

ASSIGNMENT TITLE: PSYCHOLOGY FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Essay

By

Richard Kanjoma

ID: 1916228

TEACHER:DIYA ANGULY

Introduction

In this essay, the student explains psychological perspectives focusing on the stages of development and also examines the knowledge, experiences, emotions and behaviors of children at each based on different theories. The discussion of these theories and perspectives will center on development aspects such as social, emotional and cognitive growth. The question in the mind is to find out “Why do children behave the way they do”? Therefore we shall base on theories and domains to understand why children behave the way they do at different stages whether it is attributed to age, family relations or the individual abilities. The essay also looks at the role of these theories in health and social care with a strong belief that if social workers, nurses and doctors, care takers, teachers, and parents, then it will be easy to improve the health and wellbeing of children by preventing, addressing health disparities and promote psychological health as children grown up. The developmental theories discussed in this essay are the “Cognitive Theory of Development” and “Bowlby’s Attachment Theory” while the perspectives include; behavioral, biological, social learning, cognitive and humanistic.

Piaget’s Theory of Cognitive Development

According to this theory, Piaget (1932) believed that children are naturally “inquisitive” and therefore development of children is centered on thinking, though not at the same level of thinking with adults. In this theory, Piaget explained that humans acquire knowledge gradually depending on the learning experiences from children and throughout the stages of growth. According to Piaget, knowledge development in children translates from stage to stage from what he termed as “biological maturation” and the experienced they get in the environments where they live. Children combine new discoveries in the environment and those they already know and adjust ideas accordingly as they grow up. (McLeod, S.A, 2012).

Under this theory, Piaget provided four stages of development, however, for the purposes of this essay that focuses on infants, the focus has been put on the first three stages of development

Sensorimotor stage

Sensorimotor stage is first stage of development in children from the time they are born until they acquire a language. (Tuckman, Bruce & David, 2010). Piaget believed that children at this stage use their sense of hearing and vision to gradually acquire knowledge and understanding as they physically interact with objects around them. (Bernsten, Pemer & Clark-Stewart). At this stage, children start realizing that the environment is separate from. They can think about things in the environment in their minds. This can be shown by “objects permanence”, for example, Santrock, J.W (2008) demonstrated through “peek-a-boo” game to show that children understand that an “object continues to exist even if they can’t see them or hear them”. P. 211-216. According to the “Peek-a-boo” game hiding and revealing of face while playing with a child, it shows that children develop a permanent sense of object and self. (Santrock, 2008).

Birth to 6 weeks

At this stage, children begin to experience simple reflexes especially around the objects they play with or see. For example, they will start doing things like object sucking in the mouth. This is common in children of 0-6 weeks because they enjoy putting objects in their mouth, whatever they come across. Children also start having reflexes like following objects with their eyes and grasping objects in their palms. (Piaget, J. 1977).

6 weeks to 4 months

At this stage, first habits & primary circular reactions. For example children are used to sucking the mother's breast and milk bottles and will have habits of sucking fingers. The primary circular reactions are those things that occur to a child by chance so the child tends to do it repeatedly for example making bubbles and playing with saliva bringing the tongue in and out.

4 Months to 8 months

Piaget referred to this stage as a secondary reaction phase. He added that at this stage, children do things for pleasure. At this stage, children start doing things deliberately for fun and pleasure. The task at this stage is to feel good by what they do even if it is bad. And if stopped, the children gets angry by screaming and crying. For example, a child may enjoy playing with a switch by switching on and off just for pleasure.

8 months to 12 months

According to Piaget (1977), this is a very important stage because start coordinating vision with and their brain is now awake. He termed this stage as the "first proper intelligence" because a child start having goals. They start having goals within their minds. For example, a child can be told eat food and when she finishes, then playing will start. The goal is play so the child will enjoy the act of eating so as to finish and play.

12 months to 18 months

This stage characterized by "tertiary circular reactions, novelty and curiosity" now that the child is growing and starting experience new things. ((Piaget, J. 1977). At this stage, a child wants to discover new things and is very curious about how things appear the way they do. A child begins to discover new ways to meet his/her goals. This is the stage where kids get much trouble trying to discover things for example getting burnt trying to discover how it feels touching fire. The question in their mind is "why does mummy stop me from getting near fire", so when they get a chance alone, they touch the fire and get burnt out of curiosity. Finally, from 18 months to 12 months, curiosity turns into creativity.

Preoperational stage

From 2 to 7 years, the child begins to learn how to speak and becomes very active with much love to play. At this stage, a child is able to perform tasks mentally but not physically; this is to say that they can do tasks with their minds and they can use symbols to imagine a play even when the objects are not physically there. For example a child can drive a car in her mind but not physically with knowledge acquired from playing with toy cars. They begin seeing things at a different point of view and it is difficult to consider the views of others. A child may think that playing under rain is fun and may not understand a mother's view point if stopped.

At the symbolic function sub stage, from 2 years to 4 years, a child can remember and understand by picturing objects in their minds without having the object physically. (Marwaha et al., 2018).

At the intuitive sub stage, children are between the ages of 4 and 7 years and they keep wondering in their minds asking how come and why do things appear the way they are. They are too curious with too many questions and they have primitive reasoning. The curiosity comes up because the children realize they have too much knowledge but they do not know how they acquire it, therefore they start asking too many questions and reasoning to find out. If explained to, they can understand but cannot analyze. (Marwaha, Goswami & Vashit, 2018).

Finally, concrete operational stage for the children between 7 and 11 years where children are in their middle childhood and preadolescence stage. Children here can solve problems that involve objects and their thoughts are now mature in that they can draw conclusions from observations involving objects and can understand other people's point of view. At each stage, in the mind of a child, there is new knowledge acquired and this guides how a child behaves and operates. (Papalia et al, 2008, p.34).

Bowlby's Attachment Theory

Bowlby's attachment theory looks at the importance of early childhood and emotional bonds with the mothers or care givers in regards to social, emotional and cognitive development. According to Bowlby (1969), a child is psychologically connected to their mothers which he termed as attachment. P.194.

Pre-attachment stage

The first stage under pre-attachment is from birth to 6 weeks and this stage, the baby is neutral and shows no particular attachment to a specific person whether it is the mother, care giver or any other person. So at this stage, the attachment is initiated by mother or care giver. For example, if the baby is crying and then the mother or care giver comes to attend to the baby, the baby may or may not stop crying, positive response by stopping to cry makes the mother close to the baby and hence an attachment is made.

Indiscriminate attachment

This occurs between 6 weeks of growth to 7 months where a child begins to show sides and preference of the person they want to spend time with. This preference is dependent on how the parties involved treat this child. A child prefers someone he/she can and this based on how they respond to a child's needs. At this stage, a child begins to identify familiar and unfamiliar faces can demonstrate by crying or resisting whenever the unfamiliar people try carrying the child.

Discriminate attachment

At this stage, a child is over 7 months of growth and he/she begins to show strong attachment to care givers since they spent a lot of time together. It is at this stage where the children show separation anxiety and they always show a certain level of distress when separated from the people they prefer. The distress is demonstrated by crying and being violent and they will begin showing stranger anxiety whenever they are around strangers.

Multiple attachment

Children from 10 months of age and above begin to grow bonds with other people around them. The bond usually expands from care giver to mother, father, and siblings or to grandparents. The way these people treat the child impacts a lot on the future behavior of the child. Those who are comforted and shown love grow up more secure and confident and the reverse is true.

Overall, from all the stages, Bowlby believed that nurturance and responsiveness to a child needs let attachment, quickness and consistency in providing for a child gives a child trust, security and this make a child stronger in future especially in his/her romantic relationships .

Perspectives of Psychological development in children and how they are important in health and social care.

Biological perspective

A child grows up, genetics and physiology have a strong impact on their behavior and emotions. Therefore is important to understand that nature and genes can influence the way someone behaves. In children, autism is very common and their behavior, emotions and feelings can be attributed to this which biological. According to American Psychiatric Association (2013), people dealing with children like child therapists and child psychotherapists should understand that children behave depending on natural factors should therefore use this approach to understand their needs.

Social learning perspective

This theory is based on the assumption that children learn things by observing people and the environment where they stay, which was termed as "observational learning" by the psychologists. Family relationships have a big impact on the behavior and emotions of children as they grow; caring and encouraging parents bring up a child that is emotionally upright while

violet parents who lock children in rooms, beating them, sexually abusing them will eventually cause strange behaviors in a children and it affects how he/she grows up. While designing a care plan for a child, a care giver should look at the family relationships, environment, cultural differences to better understand their needs because these impact on the actions and behavior of a child.

Cognitive perspective

For child therapists and child psychotherapists while carrying out “cognitive behavioral therapy, it is important that they should assess a child’s needs by focusing on the cause of strange behavior the child is exhibiting. (NICE, 2017). A nurse, doctor or care giver should keep records of thoughts, emotions, actions and body feelings because these partners are helpful in helping a child get rid of undesirable behavior. (Fairburn et al, 2015). A therapist should also focus on replacing negative thoughts with positive thoughts.

Humanistic perspective

This perspective was designed to represent people’s idea of free will portraying that anyone has the chance to make their own choices. In a social care setting like a school, teachers should show and teach other students about empathy to those children with psychological conditions and other illnesses as an emotional support. Giving such children a voice and a chance to make choices shows that they are valued and will in turn encourage them to be confident, feel worthwhile and competent. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). “If the children are criticized and told that they are not good, they will grow up behaving with low self-esteem”, therefore, teacher and other people in a social care setting should understand children’s feelings, beliefs and emotions without being judgmental.

Conclusion

From the theories and perspectives discussed, the common feature revealed is that at each stage of development, a child acquires new knowledge and experiences as they grow up step by step. Children behave and act depending on their biological genetics and physiology, observational behavior got from the society, psychodynamic perspective that every behavior has a cause. Therefore, we can conclude that children’s behavior, feelings, beliefs and emotions are determined by a mixture of things depending on the family relationships, society they grow up from and the genes.

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