preferences of residents (Aworinde *et al.*, 2022). Emotional security is also boosted by the creation of a homely atmosphere, use of familiar decor, and personal items.

6. Conclusion

Psychological theories are of great importance in the dementia care homes in that they assist professionals to comprehend the emotional, cognitive as well as behavioural needs of the older adults. The Psychosocial Development Theory by Erikson gives one a perspective to understand the relevance of identity, meaning, and emotional acceptance later in life and the socioemotions Selectivity Theory emphasises the role of emotional security, meaningful relationships, and social familiarity. The combination of these theories is a good guide on communication, person centred care and behaviour management.

Employing the theory-based methods will result in better awareness of the staff members about underlying needs of residents and provide more compassionate, systematic, and better care. Reminiscence therapy, regular staffing, stimulating activities, emotional validation and regular routines are some of the strategies that contribute to the wellbeing and dignity of the individual who is under dementia. Despite such practical difficulties, as severe cognitive deterioration and staffing limitations, informed solutions and teamwork strategies can be used to mitigate this.

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