

Theories of Child Development

Description

This e-book focus on theories of child development. There are many theories but it will focus on Jean Piaget and Brofenbrenner theories, Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson theories, Albert Bandura,. Also, it will look at Piaget and Kohlberg theory of moral development. .

CHAPTER ONE

BROFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

1.0 Introduction

Urie Bronfenbrenner is generally regarded as one of the world's leading scholars in the field of developmental psychology. His Ecological Systems Theory holds that development reflects the influence of several environmental systems, and it identifies five environmental systems. Conceptualized the child's environment as having different interconnected layers nested together with agents that influence the child's development with varying degrees of directness. The systems model involving micro, meso, exo, macro and chronosystems are arranged in rings from those that have direct influence to the child to those whose influence are distant with indirect influence to the child.

1.1 The Systems

The systems include:

- *Micro system* which refers to the setting in which the individual lives. These contexts include the person's family, peers, school, and neighborhood. It is in the micro system that the most direct interactions with social agents take place; with parents, peers, and teachers. The individual is not a passive recipient of experiences in these settings, but someone who helps to construct the settings.
- *Mesosystem* refers to the relationships between micro systems or connections between contexts. Examples are the relation of family experiences to school experiences, school experiences to church experiences, and family experiences to peer experiences. For example, children whose parents have rejected them may have difficulty developing positive relations with teachers.
- *Exosystem*: This involves links between a social setting in which the individual does not have an active role and the individual's immediate context. For example, a husband's or child's experience at home may be influenced by a mother's experiences at work. The mother might receive a promotion that requires more travel, which might increase conflict with the husband and change patterns of interaction with the child.
- *Macrosystem*: Describes the culture in which individuals live. Cultural contexts include developing and industrialized countries, socioeconomic status, poverty, and ethnicity.
- *Chronosystem*: This refers to the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course, as well as socio-historical circumstances. For example, divorce is one transition. Researchers have found that the negative effects of divorce on children often peak in the first year after the divorce. By two years after the divorce, family interaction is less chaotic and more stable. As an example of socio-historical circumstances, consider how the opportunities for women to pursue a career have increased during the last thirty years

Unlike Bronfenbrenner who described the ecological systems as nested within one another, Neal and Neal (2013) maintain that the ecological systems are networked where each system is

CHAPTER FOUR

PIAGET'S THEORY OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

4.0 Introduction

Jean Piaget was born on August 9, 1896 in Neuchâtel, Switzerland. He was a Swiss psychologist who was the first to make a systematic study of the acquisition of understanding in children development. He was the major figure in 20th-century in developmental psychology.

4.1 Key Concepts in Piaget's Theory

Schemas- A schema according to Piaget describes both the mental and physical actions involved in understanding and knowing. Schemas are categories of knowledge that help us to interpret and understand the world. In his view, a schema includes both a category of knowledge and the process of obtaining that knowledge. As experiences happen, this new information is used to modify, add to, or change previously existing schemas. For example, a child may have a schema about a type of animal, such as a dog. If the child's sole experience has been with small dogs, a child might believe that all dogs are small, furry, and have four legs. Suppose then that the child encounters a very large dog. The child will take in this new information, modifying the previously existing schema to include this new information.

Assimilation- The process of taking in new information into our previously existing schema's is known as assimilation. The process is somehow subjective, because we tend to modify experience or information to fit in with our preexisting beliefs. In the example above, seeing a dog and labeling it "dog" is an example of assimilating the animal into the child's dog schema.

Accommodation- Another part of adaptation involves changing or altering our existing schemas in light of new information, a process known as accommodation. Accommodation involves altering existing schemas, or ideas, as a result of new information or new experiences. New schemas may also be developed during this process.

Equilibration - Piaget asserts that all children try to strike a balance between assimilation and accommodation, which is achieved through a mechanism Piaget called equilibration. As children progress through the stages of cognitive development, it is important to maintain a balance between applying previous knowledge (assimilation) and changing behavior to account for new knowledge (accommodation). Equilibration helps explain how children are able to move from one stage of thought into the next.

4.2 Stages of Cognitive Development According to Piaget

4.2.1 Stage 1: Sensorimotor Stage

The first stage of Piaget's theory lasts from birth to approximately age two and is centered on the infant trying to make sense of the world. During the sensorimotor stage, an infant's knowledge

Normally, as the infant experiences the world out of the mother's womb for the first time her or his alertness is very remarkable. The baby's eyes are open and the infant is able to make eye contact in the first few hours. After some hours babies close their eyes in sleep and are unable to open them again for sometime. This could be attributed to the fact that as an infant gets into the world very tired. The new experience puts her or him on the alert. Mothers who are able to stay with their babies for long get more attached to them than those who do not. Initial bonding is believed to prevent later parenting problems because the parent love for the child is deeply rooted.

Phase II: Meshing of Attachment Behaviour

Once a mother gives birth, she is on maternity leave from formal or any other type of employment. This gives mother ample opportunities to interact with their babies in the early months. From the early weeks, the two develop a co-relation attachment or patterns of attachment behaviour.

The baby communicates his needs to the mother or caregiver through crying or smiling. In reciprocation, the caregiver soothes or caresses the baby. Activities that follow a certain signal are usually very important. Such activities may involve, picking the baby and carefully studying the signals in order to appropriately meet his needs. During this period caregivers normally switch to baby play while interacting with them. Baby play involves, changing the voice tone, smiling, blinking, opening eyes wide and such like activities.

Not all adults that interact with the baby become attached to them. There are occasions when one performs the routine requirements but not develop attachment with the baby. For attachment to develop there must be some feelings of affection. Mutual reciprocation in interaction promotes development on affection.

According to Hellen Bee (1997), the parent and child are involved in a kind of a "dance" In this dance, each of the participants learns to respond to the other's actions. To be able to perform well, the two need to engage in frequent rehearsals. As they perform, the smoother the dance, the stronger the attachment becomes.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ALBERT BANDURA SOCIO-COGNITIVE THEORY

7.0 Introduction

The socio-cognitive theory is a learning theory that posits that people learn by watching what others do. It emphasizes that, if people are motivated to learn a particular behaviour, they could do so through clear observation. According to Albert Bandura people acquire complex behaviour through modeling. He explains behaviour in terms of a person's interactions with the environment (either external or internal). Bandura stressed that behaviour, cognition and the environment mutually influence each other, a process called reciprocal determination. For example, the children's television watching habits (past environment) influences their interest or preferences (cognition or personal factor), which in turn determines the channel they select (behaviour).

7.1 Socio-Cognitive Theory

The following are ways in which people interact with environment;

1. Different people prefer different environments. They will make different choice on, for example, the school to attend, the television programme to watch, the music to listen to and the friends to associate with. These environments shape the individual's personality.
2. Different people respond to the environment differently. For example, anxious people are easily distracted. They perceive the world as more threatening and read more anxiously than individuals who are non-anxious.
3. The way people perceive and treat other people influences how they, in turn, treat them. For example, if we are angry at people, they in turn become angry at us. People with easy-going temperaments attract and enjoy close and supportive friendship with others than difficult individuals.

In the development of personality, a person is influenced by two factors. These are:

1. **Observational learning.** This is the ability to learn complex behaviour from watching and imitating others.
2. **Self-regulation** also known as self-efficacy. This involves the ability of individuals to exercise influence over their own behaviour. It involves the thought process because individuals must believe and think how to perform a given behaviour.

7.2 Observational learning process

The following are the main components of observational learning:

1. **The attentional process.** This is perceiving and paying close attention to the model's actions. This involves accurately observing the model in order to imitate.
2. **Retention process.** This involves recalling and remembering the model and its actions over a long period of time. It involves two processes of mental representation/coding of the model's actions and behaviour: These are imagery coding (representing images of the