

Psychology in Health and Social Care



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Applying Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory to Jenny's Development

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Jenny Situation

- This is a support plan for Jenny, a 16-year-old who has been a young carer for the past five years.
- After losing her father, Jenny became the main person supporting her mother, who has mobility issues, memory problems, forgetfulness, and low mood.
- Jenny helps with cooking, cleaning, shopping, and administrative tasks, taking on responsibilities usually expected of an adult.

The presentation uses Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to explore how these caring duties may have affected Jenny's development and shaped her needs.

The aim is to understand the impact of her caring role and identify the most suitable support plan to promote her well-being and ensure her needs are met.



Introduction

- This presentation examines the impact of Jenny's experiences as a young carer on her development.
 - Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory is used to analyse her past and current situation (Vygotsky, 1978).
 - Biological and environmental influences on development are considered (Blakemore, 2018).
 - Evidence-based strategies are proposed to support Jenny's well-being.
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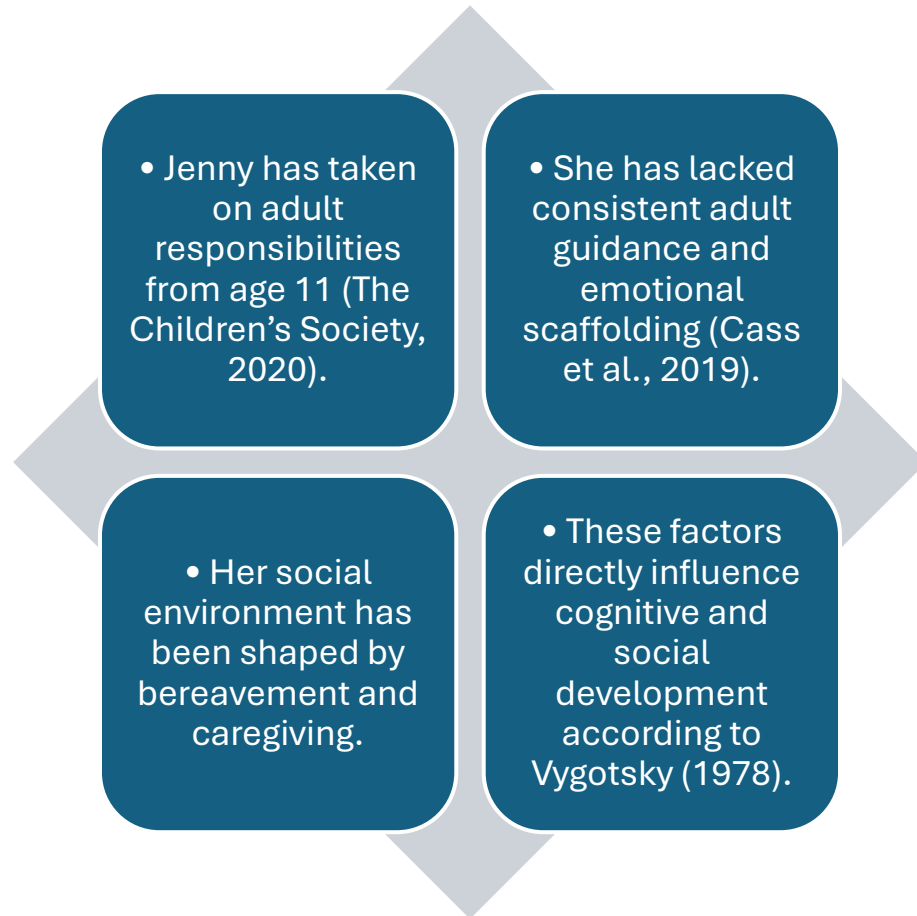
Overview of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

- Development is shaped by social interaction, cultural context, and language (Daniels, 2016).
- Learning occurs through collaboration with more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978).
- Cognitive growth depends on access to guidance, modelling, and support.
- Development is embedded within social and cultural environments.

Key Concepts of Vygotsky's Theory

- Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)
- The gap between independent ability and what can be achieved with support (Vygotsky, 1978).
- Scaffolding
- Temporary guidance provided by adults or peers (Daniels, 2016).
- More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)
- A person who provides expertise or guidance.
- Cultural Tools
- Language, social norms, and shared practices that shape thinking.

Relevance of Vygotsky to Jenny's Situation



Impact of Jenny's Past 5 Years (Environmental Factors)

- Restricted social interaction: Limited opportunities for peer relationships (Joseph, Becker and Becker, 2012).
- Reduced educational engagement: Caring responsibilities may affect concentration and attendance (Cass et al., 2019).
- Emotional strain: Exposure to parental illness, memory problems, and low mood.
- Role reversal: Jenny has acted as the MKO for her mother, which is developmentally inappropriate (Daniels, 2016).
- These experiences may hinder cognitive development within the ZPD due to insufficient adult scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978).

Biological Influences on Jenny's Development



Adolescence involves significant neurological changes affecting emotional regulation (Blakemore, 2018).



Chronic stress associated with caregiving may influence cortisol levels, sleep, and attention (Steinberg, 2017).



Biological factors interact with environmental pressures, shaping psychological development.

Applying Vygotsky to Jenny's Development

- Jenny has been required to perform tasks beyond her developmental stage without adequate support (Cass et al., 2019).



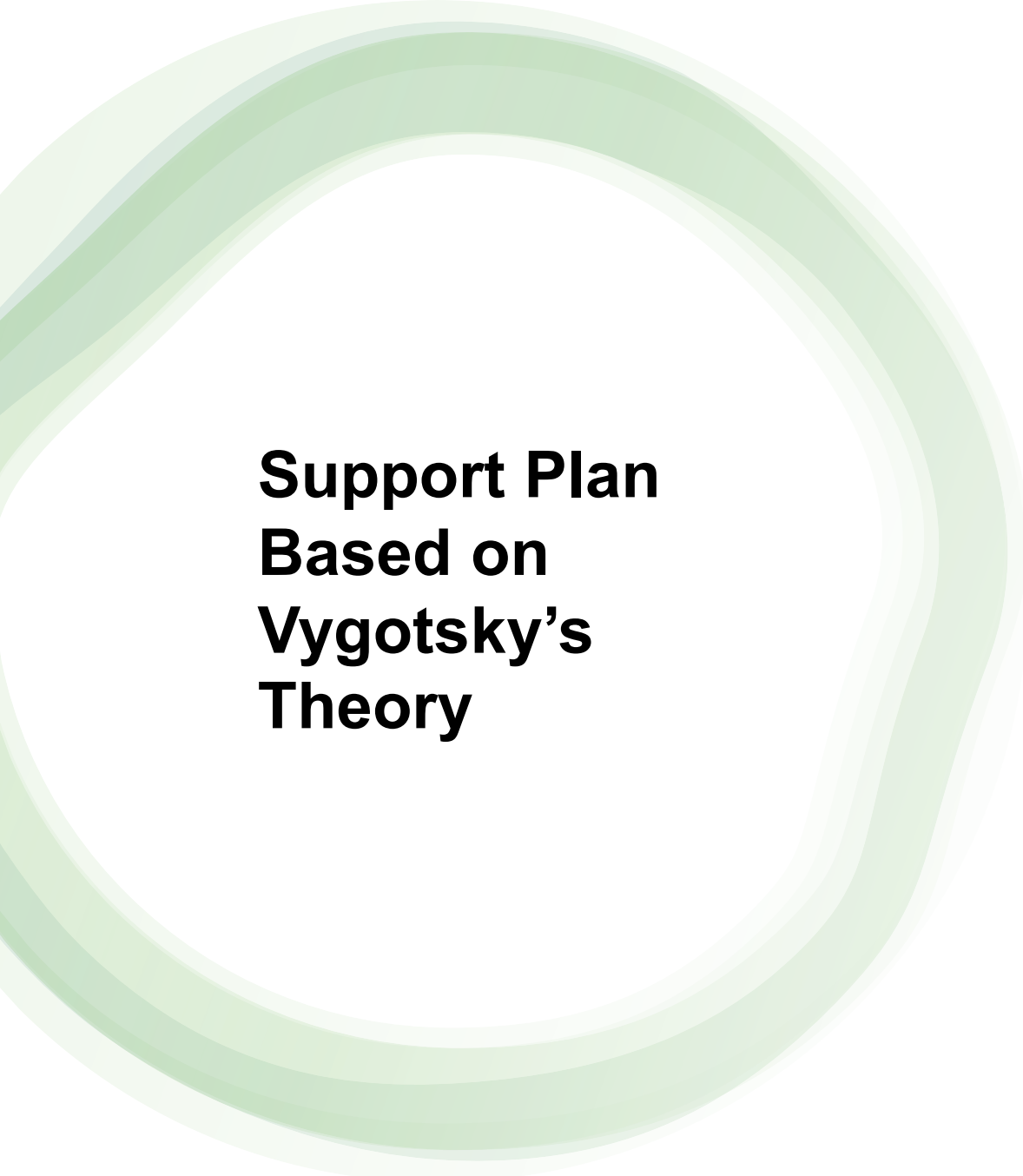
- Lack of MKOs has limited opportunities for guided learning and emotional development (Daniels, 2016).



- Her ZPD may not have been effectively supported, leading to reduced confidence and increased anxiety (Vygotsky, 1978).



- Her cultural environment has shaped her identity and behaviour (Joseph, Becker and Becker, 2012).



Support Plan Based on Vygotsky's Theory

Structured Scaffolding

- Provide consistent adult guidance through a young carers' support worker (DHSC, 2021).

Peer Support

- Encourage participation in young carers' groups to develop social skills (The Children's Society, 2020).

Educational Support

- School-based mentoring to help Jenny progress within her ZPD (Daniels, 2016).

Emotional and Practical Support

- Referral to counselling services to address bereavement and stress (Cass et al., 2019).
- Social services assessment to reduce inappropriate caring responsibilities (DHSC, 2021).

Enhancing Cultural Tools

- Support Jenny in developing communication skills and problem-solving strategies (Vygotsky, 1978).



Nature and Nurture Interaction

- Biological factors (adolescent brain development, stress responses) interact with
 - Environmental factors (caregiving, bereavement, limited social interaction).
 - Vygotsky emphasises that development cannot be separated from social context (Vygotsky, 1978).
 - Jenny's development reflects a combination of biological vulnerability and environmental demands (Blakemore, 2018).

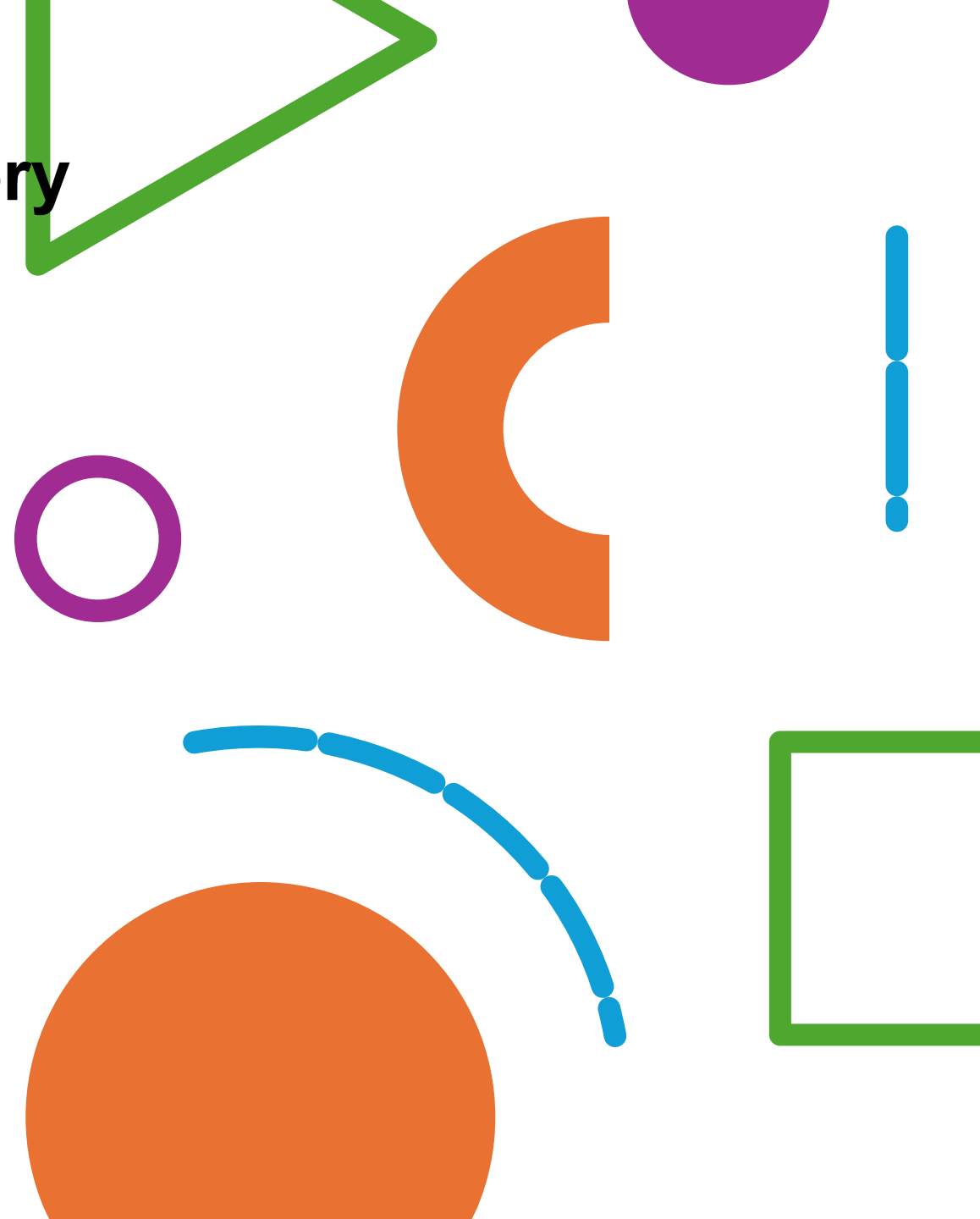
Evaluation of Vygotsky's Theory

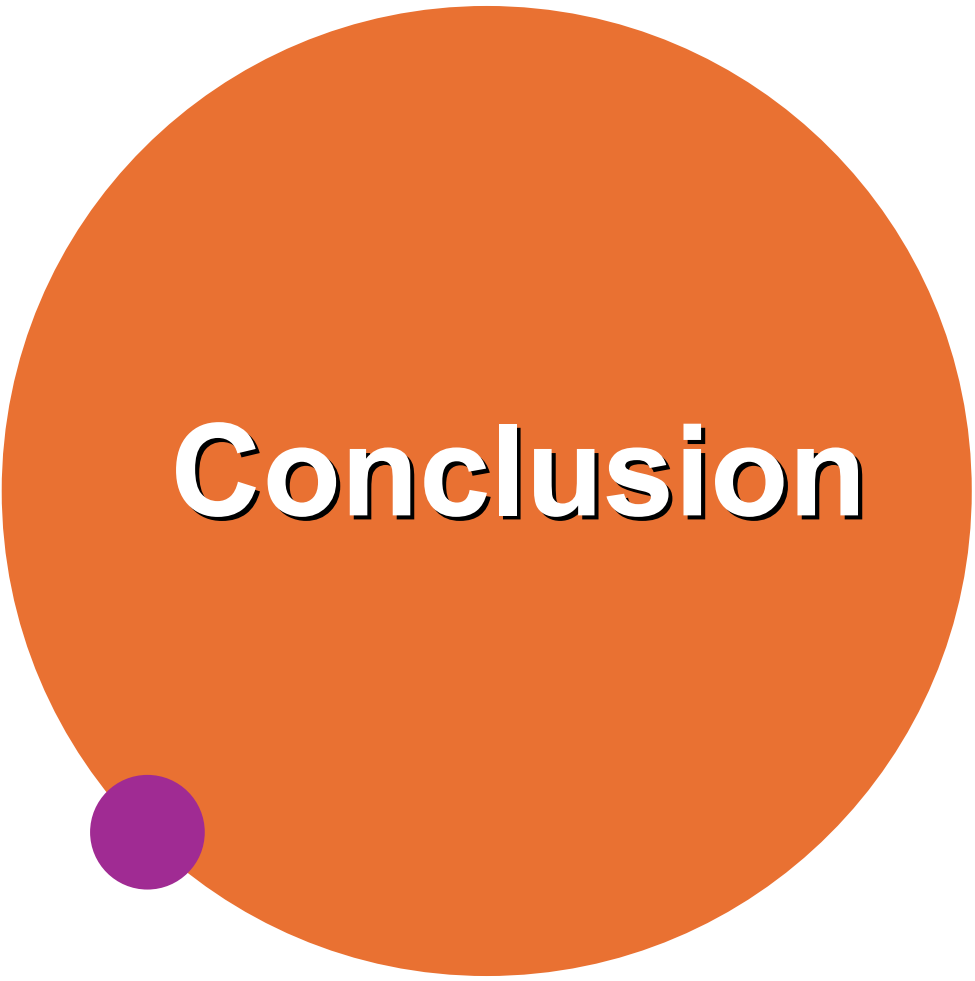
Strengths

- Highlights the importance of social support, which is highly relevant to Jenny (Daniels, 2016).
- Explains how lack of scaffolding can hinder development (Vygotsky, 1978).
- Emphasises cultural and environmental influences (Joseph, Becker and Becker, 2012).

Limitations

- Does not fully address emotional impacts such as grief or trauma (Cass et al., 2019).
- Provides limited explanation of biological influences (Blakemore, 2018).
- Assumes the presence of MKOs, which Jenny has lacked.





Conclusion

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- Vygotsky's theory provides a useful framework for understanding Jenny's developmental challenges.
 - Her experiences demonstrate the importance of social interaction, guidance, and cultural context.
 - A support plan grounded in scaffolding, peer support, and structured intervention can promote her well-being.
 - Both biological and environmental factors must be considered in her ongoing care.



References

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978) *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Daniels, H. (2016) *Vygotsky and Pedagogy*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge. Blakemore, S.J. (2018) *Inventing Ourselves: The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain*. London: Doubleday. Steinberg, L. (2017) 'Adolescence and risk-taking: A social neuroscience perspective', *Developmental Review*, 47, pp. 1–15. Joseph, S., Becker, F. and Becker, S. (2012) *Young Carers Research, Practice and Policy*. London: Routledge. Cass, B. et al. (2019) 'Young carers: Social determinants and mental health outcomes', *Child & Family Social Work*, 24(4), pp. 517–526. The Children's Society (2020) *Hidden from View: The Experiences of Young Carers in England*. Department of Health and Social Care (2021) *Supporting Carers: Policy and Practice Guidance*. London: DHSC.