

Module: Psychology in Health and Social Care

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Introduction

This report will look into psychology in health and social care. Psychology is defined as the scientific study of the mind and how it works as well as the behaviour of humans and animals (Cambridge dictionary, 2023). Moreover, behaviour is defined as the way a person or animals acts in response to what is happening around them. It can be voluntary or involuntary; rational or irrational and covert or overt. For example, a person's reaction may stay the same or they may change their reaction. Furthermore, internally their thoughts and feelings may change but their response to the things and people around them may not change (NSW Health,2020). There are various fields of psychology such as social psychology, personality psychology, clinical psychology, counselling psychology , school and educational psychology and developmental psychology. This report will be focusing on developmental psychology which is defined as the scientific study that explains how humans develop, change and grow from birth to old age (Cherry,2023). Furthermore, Psychological lifespan theories such as psychosexual by Sigmund Freud and psychosocial theory by Erikson will be discussed. As well as, birth order theory by Adler. Finally, these psychological frameworks will be linked to how it can be used by a professional working in a health and social care setting.

Sigmund Freud's Psychosexual theory

There are various psychological theories which aim to provide theories about human lifespan. For example, cognitive theory of development, theory of moral development, psychosocial theory of development and psychosexual theory of development. These all fall under development psychology which studies human development as mentioned in the introduction.

Sigmund Freud's psychosexual theory of human development includes five stages of progression by age.

The five stages are Oral, Anal, Phallic, Latency And Genital. Freud believes that an adult's ability to function well is dependent on their childhood and how well they navigated these five stages. Moreover, Freud claimed that a person may become frustrated, overindulge or fixation on a particular psychosexual stage if they are unable to process conflict/difficulty that occurs in each stage successfully. Libido or (id) in Freud's theory is in reference to instinctual natural sexual urges (McLeod, 2023a).

The Oral stage begins at birth and lasts until one year of age. The focus in this stage is the mouth as a source of pleasure as it is used for sucking and biting. A child who is not weaned properly and does not successfully become less dependent on their parents due to their needs not being met may develop oral fixation in adulthood which results in excessive eating, drinking and smoking.

Anal stage lasts between one to three years of age. The focus is now the anus instead of the mouth as pleasure arises from defecating. Successful toilet training results in the child becoming more independent. However, this is dependent on the parent's strict parents or parents who toilet train too early can result in adults who are obsessive, neat and strict instead of creative and confident. However, overly- lenient parents could result in adults who are messy and unorganised.

The Phallic stage lasts between three and six years of age. The focus is the genitals and masturbation as a source of pleasure, they finally become aware of the opposite sex.

Conflict can arise as jealousy and rivalry between the child and caregivers. The Oedipus

complex where boys desire their mothers and are jealous of their fathers occurs whereas the Electra complex where girls desire their fathers and are envious of their mothers as well as being envious of boys for having a penis. Shyness and low self esteem can arise due to this conflict.

Latency lasts between six years until puberty. This stage refers to dormant sexual feelings where children develop strong friendships with the same sex and establish interests outside of their family such as through hobbies, schools and activities. Fixation in this stage leads to inability to form relationships and immaturity.

Lastly, Genital starts at the beginning of puberty and continues throughout adulthood. The focus of pleasure is through sexual intercourse and romantic relationships. Freud believes that by this stage the individual should be well rounded and caring if all the other stages have been completed successfully. The aim of this stage is to balance all the other areas of life as the focus is no longer purely on individual needs but the need for others now also grows (Tantry, 2020). A criticism of Freud's theory is that it is difficult to test his theory scientifically and that his focus is on male development, specifically the penis envy theory.

Erik Erikson adapted Freud's theory by modifying it to become a psychosocial theory. In comparison to Freud, Erikson believed that within the eight stages of conflict there is a psychosocial conflict (society's impact on mental and physical wellbeing) that could either negatively or positively impact development and personality formation. Unlike Freud, Erikson addressed the fact that different cultures undergo the stages in different ways due to survival and cultural practices (Bishop, 2013). Erikson's stages include: Infancy, early childhood, pre-school, school age, adolescence, young adults, adulthood and old age. The crisis relate to each stage and include: Trust vs Mistrust, Autonomy vs Shame, Initiative vs Guilt, Industry vs Inferiority Identity vs Role confusion, Intimacy vs Isolation, Generativity vs Stagnation and Ego integrity vs Despair (McLeod, 2023b).

Adler's Birth order theory

A psychological framework that is of personal interest is the Birth order theory by Alfred Adler. This theory claims that personality as well as life outcome is determined by which order a person is born into a family. Furthermore, he claims that "perceived" birth order has a more significant implication than numerical. Adler suggests that first borns tend to be high achievers, controlling and have an authoritarian personality due to the need to set examples to younger siblings. Whereas, middle children can be competitive and rebellious or people pleasers and even tempered due to lack of attention. Furthermore, the youngest child of the family tends to be self-centred and outgoing due to the attention being given by older siblings and parents. This theory is relatable because as the middle child I have had to adopt the first born position and have therefore undertaken more responsibility which has led to a reliable and cautious personality trait.

Freud's theory differs from Adler's theory as it focuses on past experiences, claims people have little choice in shaping their personality, places emphasis on the unconscious desires and minimises all motivation to sex whereas Adler claims people are motivated by society's influence and are aware of their actions and motives (Saya Des Marais, 2022).

Reflection

Within a health and social care setting professionals can use psychological health behaviour theories such as self efficacy by psychologist Bandura is defined as an individual's perceived ability to succeed in a particular situation (Lopez-Garrido, 2023). A person with a high self efficacy may eat a healthy balanced diet, be more resilient to life's stressors and be a high achiever. Professionals such as nurses can use Self- efficacy techniques such as 'Modeling' which is when a patient witnesses another person with a similar condition completing a task successfully or achieving their desired outcome. For example, support groups for Cancer or Diabetes. Another technique is 'Social persuasion' which is when a person is persuaded into believing they are capable of succeeding (Buckworth,2017). Professionals can utilise this by providing realistic and short- term goals. For example, a quit smoking campaign. Moreover, NHS talking therapies services can also offer guided self help for people experiencing mental health disorders.

Conclusion

In conclusion, developmental psychology allows us to study behavioural changes in humans as they grow and age. Freud's psychosexual theory highlights that successful progression of the five stages Oral, Anal, Phallic, Latency and Genitals leads to a well rounded individual who is able to prioritise their needs as well as the needs of others. However, failure to deal with conflict within each stage can lead to fixation of a particular stage/ stages which can lead to low self esteem, inability to form healthy interpersonal relationships and unhealthy habits such as smoking. However, criticisms of Freud include that it is difficult to scientifically prove or disprove his theory as well as the argument that his theory was focused heavily on male development. Moreover, Erikson who adapted Freud's theory into a psychosocial theory aimed to also address cultural implications of development as it looked at societies impact on personality formation. Furthermore, Adler believes that the order in which a person is born into a family can impact a person's personality and outcome. This differs from Freud who places emphasis on sex and aggression as motivation rather than the need to succeed according to Adler. Lastly, health care professionals can benefit from psychological frameworks such as Self-efficacy by Bandura which claims that an individual's belief that they can succeed can impact their life choices so a person with a higher self efficacy is able to make healthier lifestyle choices and are typically less affected by stress.

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