

Chapter 1

EARLY CHILDHOOD: basic concepts of child and adolescent development

1.1 ORIENTATION: (p.3)

- The monkey boy of KwaZulu-Natal: Saturday Mthiyane
 - o Ate raw meat and vegetables
 - o Could not talk
 - o Died in an orphanage fire
- The boy who became a girl
 - o David – Brenda

1.2 GOALS OF CHILD PSYCHOLOGY: (p.4)

1. Describe the changes typically occurring from conception - 18 years of age
2. Explain what causes the developmental changes
 - o factors that can influence delay
3. Predict, based on past & present characteristics, what behavior a child will manifest later in life
 - o With caution, based on past research
 - o Children are unique, so don't strictly base on generalizations
4. Improve well-being and make positive changes to prevent problems from developing
 - o Done through research

1.3 VIEWS ON CHILDREN - HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: (p.4)

1. Ancient cultures: Children were viewed as property of the parents who could treat them in any way they wanted.
 - o Infanticide (deliberate killing of infants) rates were high – especially when "wrong" gender
 - o Parents went unpunished
2. Middle ages: Concept of childhood ignored, from age of 3/4 seen as miniature adults who had to accept responsibility in the home and in society.
3. 17th century: John Locke's view of the child's mind as the tabula rasa (blank slate).
 - o Held the opinion that children's environment determines who and what they become
 - o Tabula rasa hypothesis states that experience creates a child's personality, this caused a small change in attitude.
 - o Industrial revolution resulted in high child mortality rates due to disease and famine.

- In sub-Saharan Africa – capturing children during inter-tribal raids and wars & using them as slaves was a common practice
4. 20th century: Children initially had no rights. They were at the mercy of parents and the state.
- During Apartheid (1948-1994), inequalities existed between the rights of white and black children → education and healthcare.
 - 1996: The government endorsed Convention of the Rights of the child, the first legally binding mechanism to safeguard a child's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.
5. 21st century: Situation in RSA is still concerning
- Crime, violence, AIDS, poor education, lack of social assistance and abuse are major problems for children.

1.4 DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES AND DOMAINS OF DEVELOPMENT: (p. 7)

Advantages to stage approach:

- good indication of when children are ready for school
- ready to make own decisions on NB matters
- good indication of whether a child's development is above or below the norm
- individual & cultural differences should always be taken into account

1. STAGES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT:

- prenatal stage:
 - Subdivided into the germinal, embryonic and foetal periods
- neonatal stage: & infancy:
 - (first 2-4 weeks of life) & (the subsequent 2 years)
- early childhood:
 - 2-6 years
- middle childhood:
 - 6-12 years (onset of puberty)
- adolescence:
 - puberty to adulthood

2. LEGAL DEFINITION OF A CHILD:

- a person under the age of 18 years

3. DOMAINS OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT:

- Physical
 - Changes in the body (height & weight), includes development of brain and effect of factors such as heredity, hormones and nutrition
 - NB aspect is motor development (motor skills) — sitting, crawling, walking, grasping, etc.
- Cognitive
 - How information is acquired about the world through our senses
 - And then how we process and interpret the information
 - How the info is stored, retrieved and the knowledge used to direct behavior
 - Includes perception, learning, memory, thinking, decision-making, imagination, creativity, language, intelligence (ability to solve problems & adjust effectively to env.)
- Personality
 - It is the totality of a person's psychological, social, moral and physical characteristics
 - Unique to each individual
 - Self is considered the core of personality — most NB characteristic
 - Self-concept is the evaluation of oneself
 - Identity is the way a person identifies themselves in relation to other individuals and social groups
 - The way in which a person controls & express emotions = integral part of personality
- Social
 - Development of individual's interaction & relationships with other people
 - Also refers to the influence of society & significant other persons on the individual
 - Socialization is an aspect of social development, individual acquires socially acceptable behavior through social interaction with others
 - Moral development — person's views concerning what is right & wrong & how judgements are made
 - Religion and spirituality are usually learned in social contexts

1.5 DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES: (p. 10)

1.5.1 nature or nurture (p.10)

- Nature:
 - o biological determinants eg. genetic, neurological and hormonal factors
- Nurture:
 - o environmental factors such as social (e.g. parenting styles) and physical environments (e.g. poverty)
- Debate: is development a result of biological [genetic factors – nature] or environmental influences [nurture]:
 - o Not all arguments are strictly scientific
 - o Encompasses such a wide variety of behaviors – that can support both sides of the argument
 - o Cause-effect issue: causes of specific behaviors are often difficult to prove
- Debate no longer centers around:
 - o *which* of nature or nurture is most NB
- Debate now centers around:
 - o *how* each of these factors contributes to *specific* behaviors, situations and individuals
 - o *interaction* between heredity & environment = much more NB than the respective contribution of each
 - o *unique effect* of interaction = acknowledged (effect of interaction differs btwn individuals)

1.5.2 continuity or discontinuity (p.12)

- Continuous:
 - o *gradual* and *smooth* development
- Discontinuous:
 - o *Abrupt* and occurs in distinct *steps* or *stages*
- Evidence exists for both viewpoints, depending on the type of behavior
- Past and present behavior is the best predictor of future behavior but is not *fully* reliable.
 - o this is specifically relevant where early childhood characteristics predict later life characteristics

Depending on the behavior development is e.g. gradual like the steady growth of a tree or it is comparable with the distinct stages during which a caterpillar changes into a butterfly.

1.5.3 passive or active involvement (p.13)

- Passive involvement:
 - o Child plays no part in own development or the type of behavior
- Active involvement:
 - o Child can influence their own development
- Two questions debated:
 1. The degree to which children can *shape their development*
 2. The *factors responsible* for a child's unique *interpretation & processing* of their world
 - o The unique way in which children emotionally interpret and process their experiences have a significant influence on their development

1.5.4 universality or cultural context (p.13)

- Universal development:
 - o All children in the world follow the same development pathways
- Cultural context:
 - o Developmental pathways are different in different cultures
- Universality (existing worldwide) approach is based on Western viewpoints
- Culture:
 - o refers to the beliefs, norms, customs and general way of life of a specific group of people, which are passed on from generation to generation
 - o it influences development by ensuring children acquire appropriate cognitive, communicative, motivational and socio-emotional or affective and spiritual attributes and practical skills
 - o human development = cultural process
 - o Culture will impact the way in which the parents socialize their children
 - o Behaviour and psychological development can both be affected through cultural viewpoints
- Context:
 - o the setting or specific environment in which development and behavior occur
- Influence of culture should not be overemphasized:
 1. The differences within one culture are often larger than the differences between cultures
 2. Culture is not a static process
 3. Every individual is unique, even within a cultural or sub-cultural context.

1.6 THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT: (p.15)

- Child-developmental theory:
 - o an organized set of ideas that is designed to explain and make predictions about development:
 1. It summarizes and explains presently known facts
 2. Aims to predict future behavior
 3. It stimulates new research

1.6.1 the biological perspective

1. Maturational Theory:

- o *Arnold Gesell* (American psychologist)
- o Child development reflects a specific and prearranged theme within the body
 - Development is simply a natural unfolding of a biological plan (experience matters little)
- o **Discarded:** as there was little information on the impact of the environment on development

2. Ethological Theory:

- o *Konrad Lorenz* (Austrian Zoologist)
- o Development through an evolutionary perspective
 - Contends that behavior tends to be adaptive
- o Biologically programmed so that some kinds of learning occur only at certain stages – *critical periods*
 - Stage of development when a specific type of learning can take place
- o *Imprinting:* form of learning that takes place during a short, early period in the life of an organism when attachment to members of the same species and sometimes to members of some other species occurs

3. Evolutionary Theory:

- o *Charles Darwin*
- o Principle of natural selection:
 - Assumes that much of human behavior results from successful adaptation to the environment
- o Evolution: change in the inherited characteristics over successive generations
 - Could transform individuals and species significantly
 - Social nature is part of evolution – for protection

- Evolutionary developmental psychology:
 - Highlights the adaptive value of children's behavior at different points in development
 - Provides certain insights into the causes of problems and then possible solutions

4. Biological Perspective:

- Research has proved that there is a direct relationship between biological factors & certain forms of behavior that were previously thought to have exclusive psychological origins
 - Has led to a new interest in physiological psychology
- Sub-disciplines:
 1. **Neuropsychology:** focuses on the nervous system & especially the brain and their roles in behavior (looks at development of *neuro-imaging* or *brain scanning*)
 2. **Behavioral genetics:** role of genetic factors in behavior
 3. **Psycho-endocrinology:** relationship between behavior and the endocrine system (especially hormones)

1.6.2 the psychodynamic perspective

- Explores the influence of unconscious psychological motives

1.6.2.1 Freud's psychosexual theory

- *Psychoanalysis:* development is largely determined by how well people resolve the unconscious conflicts that they face at different ages
- Personality has 3 primary components:
 1. **Id:** reservoir of primitive instincts and drives, demands immediate gratification
 - Innate, primary component of the psyche, obtains energy linked to drives
 - **Pleasure principle** → seeks immediate satisfaction without considering consequences
 - **Primary processes** → incapable of thought, self-reflection or planning
 - Capable of wish fulfillment
 2. **Ego:** practical, rational component of personality, try to resolve conflict
 - Begins emerging in 1st year of life (can't always have what it wants)
 - Serves the id's needs by finding suitable objects for drive satisfaction
 - **Reality principle** → takes physical and social reality into account by using conscious and preconscious cognitive processes such as memory and rational thinking

- **Secondary processes** → evaluates a situation before taking action, postpones satisfaction appropriately

3. **Superego:** 'moral agent'

- Emerges during preschool years (internalize adult standards of right & wrong)
- Representative of society's moral codes and serves to pressurize the individual
- **Moral principle** → punishes the individual with guilt over immoral thoughts or behavior

- Series of ***psychosexual stages:***

- child moves in fixed sequence determined by maturation
- *erogenous zone:* body part which is the focus of development in that stage (dominated by sexual instincts)
- *fixation:* problems arise when too much or too little gratification is permitted, and the child does not move on from that stage

| | Psychosexual stage | Approx Age | Description |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------|--|
| 1 | Oral | Birth - 1 year | Mouth. Baby derives oral gratification from sucking. Fixation leads to thumb sucking or nail biting in childhood, and overeating and smoking later in life. |
| 2 | Anal | 1 - 3 | Anal area. Child derives gratification from excretion. Fixation leads to extreme orderliness and cleanliness or messiness and disorder. |
| 3 | Phallic | 3 - 6 | Genitals. Child finds pleasure in genital stimulation. Oedipus complex in boys and Electra complex in girls. Sexual desire for other-sex parent. Superego is formed. |
| 4 | Latency | 6 - 11 | Sexual instincts subside and superego develops further. Child acquires new social values. Energy is channeled in school & social activities. |
| 5 | Genital | Adolescence | Puberty causes sexual impulses to reappear. Leads to mature sexuality, marriage and the birth and rearing of children if successful. |

- Freud's work was criticized:

- for being unreliable as it was based on recollection
- for the fact that many of his concepts have not been empirically proven
- because he overemphasized the role of sexual feelings in development
- for ignoring NB areas such as cognitive development

- Freud noted that:

1. early experiences could have lasting effects on child development
2. children experience moral conflicts btwn what they want to do & what they know they should do
3. he stimulated debate and research

1.6.2.2 Erikson's psychosocial theory

- Emphasized psychological & social aspects of unconscious conflict (rather than biological & sexual aspects)
 - Development exists of a sequence of stages — the name of each stage reflects the challenge that individuals face at a particular stage
 - Earlier stages provide foundation for later stages
- 8 stages of development:

| | Psychosocial stage | Age | Challenge |
|----------|--------------------------------|------------------|---|
| 1 | Basic trust vs mistrust | Birth - 1 year | To develop a sense that the world is a safe and good place |
| 2 | Autonomy vs shame & doubt | 1 - 3 | To realize that one is an independent person who can make decisions |
| 3 | Initiative vs guilt | 3 - 6 | To develop a willingness to try new things and to handle failure |
| 4 | Industry vs inferiority | 6 - adolescence | To learn basic skills and to work with others |
| 5 | Identity vs identity confusion | Adolescence | To develop a lasting, integrated sense of self |
| 6 | Intimacy vs isolation | Young adulthood | To commit to another in a loving relationship |
| 7 | Generativity vs stagnation | Middle adulthood | To contribute to younger people, through child rearing, voluntary community work or other productive work |
| 8 | Integrity vs despair | Late adulthood | To view one's life as satisfactory and worth living |

- The conflicts, challenges or crises emphasizes that the journey to adulthood is difficult because the path is strewn with obstacles.
- Erickson's theory of psychosocial changes captures the essence of personality development better than Freud's theory, although both lack clarity and evidence

1.6.3 the learning theory perspective

- Based on John Locke's view:
 - the infant's mind is a blank slate on which experience writes

1.6.3.1 early learning theories

- John B. Watson
 - Father of behaviorism
 - Theory that behavior is primarily learned from one's environment
 - Influenced by Pavlov and his theory on classical conditioning
 - Performed rat-experiment on Albert

- Concluded that experience was all that mattered in determining the course of development
- *Ivan Pavlov*
 - Classical conditioning:
 - The phenomenon that the repeated pairing of stimuli may lead to new behavior
 - Neutral stimulus → elicits particular response after repeated pairing with an unconditioned stimulus.
- *B.F Skinner*
 - Operant conditioning:
 - Children learn by means of responses from the environment
 - children 'operate' in their environment to attract more rewarding reactions and to avoid punishment
 - Children try avoiding punishment and repeat behavior if it is rewarded
- *Skinner vs. Watson:*
 - Skinner: children learn by means of the responses *from* the environment
 - Watson: focused on children's responses (reactions) *to* the environment

1.6.3.2 social cognitive theory

- Learned behavior without reinforcement or punishment
- Initially termed: social learning theory; now termed: social-cognitive theory
- Observational Learning:
 - known as imitation, modeling or observational learning
- Place more emphasis on children's ability to decide which behavior to model:
 - Influenced by own expectations of consequences
 - Self-efficacy (beliefs about own abilities and potential) is NB
 - Created awareness of the significance of environmental factors
 - Emphasizes the importance of scientific research
- Criticisms:
 - Too much emphasis on environmental factors
 - Inadequate attention paid to biological factors (e.g. genetics)
 - Inadequate attention paid to developmental changes — environmental factors
 - Not a lot of emphasis placed on cultural factors