

Environmental influences on adolescent development essay sample

[Life, Adolescence](#)



Adolescents is a period of life that is thought to be a crucial stage of development due to changes in an adolescent's physical appearance, cognitive ability and social behavior. This paper will be discussing the environmental influences that promote the three domains of development with the assistance of two theorists, Piaget and Erikson. Discussed further is the participation of a team sport focusing on the positive developmental aspects it has on an individual. The involvement of significant peers and family members enhances development in all three domains. In most cases the period of adolescents begins from the ages of 12 till 18.

During this period of development each individual will undergo a roller-coaster of changes in their physical, cognitive and psychosocial development. The Individual's physical changes, as they go through puberty are the most obvious to the naked eye, resulting in sexual maturity. Every adolescent will experience physical changes with their primary and secondary sex characteristics although not all adolescents will experience it at the same time. There is no set age for this to occur but there is a guide to follow between genders (Hoffnung, M., Hoffnung, R., Seifert, K., Burton Smith, R., Hine, A., Ward, L., Pause, C., 2010). The adolescent will also become more abstract in their thinking ability and begin formulate a set of ethical principles as their brain develops. Most individuals will develop more positive and equal relationships with their parents and respecting elders whilst adventuring away from the family nest to become more independent on their own or with a new relationship they built with the opposite sex. Adolescents is " second only to infancy in the rate of developmental changes that take place" (Office of population Affairs., 2010)

There are three main types of development that will work together to aid the growth of adolescents, which all will be affected by the environment, in either a positive or negative way the first to be discussed is physical development. Followed by cognitive then psychosocial development.

Physical development is primarily concerned with the physical changes such as growth and the development of motor skills both fine and gross. The most obvious sign of physical growth is when the child goes through puberty in early adolescents which is characterized by the individual reaching full physical and sexual maturity. During puberty the individual will experience a rapid growth spurt which will account for 17% of their overall height and 50% of their body's weight (Hoffnung et al., 2010). The environment surrounding the adolescent can have a major effect on the individual's health, "the lower a person's socioeconomic position, the worse the health" so by contrast the higher their socioeconomic position the better the health (Talbot & Verrinder, pg13., 2010). This is a result of a better health care system, which includes a up to date and better resourced medical scheme, with a high rate of immunizations and medicines to fight disease, illness and infection, decreasing the morbidity rate in their community.

Meanwhile The quality and quantity of food the individual is supplied with, is of higher standards which will provide the right nutrients to aid in the growth in the adolescents, especially at this stage of development when its most needed during the growth spurt. Another benefit of a high socioeconomic position is having safe community to allow for an increase in the "Time spent outdoor which positively enhances the Physical activity" decreasing chances

of obesity and its relating conditions such as diabetes (Colins. P., 2012). Cognitive development refers to the development of cognition which involves the psychological process of how individuals learn and process information whilst thinking about their surrounding environment. Throughout this developmental stage individuals will begin to understand and complete hypothetical situations unlike in their childhood stage where they are unable to imagine these types of situations, cognitive development will stimulate the individual's ability to think critically about their own actions and grow ethical principles to guide future behavior (Hoffnung et al., 2010). Piagets theory the stage of formal operations high lights the different types of reasoning that separates an adolescent from a child.

For a 13 year old adolescent they begin with the hypothetico-deductive reasoning, the development of hypotheses, also developing propositional reasoning which involves ' the implications from the evidence which are presented as true, so the concluding statement is also true' (Hoffnung et al, pg 357., 2010). Piaget claims that of approximately 15 years of age the individual has reached full cognitive capabilities with the exception of physical maturation and the environmental experiences(Hoffnung, M., 2010). If the adolescents environment is described as a high socio economic position they would have access to a higher level of education with teaching standards soring past those of third world countries enabling the individuals cognitive ability to reach their peak potential, the individual will have better access to library's and discussion groups, to which their primary purpose is to promote the learning of all members (Arnold & Boggs. Pg. 240., 2011).

Psychosocial development focuses on the personality, social knowledge, skills and the emotions of the individual. During this development each individual will start asking questions like “ who am I?” “ Where do I belong?” and “ where am I going in life” once these questions are answered they become a part of their identity.

Eriksons states in his theory the stage of identity verses role confusion the importance of finding ones identity, if for instance one becomes stuck in identity diffusion, they “ would rather be a nobody, or somebody bad or dead.” (Hoffnung, M., pg377, 2010). In order to solve the normative crisis the adolescent will ask these questions and determine the answer, with the aid of their own thought process and personality traits whilst Depending on “ the quality of the peer relationship for the stability, intimacy and support” (Borsari, & Carey., 2009). A peer can be that of their siblings and friends also those negative peers can encourage one to be a better person, although the more positive peers, people and influences the adolescent surrounds themselves with the more driven to achieve and solve the normative crisis that Erickson explains and the better they develop socially. Each three domains of development previously explained, can be enhanced by a positive environment, one environmental influence is the participation in an organized team sport. Although any sport or physical activity is good for development, we will discuss how the Australian football league (AFL) can have a positive impact on the development of a 13 year old adolescent, being of both genders.

Regular physical activity through training for a local AFL team can improve the 13 year old adolescent's physical functions, by increasing their muscle mass, cardiovascular output, metabolic rate, neuromuscular performance and postural control over the movements for jumping, landing, running and changing direction. (Gamble, P., 2008). When competing the adolescent will need to become quick on their feet and think tactually about their next move, to which will have the best possible outcome for themselves and their team, this is where their cognitive development is important. Encouraging the brain to continue to develop by thinking more critical and strategically using potential hypothetical situations of what may come next due to their actions. This sport is not only for the one individual there is a whole team playing by their side, each developing a positive and supportive relationship with different players (Keung Ma., 2012). Driving the individual into boarding their peer and friend group, knocking down the boundaries, held by the differences in genders, ethnic and age groups. siblings may also come to be involved, by participating in the same team or a year level below or above, family's are encourage to help out the foot ball clubs with fundraisers and canteen work, whist watching and supporting their own adolescent child.

Engaging in peer support and continuing the activity of AFL the adolescent begging to shape their personality, enhancing their psychosocial development. Each domain of development works closely with each other, as their physical appearance and ability increases their brain function improves thus the combination of both improves the adolescent's confidence and shapes their personality. While Adolescents can be quite a daunting period

with all the changes happening to their body and mind, you can see how a simple push to play a sport will enhance the development in a dramatic way, not only for their physical appearance and ability, but for the gain in socialization and improvement of quick and critical thinking. Organized team sports such as AFL is a positive environmental influence on the developing adolescent, surrounding the adolescent in a positive environment like living in high socioeconomic positions, will promote the development of each domain physical, cognitive and psychosocial, of the adolescent thus making an easier transition into the next period of life, young adulthood.

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