



Children`s Mental Health and Development

ECAP4005: An introduction to the module

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Overview of the course:

- Week 1: Sessions 1-3
 - Attachment Theory
 - Cognitive Development
 - Moral Development
- Week 2: Sessions 4-6
 - Internalising Disorders
 - Externalising Disorders
 - The Family and Well-being
- Week 3: Sessions 7-9
 - Language Development
 - Gender Identity and Self concept
 - Childhood maltreatment, Mental Health & Well-being

Assessment details:

- Assessment 1: Promotional Campaign

Produce an educational campaign to raise awareness about either ADHD or conduct disorder (1,500 words)

24th March 2025 by 23.59pm the latest.

- Assessment 2: Seen Examination

You are required to prepare answers for TWO questions and to answer both during the examination.

Note: The questions will be released on Moodle three weeks before the exam date.

Date: 10th May 2025 (Examination period).

What is Developmental Psychology?

- ❖ Developmental Psychology is the study of how human psychology changes from infancy to old age.
- ❖ It covers all domains of psychology, including sensation, perception, motor skills, cognitive processes, social processes, biological processes, emotions, personality, and intellect.

Why study child development?

Understanding how children develop can:

1. Offer much insight into human nature – why we are what we are and how we have become that way;
2. Help parents/educators raise/contribute to raising children more effectively;
3. Lead society as a whole to adopt wiser policies that promote children's well-being.

How does development occur?

- One of the major aims of developmental psychology is to explain patterns of development, using scientific methods, in order to discover what drives processes of growth and change.
- Is development a natural or a social and cultural process?
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEnkY2iaKis>

Contentious theoretical debates

- Development as control and discipline (Hobbes – authoritarianism)
- Development as natural stages (Rousseau – nativism)
- Development as experience (Locke – rationalism/empiricism)
- Development as interaction (Kant – interactionism)

Issues in Developmental Psychology

- Nature versus nurture
- Continuity versus discontinuity
- Active versus passive development
- Universal versus particularistic

Nature versus nurture

- One of the oldest controversies within developmental psychology is the *nature/nurture* issue.
- i.e. Are human beings shaped by their heredity (nature), or are they shaped by the environment, both physical and social, (nurture), in which they are raised?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PyUfG9u-P4>

Activity versus passivity

- Another enduring theme within developmental psychology is the *activity/passivity* issue.
- i.e. Are children active participants in their own development or passive recipients of environmental influences?
- The contemporary viewpoint leans towards an active child rather than a passive child, but is best described as a continuous *reciprocal interaction* between the child and his/her environment (*reciprocal determinism*).

Continuity versus discontinuity

- *Continuity theorists* view human development as changing gradually and quantitatively.
- *Discontinuity theorists* view human development as changing abruptly and qualitatively.

(*Quantitative* changes refer to changes in *degree*; *qualitative* changes refer to changes in *kind*).

Universal or Particularistic

- *Universal* development - normative developmental outcomes that all individuals display.
- E.G. Language acquisition.
- *Particularistic* development – developmental outcomes that vary from individual to individual.
- E.G. Personality.

Periods of development

- The prenatal period (from conception to birth);
- Infancy and toddlerhood (from birth – 2 yrs);
- Early childhood (from 2-6 yrs);
- Middle childhood (from 6-11 yrs);
- Adolescence (from 11-18 yrs).



Theoretical orientations

- Ethological
- This approach is concerned with the contribution of human evolution to human psychology.
- It assumes that behaviour and development depend on inborn motives that are species-specific due to natural selection.
- E.G. Reading ability.

Theoretical orientations

- Psychoanalytic
- This approach seeks to understand human behaviour in terms of unconscious drives and motives that stem from early life experiences.
- E.G. Freud and the Psychosexual stages of development.

Theoretical orientations

- Behaviourist / Learning
- This approach argues that human behaviour is learned through conditioning (i.e., reinforcement and punishment).
- E.G. Little Albert
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9hBfnXACsOI>

Theoretical orientations

- Social Learning
- This approach argues that human behaviour is learned through observation.
- E.G. Bandura
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YclZBhn40hU>

Theoretical orientations

- Cognitive Developmental
- This approach attempts to understand developments in children's thinking in terms of the acquisition of new mental operations.
- E.G. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FjIso13i20>

Theoretical orientations

- Contextual Developmental
- This approach attempts to understand developments in children's thinking in terms of their social environment.
- E.G. Watson, Vygotsky, Gilligan.