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Developmental Psychology: Infancy life-stage

Psychology for Health and Social Care

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Introduction

The aim of this academic essay is to analyse and describe the development psychology, also to relate two lifespan psychological theories, Eric Erickson's Psychosocial Theory and Freud's Theory of Psychosexual Development, to one chosen lifespan, the infancy, as well as to analyse three relevant research enlightening the importance of psychology.

Developmental Psychology

Slater and Bremner (2003) refers to the developmental psychology as a discipline focus on the description and explanation of the psychological changes that occurs with time to a person, influenced by the environment that he lives and by his biology. According with Facci (2004, cited in Shuare, 1990) the human psych is not immutable or invariable, that is, it varies with historical changes in society and material life during each human life-stage. Human development goes through quite a few phases, childhood, adolescent, adult and old age, in this essay I will focus basically on the infancy life-stage.

Infancy life-stage

According to Slater and Bremner (2003), the term "infans" came from Latin and it means "the period without speech", so infancy correspond to the life-stage between the baby and the young childhood, from 0 to 3 years old.

Human infancy is completely dependent, all the baby's needs are taken care of by others. As the infant starts to grow, they start to explore more, by touching and putting things in their mouths, tasting, in fact this is how they learn. This phase is also characterized by the appearance of baby teeth, by the rapid development of physical skills, etc. (Bogin, 2012).

At the end of childhood, on average, the child is already able to run a short distance, manipulate and control some objects, all the cognitive and motor advances are made with the development of the skeleton, the nervous system and the musculature. It is a fundamental and very important stage, especially due to the rapid growth of the brain (Bogin, 2012).

Freud's Theory of Psychosexual Development

Sigmund Freud was a neurologist, founder of psychoanalysis, which is used as a method to treat mental illnesses, and theories that explain human's behaviour (Mcleod, 2018).

According to Freud, the human personality is influenced and shaped by the events of our childhood, and his psychological development is due to 6 psychosexual stages: oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital. Psychosexual, as according to him, each stage represents sexual instincts in a different area of the body (Mcleod, 2008).

Giving to Freud, life is built around tension and pleasure and that tension is due to increased libido, that is, sexual energy, and with its discharge comes pleasure. For him, as the human being develops biologically, he also develops the way he stores and discharges the libido (Mcleod, 2008).

Freud's Psychosexual Stages:	
<u>Stage/Age</u>	<u>Focus</u>
Oral (0-18 months)	Pleasure centers on the mouth – sucking, biting, chewing
Anal (18-36 months)	Pleasure focuses on bowel and bladder elimination; coping with demands for control
Phallic (3-6 years)	Pleasure zone is the genitals; coping with incestuous sexual feelings (<i>Oedipus complex</i>)
Latency (6 to puberty)	Dormant sexual feelings Identification process – gender identity
Genital (puberty on)	Maturation of sexual interests

Freud's Psychosexual Stages (University of Wales Trinity Saint David class lecture notes, 2020).

Freud's Theory of Psychosexual Development – Infancy life-stage

The infancy life-stage based on Freud's psychosexual development theory correspond on the two first stage, oral and anal.

Oral stage – 0 to 18 months years old

Freud's oral, that is oriented by the mouth, for example suction, breastfeeding and bite, stage is due to the fact that babies like to put things in their mouth, the libido is centred in their mouth (Mcleod, 2008).

Freud said that if the baby receives an ideal amount of stimulation it will lead to an oral fixation later, such as biting nails, smoking, sucking a finger (Mcleod, 2008). However, in the case of an oral non-stimulation, the sexual energy is fixed in the mode of oral gratification, which leads the infant to develop an orally aggressive, cruel and manipulative or passively spoken personality (Lantz and Ray, 2020).

Anal stage – 18 months to 36 months years old

The infant at this age is already more aware, slightly more autonomous and independent. In this age his toilet training begins and the libido changes from the

oral to the anal area (Lantz and Ray, 2020). According to Freud, the desire of caregivers for the child to have an adequate performance using the toilet, can lead to conflicts, given the imposition of restrictions by them, about where and when the child should defecate (Mcleod, 2008).

Toilet training is very important emotionally for the child, he might develop anal retention or expulsion, depending on his experience (Lantz and Ray, 2020). In case of starting the training before the child is prepared, or a hard training, consequently the child will develop a retentive anal, with rigid personality, respectful of authority, excessively tidy and controlling. Otherwise, the expulsive anal, who has undergone more liberal training at this stage, develops a confused, disorganized and rebellious personality, but also with a greater capacity to share (Mcleod, 2008).

Erickson's Psychosocial Theory

Erik Erickson was a psychoanalyst and professor of developmental psychology at Harvard, he based his theory on Freud's theory of psychosexual development and it was introduced 1950's (Elkind, 1970).

Erickson's theory is divided into 8 stages of human development that vary according to biological, social and psychological conditions throughout its development. Give Erikson, at each stage the human being experiences psychosocial events with positive or negative results for the development of his personality (Mcleod, 2018).

Stage	Psychosocial Crisis	Basic Virtue	Age
1.	Trust vs. Mistrust	Hope	0 - 1½
2.	Autonomy vs. Shame	Will	1½ - 3
3.	Initiative vs. Guilt	Purpose	3 – 5
4.	Industry vs. Inferiority	Competency	5 – 12
5.	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Fidelity	12 – 18
6.	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love	18 – 40

7.	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Care	40 – 65
8.	Ego Integrity vs. Despair	Wisdom	65+

Erickson's Psychosocial stages (Mcleod, 2008).

Erickson's Psychosocial Theory – Infancy life-stage

The infancy life-stage correspond to two stages on the Erickson's Theory, the Trust vs. Mistrust, 0 to 1 year and half and the Autonomy vs. Shame, 1 year and half to 3 years old.

Trust vs. Mistrust – 0 to 1 year and half

According to Erickson's theory the infants builds trust, in themselves and other peoples, based on the level of care they receive. When the baby receives all the care, attention, affection and love in need, he develops a feeling of trust. He starts to trust people and see the world as a safe place. However, when the opposite happens, that is, when the care is not consistently, adequate and when he is rejected, he develops a feeling of distrust and fear towards people and the world (Elkind, 1970).

The basic virtue, hope is acquired in case of being successful in this first stage. The development of a sense of trust will lead the infant to hope that he will always have people to help him in difficult times. But in the event of failure, it will develop fear, distrust, anxiety and insecurity (Mcleod, 2018).

Give to Erikson, trust vs. distrust is not resolved only in the first stage, however it will appear again in the later stages, which can be good or bad. In the case of an infant who has not acquired the feeling of confidence in his first stage, he can acquire it in case he receives all the attention and care he needs in later stage, for example if he has a good relationship with his teacher at school. And the opposite may happen in case of an infant who has already developed a feeling of trust, starting to lose his confidence especially if he goes through traumatic situations, for example a bad divorce between the parents (Elkind, 1970).

Autonomy vs. Shame and doubt – 1 year and half to 3

An infant at this age, starts to develop autonomy, giving new motor and mental abilities. They start to get more sense of doing and independency, discovering that they have skills and abilities (Mcleod, 2018). They want explore, to do things by themselves, however it is not just about doing or try to do it, but feeling proud of all the achievements (Elkind, 1970).

For Erick Erickson it is very important that the caregivers to recognize the need of the infant to do what he is able to and let them do it by them self. Instead of undertaking it for them. They should show how to do it and let them do it at their own pace and time and assist them in case they need help until they succeed. It is also important to congratulate them and show happiness for them, or support

them if they are unable to do so and encourage them not to give up. With this the child gains more confidence and security in his abilities (Mcleod, 2018).

On the other hand, in case of lack of encouragement so that they can develop their autonomy, constant criticism due to failure and always hurrying, the infant begins to develop the sense of shame and starts to doubt his abilities, develops a lack of self-esteem and becomes very dependent on others. The success in this stage leads the child to the virtue of will (Elkind, 1970).

Infant behaviour, cognition and emotions patterns

One of the best-known theories of infant cognitive development belongs to Piaget. Piaget's theory of cognitive development is divided into 4 stages, with infant corresponding to the first stage: sensorimotor stage. According with Piaget, in this stage the infant becomes rational and knowing toddler after being a helpless newborn (Slater and Bremner, 2003).

In Piaget's theory the newborn interact with the outside world through reflective behaviour, they get what they want through their instincts and spontaneous reactions. According with Pavlov the infant behaviour can be conditioning, that is the infant can be shaped in any direction according with their environment. Although, to Skinner the infant behaviour can be moulded by punishments and rewards. Alex Bandura, in addition to the fact that infant can learn by reinforcement and punishment, he added also that they can learn by observation (Slater and Bremner, 2003).

An infant can feel a range of emotions, like happiness, sadness, fear, etc. and is readable through face expression, such as smile, or they can express their feeling or needs by crying. Crying is universal in infant's world and is one of the first signs used to see if the baby is well and alive (Dorking, 1995).

Research studies in health sector

One of the most obvious point in all these theories spoke above is that the events experienced in the infancy have a great influence on the future personality of the person. Below I will present 3 researches, two related to infancy, and the influence of experienced events and others in the construction of personality and one more about how psychologic theory can be helpful for healthcare sector.

Research 1

Hemmi, Wolke and Schneider wrote an article in 2011 about the associations between infancy problems such as: crying, sleeping and/or feeding and long-term behavioural outcomes in childhood as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) problems. The article was based on a meta-analysis of 22 studies from 1987 to 2006 and about 16,848 children were analysed in the study, among which

1,935 had regulatory problems. The result suggests that children with previous regulatory problems have greater behavioural problems, especially children belonging to families with multiple problems, slight relationship between parents and children, depressive mother, etc.

Research 2

Based on the first research, the worst results were found in families with multiple problems. Recently, Letcher et al. (2020) made a research based on the adolescent and young adult mental health problems and infant offspring behaviour. The study used data collected 1 year after delivery of cohort participants (people born during the same period of time) and their non-cohort partners, and had to identify the person who spent the most time taking care of the baby (mostly the mother). They were asked to provide information relevant to social and emotional development, being more detailed for the primary caregiver. According with the results, the mother's history of persistent depression and anxiety from adolescence to young adulthood can predict higher levels of behaviour problems in her infant.

Research 3

Gilmartin et al. (2017) made a research about the mindfulness practice for healthcare providers. The research was based on a systematic literature review, about the effects of mindfulness interventions with hospital providers and measurement of change in wellbeing or behaviour. According to the results brief mindfulness intervention may be effective in improving provider well-being.

Conclusion

In conclusion, based in all information describe above, is important to state that psychology is one of the most important and complex science, that understanding the human mind and behaviour is crucial for understanding and building a society. Also, that the infancy is one of the most important stage for the human development and the experiences lived there may forever mark our lives.

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