

Good example of developmental psychology critical thinking

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Abstract

Human development is an area that has been one of the most discussed areas of study in the last one century. Cognitive development of a person from childhood days to adult years was studied extensively by a Swedish psychologist Jean Piaget. He is known as the father of cognitive development theories. His four stages of cognitive development, sensori-motor, pre-operational, concrete, and formal, are still considered to be the foundation of the cognitive development process. Piaget's theory does not touch upon why individuals develop at a different rate or why there are different developmental stages. Vygotsky, on the other hand, proposed a completely different point of view. He believed that learning happens through social interaction and instruction, and cognitive development is a gradual process. Piaget is also one of the pioneers in the study of moral development. His two stage moral development process acts as the basic building blocks for future theorists. Kohlberg is the most influential psychologist in the area of moral development. His moral theory is based on the basic principle that a person acts morally, if he thinks it is right. Children get influenced by most by their primary caregivers and parents, or primary caregivers instill the basic moral definitions in a child's brain.

Attachment theory states that attachment is essential in a person's development. Bowlby in his work suggested that a strong attachment to primary caregivers facilitates the development of a child. Ainsworth further enhanced the work done by Bowlby and found that attachment behavior can be found among all people and the attachment behavior changes based on the relationship between primary caregiver and the child. Critics of the

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attachment theory opine that the role of primary caregiver is exaggerated in the attachment theory.

Evaluate the main theories of Cognitive, Attachment and Moral Development, and describe a developmental disorder and its characteristics.

Comparison and contrast between two theories of cognitive development

According to Jean Piaget, a child goes through key four stages of cognitive development. In his cognitive development theory, he identified four stages; sensori-motor, pre-operational, concrete, and formal (Blake and Pope, 2008). During the sensori-motor stage spanning the period between infancy and age two, children learn with the help of their five senses, object permanence and goal-oriented actions. The thought infants and children differ from that of an adult. Young children's egocentrism is based on when they fail to understand the difference between someone else's point of view and theirs or fail to coordinate with the different point of view of others. The preoperational stage refers to the stage spanning age two through seven. At this stage, children develop the ability to do one-step logic problems, learn language, complete tasks and continue to be egocentric (Blake and Pope, 2008). However, they are still unable to manipulate the information, and hence, depend on the point of views of adults. In the concrete stage spanning between age 7 and 11 years, children develop better control of their cognitive operations, but still abstract and hypothetical concepts confuse them. The formal operational age that begins from age twelve continuing into adulthood is the stage when children begin to think logically, develop the ability to make use of deductive reasoning, understand the

abstract concepts better, and show lingering egocentricism (Blake and Pope, 2008).

Piaget's theory does not cover some areas that will be discussed in the next section. Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, believed that social-cultural effects have a huge impact on cognitive development (Shayer, 2003).

Vygotsky emphasized that social interaction and instruction play a crucial role in the development process. According to Vygotsky, development does not precede socialization, rather social relations and structures lead to the development of cognitive functions. Vygotsky developed the concept of cognitive learning zones (Shayer, 2003). Zone of actual development (ZAD) takes place when a child is able to complete tasks on his own. In this zone, children are independent. Zone of proximal Development (ZPD) requires children seeking assistance from peers and caregivers. Instruction and learning occur in the ZPD zone (Ducrey, 2000).

Piaget's theory influenced almost all of the subsequent cognitive development theories that surfaced in the later years. However, Vygotsky was clearly an exception, because he developed his theory, almost at the same time as Piaget's theory. For Piaget, learning is a construction, whereas Vygotsky believed that learning happens through social interaction and contact. Piaget's theory is qualitative with distinctive developmental ages and stages. Piaget's theory also encourages hands-on learning (Shayer, 2003). Vygotsky, on the other hand, believed in learning through negotiation, interaction and instruction. Vygotsky's theory promoted gradual cognitive development through social contact. Piaget's theory discounts the difference between individuals and is unable to explain the reason for some children

moving faster from stage to stage in comparison with others (Lickona, 1994). Furthermore, at times, some children show excellent social ability at a young age, but show poor spatial concepts or mathematical concepts even at teenage. This type of children does not fall under any of the four Piagetian cognitive development stages.

Cognitive development theories are extensively used in many ways in the classroom. According to Piaget, providing a vast number of different experiences to a child will help them interact and learn more. Providing a wide-ranging experience is important as that will build the foundation of cognitive development in a child's brain (Blake and Pope, 2008). Exposure to a small number of experiences may slow down the cognitive development process. For example, using proper props and visual aids can enhance the learning experience. If instructions are kept short, then the processing of that information is easier for a young child. According to Vygotsky, learning happens through social contact and interaction (Blake and Pope, 2008). It is important for children to interact with peers, teachers and parents more. This will help them learn quickly and effectively as the learning happens faster in the ZPD zone for kids (Ducrey, 2000). Many educational institutions have developed the curricula in a way that make students interact with other students and teachers.

Compare different theories of moral development:

Though best known for the theory of cognitive development, Piaget also shared his insights on children's moral development. According to him, young children view morality in terms of obedience to adults, whereas older

children conceptualize morality in terms of cooperation with peers. He believed that young children's tendency to conceptualize morality in terms of obedience is caused by two reasons essentially, 1) they think in physical, concrete, and egocentric ways, and 2) their social worlds are dominated by apparently omnipotent and omniscient adults (Krebs and Denton, 2005). On the contrary, older children's view of morality in terms of cooperation with peers derives from their cognitive ability to understand the point of views of others, comprehension of the concepts of reciprocity and egalitarian interactions with peers. As regards the relationship between moral behavior and moral judgment, Piaget believed that each child has the capacity to influence the other, though it may be true that the child's concept of morality may not have any precise connection with what he feels or does in his concrete experience (Krebs and Denton, 2005).

Kohlberg's model of moral development is based on three primary assumptions; 1) the first and foremost criterion for moral development is the maturity of moral judgment, 2) moral organized in “ structures of the whole”, and 3) the new structures acquired by people transform and displace the older structures (Krebs and Denton, 2005). Unlike Piaget, Kohlberg focused more on role taking opportunities than egalitarian peer interactions. He believed that the more a child gets exposed to social stimulation, the faster is his rate of moral development (Kohlberg, 1971). The five stages of moral development identified by Kohlberg include 1) pre-conventional stage in which morality is formed on the basis of avoidance of punishment, and therefore, obedience; 2) instrumental exchange in which morality comes from the feeling to satisfy one's own needs and allowing others to do the

same; 3) interpersonal conformity in which morality comes from the desire to be viewed as a good person, fulfill role expectations, and show concern and care for others ; 4) law and order in which morality is defined by the desire to maintain the social system that benefits everyone; and finally, 5) prior rights and social contract in which morality is defined by the action of fulfilling the social obligations (Kohlberg, 1971).

As opposed to Piaget's model of moral development, which was based on naturalistic observations of children, Kohlberg's theory of moral development was based on people's moral judgments in response to hypothetical dilemmas. While Piaget believed in alternative relations between moral behavior and moral judgment, Kohlberg believed that knowing what is right motivates one to behave properly (Lickona, 1994). Kohlberg's theory is largely inspired by Piaget's theory, and therefore, the basic foundation of both the theories is same. However, Piaget is less elaborate in explaining how the moral understanding of children changes with age (Lickona, 1994). According to him, till the time children understand intentions, their sense of morality is based on parental guidance and consequences. Kohlberg's theory is more elaborate and explains that morality development is a function of rule and consequences. Kohlberg also recognized that a child may struggle to understand morality related to relationships, social order and universality when rules change as they grow up and they may start developing the concept of intentions (Kohlberg, 1971).

There is a huge difference between how people think about moral matters and how they act. Moral reasoning is defined by the level of maturity of judgment in the case of moral matters. Moral behavior, on the other hand, is

defined as the actions one performs to help others in need or distress, or refrains from actions that are physically or psychologically harmful to others. There is some evidence that if a person has an increased level of moral thought or reasoning, he is more likely to act morally. However, many other studies have found that moral thought and behavior are not always strongly correlated (Aksan and Kochanska, 2005). It happens because the moral reasoning, in many cases, varies for the same action or non-action. For example, some people may view murder as a wrongful act as it is considered to be sinful by the religious scriptures, and therefore, will refrain from the act. Some other people, on the other hand, may refrain from the act of murder, because it is illegal by law (Aksan and Kochanska, 2005). End over means is the main reason for the difference between moral reasoning and moral action.

Choose one developmental disorder and outline the aetiology and behavioral characteristics of this disorder

Developmental disorders are psychiatric conditions originating in childhood that cause serious impairment in many developmental areas. The main areas of disorders are language disorders, motor disorders, learning disorders, and autism spectrum disorder (Rice et al, 2005). ADHD is also included as a developmental disorder with some. Developmental disorders manifest from an early age and generally improve as the child grows older. However, these disorders may lead to impairments in adult life. There is a strong genetic component associated with developmental disorder (Rice et al, 2005).

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is one of the most discussed and researched developmental disorders. It is not easy to notice the first signs of ASD in

children. However, with modern techniques and research, ASD can be conclusively detected by the age of 3 (Turk and Graham, 1997). The cause of ASD is still uncertain. ASD is thought to be a disorder of the cortex that controls functions, including memory, muscle movements, sensation, and higher functions. The wiring in the brain is not normal for an ASD patient. However, the growth of an ASD brain happens rapidly and almost grows fully by the age of 10 (Howlin, 2000). Early diagnosis of the disorder can reduce familial stress to a great degree, speed up referral to special educational needs and also influence the family planning process.

Description of different attachment theories and what can happen to the child when things go wrong

Attachment theory is the outcome achieved by the joint work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. The basic tenets of the attachment theory were formulated by John Bowlby, while Mary Ainsworth through her innovative methodology tested some of Bowlby's ideas empirically and also helped expand the theory (Smyke, Dumitrescu and Zeanah, 2002). Attachment has been defined by Bowlby as an enduring emotional bond that an individual forms with another person (Malekpour, 2007). He closely observed and studied the effects of traumatic events of separation and loss on young children. Together with James Robertson, he observed, hospitalized, and institutionalized those children who were separated from their parents, and this work later led to the classical film "A Two-Year-Old Goes to Hospital" (Bretheronton, 1992). Out of his work, the major conclusion that he arrived at was that a child's development is highly dependent on forming a strong relationship with at least one primary caregiver (mother mainly). He believed

that a good mothering, if delayed beyond two and half years, is useless. The prolonged period of maternal deprivation might impact the child's character seriously, affecting his or her whole life (Clarke and Clarke, 1998). Bowlby found that if a strong relationship is not developed, then most of the developmental energy of a child is spent in search of stability and security, which impedes the normal developmental process (Gullestad, 2001). For example, if a baby is cared well by his parents, then the child can spend more time observing and interacting with the environment around them. When things go wrong, then the child feels separation anxiety and anger (Wortis, 1973).

Mary Ainsworth further developed the ideas of Bowlby. According to her, attachment may be "an essential part of the ground plan of the human species for an infant to become attached to a mother figure" (Bretheronton, 1992). Mary and Bowlby's theory was only based on naturalistic observations on young children. Cindy Hazan and Philip Shaver expanded the attachment theory for adults. According to them, the attachment is an important factor for adults too. Hazan and Shaver's study found that adult couples with a sense of strong intimacy only do not always share strong attachment (Haugaard and Hazan, 2004). In fact, couples with both the sense of intimacy and independence remain more attached to each other.

The relationship a child shares with his parents forms the prototype of his future relationship with others (Latham and Mason, 2008). In other words, the quality of early relationships in a child's life predicts the success of his future relationships (Rutter, 1981). The more secure relationship a child shares with a nurturing adult, the easier it becomes for him to be

independent and develop functional relationships with others. If attachment goes wrong and the child feels emotionally neglected and insecure, despite getting adequate cognitive stimulation and physical care, then it can lead to developmental deficits such as the lack of confidence, dependency anxiety, social maladjustments, depression and delinquency (Malekpour, 2007).

Attachment theory has strong empirical evidences supporting it. In a 2007 study conducted in Sapporo, Japan, it was found that attachment theory assumptions apply equally well to the Japanese children like any other global children. Jerome Kagan, a big proponent of the naturalistic development theory, rejected almost all the basic assumptions of attachment theory and tagged all those behavior on heredity. He stated that a child with a difficult temperament would not elicit sensitive behavioral responses from parents (Eagly and Wood, 2013). However, subsequent studies have not concurred with Kagan's claim, establishing the fact that the attachment of a child is solely dependent on a caregiver's behavior. However, critics of the attachment theory, such as Harris and Pinker continue to criticize the exaggeration of parental influence on the child (Eagly and Wood, 2013).

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