

Adolescence is the  
period of  
development  
psychology essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Physically adolescents go through numerous changes, with rapid increases in both height and weight. As well as muscle development in boys. Adolescence is also the time when puberty begins. The development of secondary sex characteristics including growth of pubic hair, spermatarche, voice changes, growth of underarm and facial hair, increased production of oil, increased sweat gland activity, and the beginning of acne (Ruffin, 2009). Cognitively adolescents begin developing advanced reasoning skills (being able to think about multiple possibilities), abstract thinking (thinking about things that cannot be seen or touched), and the ability to think about thinking (metacognition - being able to think about how they feel when they are thinking) (Ruffin, 2009). Psychosocial issues that adolescents deal with include: creating an identity; establishing autonomy; establishing intimacy; finding comfort in their sexuality; and achievement. Adolescence is also the time when intimate relationships are established and maintained, as they move toward a mature sense of self and purpose (Ruffin, 2009).

The domain of physical development comprises of adjustments in the body itself and how the individual utilises their body (Hoffnung, 2010). Some changes may be evident, while others not as visible (Hoffnung, 2010). The family environment has been found to influence participation in physical activity (Veitch). Environmental influences on physical development include nutrition; illness; physical environment - socio-economic status, housing; access and involvement in physical activities (Popkin, Duffey, & Gordon-Larsen, 2005). Parental encouragement and participation also plays a significant role in the physical development of the individual (Morrissey, Wenthe, Letuchy, Levy, & Janz, 2012). Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory

relates well with the physical development domain of the lifespan.

Bronfenbrenner divides the individual's environment into four levels: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and the macrosystem (Hoffnung, 2010). The microsystem consists of the people in the individual's immediate environment, eg: parents and siblings. The mesosystem provides connections between microsystems (Hoffnung, 2010). What happens in one microsystem is likely to influence other microsystems, eg: a bad day at school can mean the individual is cranky at home. The exosystem refers to social settings that indirectly affect the individual but still influence their development, eg: a temporary change in work hours of a parent (Program, 2013). Lastly is the macrosystem, the broadest environmental context of all Bronfenbrenner's systems. The macrosystem contains the cultures and subcultures in which the micro-, meso-, and exosystem are embedded (Hoffnung, 2010). Eg: parental workplace, children, and schools are part of a larger cultural setting (Hoffnung, 2010). Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory emphasises all these levels influence on the individual's development (Hoffnung, 2010). For example, people are directly affected by family and friends, and indirectly by neighbourhoods (Hoffnung, 2010).

To relate Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory to the domain of physical development we can link all four systems to the adolescence environment. Microsystem: parental encouragement in physical activity. Physical activity has been shown to be important for adolescent health (Veitch). Adolescents that are active have less cardiovascular risk factors, as well as leaner body mass (Veitch). Mesosystem: physical activities through structured and unstructured activities. Structured activities include organised sports, and

physical education at school. While unstructured include activities such as walking or cycling to school. Exosystem: regular pathway walked to school undergoes road works, therefore affecting the individual's regular route to school. Macrosystem: transferring to another school impacts on the individual's school culture as the adolescent searches for where he/she fits in.

Cognitive development incorporates variations in methods and styles of thinking, language ability and language use, and strategies for remembering and recalling information (Hoffnung, 2010). Adolescents develop abstract thinking in terms of how they think about themselves and the world (Santrock, 2009). Adolescent reasoning skills improve through the use of deductive reasoning, and learn to negotiate problems even in the absence of concrete events (Santrock, 2009). Environmental influences on cognitive development include genetics and environment, parenting behaviours and styles, social peers and interactions, and educators (Tucker & Drob & Harden, 2012).

Piaget's theory of cognitive development focuses on how children construct knowledge and how their constructions change over time (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013). Piaget believed that children naturally try to make sense of their world (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013). Piaget proposed four stages of cognitive development: sensorimotor (birth - 2yrs); preoperational (2 - 7 yrs); concrete operational (7 - 11 yrs); and formal operations (11 - adulthood) (Hoffnung, 2010). Adolescents fall in the formal operations category where they think abstractly, deal with hypothetical situations, and speculate about what may be possible (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013). Adolescents begin forming

<https://assignbuster.com/adolescence-is-the-period-of-development-psychology-essay/>

the ability to perform mental operations with abstract, intangible concepts such as justice and poverty, with the ability to describe the effects of these concepts (Oswalt, 2013). The development of an adolescent's cognition can be affected by many factors such as family culture, quality and quantity of formal schooling, various medical conditions, and emotional or physical trauma (Oswalt, 2013). An example of Piaget's cognitive development theory in today's adolescents can be seen in individual adolescent response to a natural disaster. They are able to imagine and describe what it would be like to be living in a small township that had been devastated by a cyclone or flood (Oswalt, 2013).

Psychosocial development incorporates changes in feelings or emotions as well as alterations in relations with other people. This includes connections with family and peers, and combines the person's personal identity or sense of self (Hoffnung, 2010). Adolescence is a time when the individual may become interested in sexual relations, have their first dating experience, and begin their first job (Hoffnung, 2010). These are just some topics that will impact the adolescent's psychosocial development. Adolescence is a period when the teenager begins the emotional pendulum (Firchow, 2012). The average 13 year old may have emotions such as those of uncertainty, unhappiness and sensitivity (Firchow, 2012). They may be withdrawn or spend a lot of time alone, and they may be concerned with their body image developing self-esteem issues (Firchow, 2012). Environmental influences on psychosocial development include genetics, illnesses, and educational settings, life experiences such as playing sports, traveling, and reading (Newman & Newman, 2006).

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development has eight stages, each with two possible consequences (McLeod, 2008). Success in the stage of adolescence leads to an ability to stay true to oneself, while failure leads to role confusion (McLeod, 2008). According to Erikson's theory, effective completion of each stage results in a healthy personality and successful contacts with others (McLeod, 2008). Erikson's psychosocial theory put a great deal of importance on the adolescent period, feeling it was a critical stage for emerging a person's identity (McLeod, 2008). During adolescence, the conversion from childhood to adulthood is important (McLeod, 2008). Children become more independent, and begin to look at relationships, families, and careers (McLeod, 2008). It is throughout this stage that the adolescent will re-examine his identity and try to find out who he is (McLeod, 2008). An example seen in middle school of Erikson's psychosocial theory is that of the different 'school groups' adolescents form. School groups are often self-stereotyped and assume the social identity of the adolescent (Tanti, Stukas, Halloran, & Foddy, 2011).

With the use of the above information, it is important to understand how to incorporate these changes into the adolescent world so the individual makes a smooth transition from childhood to adulthood (Ruffin, 2009). Some activities adults can do to support the adolescent transition in all three domains of development. In the domain of physical development adults/parents can be aware to not criticise or compare the teens to others (Institute, 2007). The adolescent is already highly self-conscious about their appearance. Adolescents should be encouraged to eat healthy by adults/parents by keeping plenty of nutritious foods in the house and

modelling healthy eating habits (Institute, 2007). As well as eating healthy they should be encouraged to participate in physical activity. Exercise will help the teen burn excess energy, encourage strengthen of developing muscles, and inspire a better nights sleep (Institute, 2007). It could also aid teens to become more comfortable in their changing bodies. Adults should also be patient with excessive grooming habits as teenagers often spend large amounts of time preparing themselves and obsessing over personal hygiene (Institute, 2007). This behaviour more often than not merely reflects teens' efforts to maintain some sense of control over their changing bodies (Institute, 2007).

In the domain of cognition, adults/parents can get teenagers involved in discussing behavioural rules and consequences. Adolescents should take on more responsibility in shaping how they should behave (Institute, 2007). Advanced reasoning skills make it easier for them to create accurate consequences for their actions (Institute, 2007). Talking to teens about their views and being open to the discussion (Institute, 2007). Find out what they think about current news headlines and discussing with them their political and spiritual beliefs. Teenagers are already thinking about these things so it is important to not pass judgement but give them an open forum for discussing them (Kliegman & Nelson, 2007).

Psychosocially teens should be encouraged to be involved in numerous groups or events both within school and after-school (Tanti, et al., 2011). Adults/parents should be prepared to realise that teens are trying to gain a sense of achievement - a sense of being exclusively good at something (Salmela-Aro, 2011). Adults/parents need to refrain from getting frustrated  
<https://assignbuster.com/adolescence-is-the-period-of-development-psychology-essay/>

as adolescents frequently change their minds. Adults/parents should inspire the teen to stick with a project long enough to generate some skills.

Adults/parents can help teens explore career goals and options by taking teens to work so they can see what adults do. Perhaps they can initiate thought on the teen's future by asking them questions about their career goals (Institute, 2007). It is important to continue providing a structured home atmosphere. Teens should be permitted to have further independence, but not enough to place them in jeopardy. Despite their grievances, teens rely on adults to provide them with safety and structure as they deal effectively with all the psychosocial tasks of adolescents (Institute, 2007).

Adolescence can be a period of great frustration both to the individual and parental figures. It tends to be a period of rebellion against adult authority figures in the search for personal identity. With adolescent bodies and minds going through rapidly changing phases the threats to the adolescent well-being can be overwhelming. Understanding the environmental influences on physical, cognitive and psychosocial development for both the adolescent and parent can help the transition from childhood to adulthood a little smoother.

Word count: 1680