

Freud's psychosexual theory stages



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This literature review is about how well does Freud's psychoanalytic theory explain and predict the human development? In order to see it, this literature review will review the five psychosexual stages one by one. First it starts with the oral stage where the mouth is the centre for pleasure. The passage will also go through two experiments. One experiment will investigate the relationship between the period of breastfeeding and the oral character of the person. The other experiment will explain whether or not the period of breastfeeding affects a person to smoke later on. The next stage discussed is the anal stage. The passage will tell how parent's attitude affects the bowel movement. The third stage that will be discussed is the phallic stage. In that passage, the Oedipus complex and the Electra complex will be discussed. The fourth stage that will be discussed is the latency stage. The latency stage will be correlated with one of Erikson's psychosocial stage. The final stage that will be discussed in this literature review is the genital stage. Last the whole psychosexual development will be concluded.

About Psychoanalytic Theory

By looking at the psychoanalytic point of view, humans are said to have both sexual and aggressive desires. In this theory, development is described as primarily unconscious and is full of emotions. Many psychoanalytic theorists proclaimed that human development is shaped by the early experiences that we have with our parents. Psychoanalytic theorists also stressed that by examining the figurative meanings of behaviour and the deep innermost mechanisms of the mind, one can truly understand the human development.

Biography

Sigmund Freud was born on the sixth of May in the year of 1856. He was raised in Moravia, Czech Republic. He died in London on the 23rd of September in the year of 1939 and he was aged 83 years old. His nationality was an Austrian. He studied in the fields of Neurology, Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy. His influences were Kant, Plato and Nietzsche. He was the one who coined the term 'ego'. Subconscious processes were his main key idea.

Psychosexual Stages

The psychosexual stages are also called the Freudian stages. According to Freud, everybody goes through five stages during their development. These stages are the oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital stage. From birth to the age of 1 ½ years old, the infant goes through the oral stage. During this stage, the infant's pleasure is directed on his or her mouth. Then, during the anal stage which is from the age of 1 ½ to 3 years old, the child's pleasure centres on the anus. The third psychosexual stage is the phallic stage which all of us will go through from the age of 3 to 6 years old. At this age, the boys will have very strong feelings of desire for their mother and on the other hand is very jealous of their father because they think that the father is a rivalry for their mother's affection. Freud used the term Oedipus complex for this situation. As for girls, they are attached to their mother initially but then they will find out that they do not have a penis, therefore they will tend to be closer to their fathers. They will blame their mother for their 'castration'. This in terms is called Electra complex. The fourth Freudian stage is the latency stage which is from the age of 6 years old to puberty. In this stage the child represses any sexual interest and moves on to develop in their

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social and intellectual skills. The last stage is the genital stage that is from puberty onwards. In this stage, sexual pleasure reawakens but this time it is projected towards someone outside the family. According to Freud, our adult personality is influenced by the way we resolve conflicts in each stage.

Oral stage

The oral stage begins at birth and ends during the age of 1½ years old. The oral cavity is the primary focus of the libidinal energy. According to a journal, 'Freud and Emotional Development', in the first few months of life, an infant has minimal control of its body and only have the simplest sensations.

Therefore, feeding or anything to do with the mouth is the most and constant pleasure that the infants can get. The infants also occupy themselves with the pleasure of sucking. If the mother refuses to nurse the infant in demand or if the mother stops nursing earlier, the infant will have an oral character who is frustrated. The infant is also characterised as pessimist, envious, suspicious and sarcastic. As Abraham (1924) suggested in his journal, 'The Influences of Oral Erotism on Character Formation', the presence of the over-developed envy is very common when the infants are frustrated (Abraham, 1924). For example, an elder child who has teeth and can already chew and bite may see his baby brother sucking on his mother's breast and hence, he gets very envious of his brother because of his lack of nursing during infancy (Abraham, 1924). The child will then repress his feelings of envy in the future (Abraham, 1924). Their optimistic view of the world is totally absent (Abraham, 1924). They also have the tendency to turn the simplest job into a very difficult one (Abraham, 1924). As for the infants whose nursing was often and in a longer period of time, they will have an oral character of

overindulgence. They are said to be positive, gullible and is full of awe for others around them. According to Abraham (1924), the overindulged infants will always think that life will be well for them. They go through their life with an optimism point of view (Abraham, 1924). In another journal by Goldman titled, ' Breastfeeding and Character Formation; II The Etiology of the Oral Character in Psychoanalytic Theory, did a study to investigate the relationship between the period of breastfeeding and the oral character of the person. This investigation proved the hypothesis that the shortening of the breastfeeding period brings more trauma than the lengthening of the breastfeeding period. Another issue that Freud brought out is that if an infant who fixates in the oral stage will grow up to be smokers. An experiment was done and published in the journal titled ' Duration of Breast-Feeding and the Incidence of Smoking' by Raith (2003). The hypothesis of this experiment was based on Freud's theory of fixation " unsuccessful attempts to master a particular stage later become apparent with time of difficulty" (Raith, 2003). The aim of this experiment is to investigate the relationship between the duration of breastfeeding and incidence of smoking. The real hypothesis stating that the duration of breastfeeding will affect the incidence of smoking was not accepted (Raith, 2003). In a nutshell, Freud's oral stage is not all true but in that age, the oral cavity is the main source of pleasure.

Anal stage

The anal phase starts from the age of 1 to 3 years old. It is more focused on the anus and this is the phase when a child learns to regulate their bowel movement (Cook, 2006). They obtain pleasure from expelling out their faeces (Cook, 2006). Around this stage, the child will begin to toilet train. The

child will be fascinated of his anus, the erogenous zone. Freud believed that the libido during this stage was mainly focused on controlling the bladder and bowel movement. The child can overcome this stage positively, and then a sense of accomplishment and independence will result. Regarding the conflicts of the anal stage, the child has a conflict with the id, ego and superego because of their parent's demand. According to the journal, 'Freud and Emotional Development', the bowel is the first internal organ that requires mastery. Therefore, if the child has control over their bowels, they will be rewarded with their parent's pleasure. If they have a lack of control over their bowel movements, the child will be punished by their parent's displeasure. The child now thinks that the faeces are some kind of symbolic gift because of the parent's response. As a conclusion, the anal is a very pleasurable area for infants that age.

Phallic stage

In the psychosexual development stages, girls and boys go through the same development throughout the psychosexual stages except for the phallic stage. During this stage as shared earlier, boys will undergo the Oedipus complex while girls will undergo the Electra complex.

The Oedipus complex

The Oedipus complex came out of a drama or a myth. The story goes like this, the king and queen of ancient Thebes, Laius and Jocasta had a son named Oedipus. Oedipus was given away at birth to a herdsman because there was an oracle foretelling that Oedipus would kill his father. He then was adopted by the king of Corinth. In a battle, he killed the king of Thebes.

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Then, he married the queen of Thebes. He then discovered that the woman was his actual mother and that he had fulfilled an oracle prophecy. He then blinded himself (Jakovljević & Matačić, 2005). Freud thought that a little boy has to follow his drives and desires, the same way as Sophocles' Oedipus was destined to do (Jakovljević & Matačić, 2005). Freud suggested that this is the reason why little boys became involved in such an emotional drama which only can be resolved by the little boy's castration anxiety, fear of losing his penis (Jakovljević & Matačić, 2005). The boy thinks that his strong rival, his father is the one who will castrate him (Jakovljević & Matačić, 2005). This issue can be resolved only if the boy abandons his oedipal wishes (Jakovljević & Matačić, 2005). In constitution of the superego, he then transfers his sexual desires from his mother to other female figures (Jakovljević & Matačić, 2005). According to Money (1963), the author of the journal, 'Psychosexual Development in Men', in today's psychoanalytic theory, the Oedipus complex is not viewed as a biological perspective but it depends on culture, family, nature and also the relationship of the boy with his parents. Money (1963) gave an example that the oedipal relationships will be different in a happier family than in a family that screams and yell all day.

The Electra complex

As for the girls, their development is the same as the boys in the oral and the anal stage. The differentiation of the development of girls and boys starts from the phallic stage onwards. In the journal 'Freud's Devaluation of Women', Krausz (1994) claimed that Freud's psychosexual theory of human development is too masculine for the girls. For instance, let's take a look at <https://assignbuster.com/freuds-psychosexual-theory-stages/>

the Electra complex. It is said that during the phallic stage, girls will develop a penis envy. The girl's envy is rooted when she finds out that she, along with all other women, especially her mother does not have a penis which her father and other men possess. As she desires for her own penis, her love for her father becomes more erotic and envious. She would blame her mother for her lack of penis. According to Krausz (1994), Freud is making the assumption that the boys having a penis are higher in the whole social viewpoint than the girls who do not possess a penis. Therefore, the women are degraded as sexual objects because of the masculine approach of possessing a penis. Hence, the masculine organ is more superior to any other organ. It is also said by Freud in his 'New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis', Chapter XXXIII that the little girl is a little man during the phallic stage (Freud, 1933/1965). Adler would then interpret this statement that most girls hope that they can be a man because masculinity is worth striving for (Krausz, 1994). This hope is often long before puberty (Krausz, 1994). A girl will become a woman only after she has comprehended that the clitoris, which is the leading erotogenic zone, is not equivalent to the penis (Krausz, 1994). Now a pondering question, how can a little girl at the age of 3 to 6 years old, during the phallic stage, think in such an abstract way? According to Piaget's cognitive developmental theory, children from the age of 2 to 7 years old are going through the preoperational stage. During this stage, the child is just beginning to connect the five senses with physical actions and represent the world with words (Santrock, 2011). Therefore, these little girls envying about the penis is just too abstract.

Now let's look at the cotemporary revisions of the classic psychoanalytic theory of early female development (Dujovne, 1991). This way, we can see how well the classic psychoanalytic theory according to the journal titled 'Contemporary Revisions of Classical Psychoanalytic Theory of Early Female Development' explained and predicted the human developmental process. According to Dujovne (1991), Freud's theory that girls are primarily masculine has been disconfirmed by the contemporary psychoanalysts (Dujovne, 1991). Gender identity is normally established by 18 months. They can differentiate femaleness and maleness in their self or even others (Dujovne, 1991). Hence, little girls know that they are female before the phallic stage (Dujovne, 1991). As shown by some revisions, girls often feel good about their gender (Dujovne, 1991). Furthermore, Freud said that girls have no body experiences during the early stages of their life (Dujovne, 1991). Current views said that body experiences are essential factors in gender development (Dujovne, 1991). Early genital awareness for the girls may come via the vagina, clitoral and masturbation (Dujovne, 1991). According to Freud, girls have no sensations of genital organs such as the vagina until puberty but new research shows that the genital experiences contribute to body appearance from birth onwards (Dujovne, 1991). On the contrary, Freudian psychologists suggest that the clitoris is an incomplete penis (Dujovne, 1991). Contemporary psychologists argue that the clitoris is a feminine source of the body image throughout the life-span of women (Dujovne, 1991). Next, Freud did not emphasise the role of the mother during the early development of girls. Instead, he made the father more superior than the mother (Dujovne, 1991). Revisions contradicted that in the early development of girls, mothers are more important than the fathers

(Dujovne, 1991). According to Dujovne (1991), anxieties of losing the mother and fears associated to the female body are more suitable factors than 'castration anxiety'. As for the penis envy theory, revisionists do not regard it as the key organizer of femininity (Dujovne, 1991). Therefore, a major issue in the psychoanalytic theory of women's development is the masculinity in it.

This can be concluded that the oedipal complex can relate to the male gender while the Electra complex is too masculine for the female gender.

Latency stage

The latency stage is the fourth psychosexual stage in human development. According to Freud, every child from the age of 6 years old to puberty will go through this stage. According to Kramer and Rudolph (1991), authors of the journal titled, 'The Latency Stage', Sarnoff (1976) suggested that the cognitive development of latency is divided into early, middle and late stage. The early stage occurs during the age of 6 to 7 years old where the child's Oedipus complex begins to dissolve (Sarnoff, 1976). The child will repress all the feelings towards the parent of the opposite sex (Sarnoff, 1976). During the middle stage, which is from the age of 7 to 8 years old, the sexual libido towards the parents of the opposite sex is sublimed to their peers of the same sex (Sarnoff, 1976). The last stage is the late stage which is from the age of 8 to 10 years old (Sarnoff, 1976). During this stage, the child will have many conflicts with their parents mainly because of the generation differences (Sarnoff, 1976). The journal by Kramer and Rudolph (1991) also wrote about the two stages in latency as described by the later contributor to the theory of latency, Bornstein. The first Bornstein stage of latency, the

ego is under stress from both the drives and the conscience while in the second Bornstein stage of latency, the ego becomes more involved when managing with reality (Bornstein, 1951). A major task for the child to achieve during this stage is to learn and become more productive in order for the child to become happier in the future (Kramer & Rudolph, 1991). This can also be seen in Erikson's psychosocial theory of development when a child has to balance between industry versus inferiority (Kramer & Rudolph, 1991). Therefore, the latency stage explains and predicts the development of children from the age of 6 years to puberty quiet well (Kramer & Rudolph, 1991). The only disagreement here is that the child partially represses his or her sexual desires. In some cultures, sexual activities continue persistently throughout the developmental process (Kramer & Rudolph, 1991).

Genital stage

The genital stage is the final stage of Freud's psychosexual development (Cook, 2006). Every child will go through this stage from puberty onwards (Cook, 2006). Now the energy is only focussed on the genitals again. According to the journal, 'Freud and Emotional development', sexual intercourse is the only pleasure at this stage. Dating and flirting is now the things that the person does instead of learning as said in the latency stage. There is not much to be said in the genital phase as Freud gave less importance to it. Therefore another question can arise, why did Freud stop until puberty only? Hence, the psychosexual stages can only predict and explain the human development until a certain age.

Conclusion

Now I can conclude that Freud's psychosexual theory only can explain and predict some of the human development. In my opinion, Freud explained the oral, anal, latency and genital stage quite well but as for the phallic stage, a lot of issue concerns. The Oedipal complex and the Electra complex emphasises too much on sex. The Electra complex is just too masculine. The weaknesses of the psychoanalytic theory of human development are that his theory is just too generalized. He did not view everyone individually. Freud also generalised his theory based on his patients, therefore we do not know whether the theory can explain our human development. Freud's theory also lack scientific evidence. The strengths of his psychoanalytic theory of human development are that we get to briefly know how our unconscious mind develops through the years.