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Module Title :	BMHP4003
Assignment Title	Applying Psychological Perspectives in Health And Social Care
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Applying Psychological perspectives in Health and Social Care

This essay will explore the ways in which Erikson's psychological theories are applied to health and social care practice, with emphasis on myself. I will reflect on the stages of crisis according to Erikson, while exploring my role in the healthcare profession by applying the learnt crisis in my duty to care, and then discuss how I would relate this to health and social care practice. To summarise, I will focus on Erikson's theory of psychosocial crisis and relate this to my own life.

Table 1. The Life Cycle Completed: A Psychosocial Understanding of Human Development

	Stages	Psychosocial crises	Radius of significant relations	Basic strengths	Core pathology
I	Infancy 0–1½ years	Basic Trust vs Basic Mistrust	Maternal person	Hope	Withdrawal
II	Early Childhood 1½–3 years	Autonomy vs Shame, Doubt	Parental persons	Will	Compulsion
III	Play Age 3–6 years	Initiative vs Guilt	Basic family	Purpose	Inhibition
IV	School Age 6–12 years	Industry vs Inferiority	'Neighbourhood', school	Competence	Inertia
V	Adolescence 10–24/26 years	Identity vs Identity Confusion	Peer groups and out groups; models of leadership	Fidelity	Repudiation
VI	Young Adulthood 18/22–40 years	Intimacy vs Isolation	Partners in friendship, sex, competition, cooperation	Love	Exclusivity
VII	Adulthood 30–65 years	Generativity vs Stagnation	Divided labour and shared household responsibilities	Care	Rejectivity
VIII	Old Age 55–60+ years	Integrity vs Despair	'Mankind, my kind'	Wisdom	Disdain

(Batra, 2013)

AUTONOMY VS. SHAME

The first crisis I will focus on, is autonomy vs. shame. I will explore how this works in a childcare setting by exploring how this relates to childcare practices. I will then relay the crisis from an educational perspective by evaluating the best practice and its strength or weakness. I will explore how this relates to my own life in terms of how I practice, and how effective it is.

Autonomy vs. shame stage is described by Batra as the following:

“For instance, a toddler who has an urge to experience autonomy for the first time in life must find an understanding of the need to balance social norms and personal freedom through and under sensitive parental guidance. The basic virtue that emerges at this stage is a sense of Will to make choices that are relevant for the present and subsequent ages.” (Batra, 2013)

Immediately, the inference from this quote is without balance, or a sense of balance of society and expectations the child will struggle. The idea of “finding” an understanding is a proactive continuous action. However, the discussion is more veered toward what is sensitive parental guidance. This is where we can discuss the educational aspect, because ideally the child is now subject to a crossroads. The child must decide how and when to balance regulation with education. In a childcare setting, “...emotional strength to cope with the challenge of autonomy and related regulation at a later stage in life. Awareness of the importance of negotiating and surmounting the social and emotional challenges of life offers opportunities for healing and resolution, and for self-regulation through intuitive growth and/or professional counselling” (Batra, 2013) so, in an educational view, for example the child has learnt in a nursery setting to behave a certain way, while at home it may conflict with something the parent is sensitive about. Batra gives an illustration, “Picture the plight of the young baby who has recently learnt to walk and whose joy in her new-found ambulatory ability is constantly undercut with cries of ‘no’, ‘not there’, ‘not here’. A new set of anxieties related to safety curtail her evolving desire for autonomy and her urge to explore her world. New and often incomprehensible rules deny her the

space for exploring and fulfilling her inner urges”. So, a strength of this perspective is to approach the development with sensitivity, but the weakness is that if as a parent the child is not met with “yes, no,”/ right and wrong, the balance between autonomy and exploration is now imbalanced. To relate this to how I practice and toward my career goal in this instance, is to simultaneously incorporate autonomy as a encouraged entity of children’s learning, and give them support they need to avoid them feeling any sense of guilt, which I believe is the most effective interpretation of this.

INITIATIVE VS. GUILT

The second crisis I will focus on, is initiative vs. guilt. I will explore how this works in a childcare setting by exploring how this relates to childcare practices. I will then relay the crisis from an educational perspective by evaluating the best practice and its strength or weakness. I will explore how this relates to my own life in terms of how I practice, and how effective it is. The initiative vs. guilt time during a child's life is something of a swift ever-changing process of the child's development and mental state. It is the fight between assertion and association. The assertion being declaration of the independence of their choices, for example who they play with, what they play, who they encounter with, who they decide is their best friends and what they decide is worth doing and what is not. Saul McLeod, in his paper "Erik Erikson's Stages of Development" he notes that "During this period the primary feature involves the child regularly interacting with other children at school. Central to this stage is play, as it provides children with the opportunity to explore their interpersonal skills through initiating activities." (McLeod, 2018)

In a childcare setting, this means "children begin to plan activities, make up games, and initiate activities with others. If given this opportunity, children develop a sense of initiative and feel secure in their ability to lead others and make decisions. Conversely, if this tendency is squelched, either through criticism or control, children develop a sense of guilt. The child will often overstep the mark in his forcefulness, and the danger is that the parents will tend to punish the child and restrict his initiatives too much." (McLeod, 2018) so, in childcare practice, it is the idea that without frequent interaction, the child is unable to truly establish his or her interpersonal skills. Without the blossoming of this initiative, the desire or the drive to do things that they believe will lead to their happiness or their satisfaction, the child will be unable to tap into their imagination. Without fantasy, without imagination, how can the child simultaneously solve the problem of reality and make-believe? McLeod phrases this perfectly, suggesting "It is at this stage that the child will begin to ask many questions as his thirst for knowledge grows. If the parents treat the child's questions as trivial, a

nuisance or embarrassing or other aspects of their behaviour as threatening then the child may have feelings of guilt for “being a nuisance”. Too much guilt can make the child slow to interact with others and may inhibit their creativity. Some guilt is, of course, necessary; otherwise the child would not know how to exercise self-control or have a conscience.

A healthy balance between initiative and guilt is important. Success in this stage will lead to the virtue of purpose, while failure results in a sense of guilt.” (McLeod, 2018) however, this is where we look at strengths and weakness. A strength of this psychological perspective is that without a doubt, exploration within and without an educational nursery is always going to be positive toward the overall development of the child. But, as Batra puts it below, stifling this process is far more dire than stifling the first crisis.

“The urge to explore the surroundings and to experiment with simple objects is now trapped beneath the pressure to conform to external forces and to develop an emerging morality based on self-regulation, reason and congeniality... these conflicts ... affects the development of the child’s system of emotional regulation during this stage. Where a sense of initiative is denied psychological, social and physical space for its emergence and development, a sense of guilt can grow to become an obsession, leading to perpetual self-doubt. Where the child is not trusted to find her own moral responsibility in resolving conflicts with peers, or in dealing with her fantasies and desires to live out her own dreams and to act in her own interest, she will turn her ‘rage’ towards herself and live with a sense of inhibition....” (Batra, 2013)

In this instance as opposed to the first crisis, the weakness outweighs the strengths, and puts more emphasis on the sensitivity or even the tolerance of the parent in relation to stifling the creativity of the child. In terms of how I practice, and how effective it is I can look at my career goal in this instance, to simultaneously incorporate socialising as an encouraged entity of children’s learning, and give them support they need to discover themselves through playing with others, while also exploring their own creativity, I believe this is the most effective practice.

INDUSTRY VS. INFERIORITY

The third crisis I will focus on, is industry vs. inferiority. I will explore how this works in a childcare setting by exploring how this relates to childcare practices. I will then relay the crisis from an educational perspective by evaluating the best practice and its strength or weakness. I will explore how this relates to my own life in terms of how I practice, and how effective it is. Industry vs. inferiority is stage four in Erikson's stages. This typically happens between ages 6-11. In a childcare setting, a child who proves to find a certain subject or study difficult, needs reassurance and support in order to avoid feeling their importance is measured or validated by the progress of the subject. In education, the psychosocial aspect of the expanding world around the child is key in maintaining their emotional maturity. If a child struggles in school without the proper support around them the child will feel as though they are the ones to blame. In Kendra Cherry's paper "Industry vs. Inferiority in Psychosocial Development: Stage Four of Psychosocial Development", she demonstrates the idea of the importance of building relationships that allow for exploration, which leads to self-confidence, another aspect that could encourage the feeling of inferiority.

"Friends and classmates play a role in how children progress through the industry versus inferiority stage. Through proficiency at play and schoolwork, children are able to develop a sense of competence and pride in their abilities. By feeling competent and capable, children are able to also form a strong self-concept. During social interactions with peers, some children may discover that their abilities are better than those of their friends or that their talents are highly prized by others. This can lead to feelings of confidence. In other cases, kids may discover that they are not quite as capable as the other kids, which can result in feelings of inadequacy." (Cherry, 2020)

To look at the strength and weakness of this psychosocial perspective, in childcare practice, we can infer one strength of industry vs. inferiority is the idea that lack of support means a child will blame themselves and allow for feelings of guilt to grow to the point that they will give up. In practice, you must evaluate how effective it is to allow room for individual exploration or being there every step of the learning, which could interfere with creativity or confidence building. This could be, in laymen's terms, the idea of trial and error. The weakness, however, is that it could be inferred that the support is

a form of control, that the child will not be open to doing things differently to the norm imposed on them. Therefore, to evaluate, this psychological perspective seems to be just slightly more beneficial than disadvantageous. In terms of how I practice and how this relates to my career goals, I place significant focus on making sure a child always feels encouraged no matter how they feel they are progressing.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this essay looked at the psychological perspective of Erikson on different lifespan stages. This essay is structured as a reflective essay that focused on the ways in which psychological theories are applied to my health and social care practice, with emphasis on my career goals. I focused on three stages, autonomy vs. shame, initiative vs. guilt, and industry vs. inferiority. I concluded that autonomy vs. shame contributed to my career goal by incorporating it into my daily practice. I concluded that initiative vs. guilt was especially important stage to incorporate as it dwells on the emotional side of things. I concluded that industry vs. inferiority contributed to my career goal of being a consistent but not overbearing support system. Overall, this psychological theory has been applying to my own career goals and practice successfully.

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