

Psychology in Health and Social Care

BMHP4003

Student Name: Maria Cristina Ilie

Student ID: 2008191

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Introduction

Developmental psychology is defined as the area of the psychology that studies how people grow and develop during their lifetime, physically and emotionally. The understanding of the human development is important in order to recognise and prevent any issues that could be encountered by the individuals. This issues can be in relation to cognitive development, motor skill development, emotional development, personality development, self-awareness, language acquisition, social and cultural influences (Bee, 1994).

This report is discussing in depth the adolescence and its psychological development and it applies Kohlberg theory to this stage. It also emphasises the role of healthcare practitioners and personal reflection on theory application.

Adolescence

The selected lifespan psychological for this report is adolescence. Adolescence is the period of transitioning from childhood into adulthood and presents development on many levels cognitive, psychosocial and emotional. At times this stage of development can be very challenging for parents, but also for clinicians to care for adolescents. Each adolescent has its own pace of development and it differs as it involves individual thinking (Sheldon, 1988).

Human cognition is the individuals ability to acknowledge the threats and opportunities and to respond in the most efficient manner. It is infused by self-control and focuses on survival in the natural world. The cognitive developments of adolescence are part of the progression of thinking and decision making from a child to an adult.

In the Adolescence stage it is developed complex thinking. This more complex thinking is called formal logical operations. Several areas that develop during adolescence: advanced reasoning skills, hypothetically thinking, logical thought process, ability to think abstractly. Reasoning skills: this refers to the adolescents development regarding their critical thinking. It involves exploration, evaluation and synthesis. The changes in the brain for this stage are more dramatic than the physical developments. The cognitive growth is influenced by individuals experiences, social demands and knowledge. A example of an influential factor is school who ensures that it provides a stimulating learning frame through experiments, solving problems, interpersonal relationships and friendship, morality, fairness etc. Think hypothetically: the adolescents develop the ability to make suppositions on contrary-fact situations. The adolescents are able to make analysis taking in consideration cause and effect elements, to think about hypothetical scenarios about the world , about the future and personal goals. Logical thought process: in adolescence it is developed a more

complex thinking process where are taken in consideration more views and opinions. Adolescents are able to approach problems systematically and methodically, they can use trial and error for solving problems. Ability to think abstractly is specific more to the last stage of adolescence. It involves the exercising of creativity and some authors claim that is a product of teaching, culture and experience. Some adolescents are able to use introspection and have a more mature approach to decision making. They comprehend language nuances and expression such as sarcasm, metaphor, analogies, satire. Also there is this transcendence of the concrete and capability to contemplate and produce abstract thinking (Sanders, 2013).

Emotions in adolescence relate to the adolescents change to become a more independent person. The adolescent's emotional autonomy is increasing and is a tumultuous period determined by various conflicts which is in connection with the development of abstract thinking debated above. The adolescent is reducing gradually the emotional dependence on the parents and is more inclined to manage emotions in a peer group that tends to offer emotional support. It is very likely for adolescents to struggle with emotions at times and to have negative emotions. Anxiety or anger can be experienced at one point by every adolescent. During adolescence, it is explored the dating relationship and emotions such as jealousy. (Winiarski et al., 2016).

Behaviour patterns in adolescence are determinant for the good health of body and mind of the individual. In adolescence the behaviour is shaped through individual exploration, personality assertiveness (Jones et al., 2014).

The behavioural developments are quite complex and knowledge and positive environment benefits the adolescent development. These factors have psychologic and social components and impact adolescent's values and beliefs, attitudes, self-concept. Patterns developed during adolescence usually forms the basis for adult health. Behaviour patterns include many aspects, from establishing good habits for personal hygiene and health to self representation and beliefs. (Gardiner, 2006).

Adolescents will shape their behaviour at the influence of the peers, but educating and information from parents and specialist could contribute to positive development. There is possible to establish negative attitudes and behaviours such as smoking and taking drugs, eating disorders and other trouble youths, depending on a variety of factors. More concerning problems that can appear from peer approval or rejection can be school withdrawal, aggression and mental health problems (Winiarski et al, 2016).

The development of the adolescent beliefs is influenced by external factors and are determined by the learning experiences that can include positive or negative references. Many times the peer group

authority converts the beliefs of an adolescent. Sexual interest is another change in the behaviour of the adolescent and dating relationships which are a consequence of puberty (Science Direct, 2011).

Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory applied to adolescence

Kohlberg (1958) proposed a theory on moral development which states that moral understanding is directly connected with the cognitive development. The theory is elaborated in three levels: preconventional, conventional and postconventional. Kohlberg indicated that the movement through this stages has a fixed order. Every level has two stages and the reasoning process is realising by completing a stage in order to replace with another stage. It is possible that some would not complete all stages. This theory is based on research using children's thinking towards some moral dilemmas. This theory makes use of Piaget's storytelling technique offering choices for answering. In his research, Kohlberg has identified that children's judgement has changed from younger children to adolescents.

Kohlberg stages of moral development for adolescence corresponds to Level 2 in the theory. Level 2 is the conventional morality stage and involves the development of moral standards and value system. The adolescents internalise and accept the social rules on right and wrong. Role models play an important influence in this stage for the adolescents. Peers are also an influencing factor to the reasoning of the adolescent (McLeod, 2013).

Stage 3 of conventional morality emphasises the need of approval from peers and that is mirrored in the responses as the adolescent seeks to be seen as good. Stage 4 of the conventional morality relates to the wider social order, when adolescent starts to think about obeying rules and laws and potential repercussions.

Level 3 of Kohlberg's theory is the third stage and is specific to more mature thinking, which some unique adolescents could potentially achieve. Postconventional morality involves more abstract thinking with concerns such as life preservation, human dignity. Kohlberg considers that a very small percentage of people can achieve this last stages, as majority of people assimilate others moral views and do not create own ethical principles. Stage 5 refers to social contract and individual rights and stage 6 to universal principles (Kohlberg, 1984).

This theory received criticism related to the distinctive character of the stages in different moral dilemmas and practical situations do not progress through the fixed stages. Also it is debated Kohlberg's consideration on justice to be the most fundamental principles and his claims on males advancement in stages (Rest, 1979).

Role of healthcare practitioners

Healthcare practitioners require special training and education and for some professions special licensing. The care given is based on systems of evidence-based practice and that involves knowledge from existing theories or research. Further that a healthcare practitioner should have the required knowledge and technical skills, should be stable emotionally, should have problem solving skills, empathy. The role of healthcare practitioners is very important to people lives because it involves care and medical assistance, it informs patients, it helps with prevention of diseases and to create a healthy lifestyle (ST. Patricks blog, 2019).

Reflection

Psychology cumulates a variety of theories to explain human behaviour. A career in healthcare involves working and caring for people on a daily basis. This module has give me the knowledge to understand the human behaviour which is fundamental for this career path.

The theory learned on social learning or behaviourist is helping me to understand how health related behaviours are learned and how the patients can be taught new behaviours that benefits their health and wellbeing. The humanist approach involves a framework that has non-judgemental principles. It is important to understand what influences the patients health and how to give the best care. Nature and nurture are other concepts that can be applied in the healthcare as it emphasis the role of lifestyle and lifestyle choices for the patient health. Also this module has given me the knowledge to understand the differences between individuals and how to meet best the needs of the patients.

The theory presented and analysed through this report contributes to my knowledge for my future career as a healthcare assistant. I consider that the knowledge on the adolescence psychology development gave me the understanding of influential factors, on the specific changes to this life stage and potential problems that could be encountered. Kohlberg theory is a good technique to assess adolescents thinking process and identify the stages in order to understand their reasoning. I disagree with some elements of the theory that places justices on top of the principles considering that giving care and looking after each other is also very important.

Conclusion

This report has identified the psychological changes during adolescence: human cognition, emotions and behaviour patterns. It has concluded that this stage involves volatile emotions and that peer influence gains great importance in many aspects in the adolescent life. Kohlberg Theory on Moral development is a useful framework to be used in practice, but it is important to realise that many times real life situations can be very different and variate and a fixed structure can not be imposed.

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