

# Life span perspective paper



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a. Define life span development. There is a general perception that human development is an interplay between himself and his environment. And this underscores the idea that development is a life-long process - the cornerstone of the life-span development concept. According to Martin Lerner, Eileen Hetherington and Marion Perlmutter (1988), the life-long human development is a process that extends from sperm to worm where no one stage is critical or salient in producing developmental change. (p. 3) In this regard, life span development supposes that events and changes occurring after childhood and throughout the childhood years have equally powerful effects on the direction and rate of human development. Lifespan development has been an important area of study from the standpoint of psychology. We take note of this as we identify the characteristics of the life span perspective.

b. Describe the characteristics of the life span perspective.

In a life-span perspective, ageing implies changes, which for its part, take many forms. For instance, we have the purely biological changes such as weakening of the muscle strength, shortness of breath, graying of the hair, wrinkling of the skin and so on. There is the incidence of human disease, particularly those of the elderly who at certain point may be diagnosed with more than one illness.

Next we have the cognitive decline such as the benign forgetfulness or the onset of dementia. This also includes the changes in the social environment and thus the experiences arising from it. Bere Miesen and Gemma Jones (1997) write that a model of a life-span perspective may be characterized by type of change, individual characteristics, coping behavior, adjustment in adaptation and the experience of quality of life. (p. 32)

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Finally, the Darwinian concept is very important in this perspective. It banks on the idea that humans share important characteristics through heredity and this in turn becomes a variable in the whole life-span development process. For example, virtually all of us develop in similar ways at similar ages such as walking and talking at age 1. And so, the study of development from a life-span perspective is multidisciplinary involving both biological and social sciences.

c. Identify the human development domains and periods.

Human development falls into three broad domains, namely: physical development, cognitive development and psychological development.

(Sugarman 2001, p. 14) There are some who include personal and social developments but the previous three roughly cover everything. Human development meanwhile is divided into 8 periods: infancy, early childhood, middle childhood, late childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood. (Sugarman, p. 56-60)

d. Examine at least two contemporary concerns related to life span development.

Contemporary concerns regarding life-span development include the questions on the eight periods in human development. Understandably, for some, the modern life cycle has been significantly altered by socio-political as well as technological upheavals today. Indeed, was it not that in our generation, people are leaving childhood sooner than say in the previous generations? We also have the concern raised by Sugarman who stressed that life-span development overemphasizes the symbiotic relationship between individual development and societal progress. (p. 99) The pitfall of this, as I see it, is that the perspective has become conformist, favoring the

status quo and veers away from radical notions which could prove important in the long-term significance of the entire concept.

#### References

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Sugarman, L. (2001). Life-span Development: Frameworks, Accounts, and Strategies. Psychology Press.