

Human growth and life span development sociology essay



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There are eight characteristics in the life-span development (John Santrock, 2009). Development is a lifelong process, whereby throughout the whole process we will go through different phases which will allow us to be exposed to different challenges in life. For example, a baby who is learning how to walk will need a lot of physical guidances within this period of basic learning phase. A teenager in his/her adolescence phase tends to seek for more family love, as it is a transit stage between being a child and an adult in which he/she will have to handle both physical and emotional issues (eg. Puberty). A working adult who enters the working society will tend to juggle both financial and marriage issues. An elderly who is not as feeble as how he/she used to be, will tend to be more concerned with health issues. So at different stages of our life, we have to handle different types of various issues throughout.

Development depends on history and context. Each and every individual is exposed to different physical and social environment that is why each of us is different and unique in our own way. It is somewhat impossible to have two individuals going through a same series of events at the same time and having the the same pace within that period of time. For example, two friends of mine who are twins, whom may have been brought up under the same conditions given at the point of time, have grown up and picked up different likings, interests etc as time goes by.

Development is multidimensional, in which several factors like biological, cognitive and socioemotional are involved and they affect us in many ways. Within these factors involved, each of them has their own different aspects.

It is like a multi-factorial process, in which overlapping of concepts is

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involved. Take for an example, Timothy, a toddler who loves to eat banana, started to stop eating bananas after a choking incident. Even having tried several attempts to get him to eat bananas again, none work out. And ever since then, he is very particular with what he eats and only consumes food that he feels safe to eat. It is somewhat as though this choking incident has affected him psychologically, which affects his eating habits and how his body responds to different food.

Development is multidirectional, in which certain dimensions or aspects in life which used to be of a certain great concern to us may gradually be of a less concern as time goes by. For example, teenagers in their adolescence phase will be under extreme peer pressures and will tend to do what their peers do, so as not to be seen as being out-casted if he/she decided not to join in a certain event. They will eventually spend more time with their friends, instead of spending more time at home with their family, whom he/she used to spend time with before reaching the puberty stage.

Development is plastic or pliable, which refers to the tendency to change or readiness for a change in life. The elderly may have this issue of not being able to comprehend certain complicated concepts eg. Using of computer software. They may be able to do basic computer tasks after going through certain upgrading or training, however the capacity for such changes is somewhat limited.

Development is multidisciplinary, in which different groups of professional experts are all sharing a common interest in this area of life-span development. And when analyzing a situation, it is necessary to consider

many different dimensions which are related or might have contributed to such problem in life. Take for instance, Thomas who has a drinking addiction; could it be simply just because of peer pressure from family and friends or he did it out of curiosity and leading it to a habitual act?

Development is contextual, and it is one critical factor that affects life-span development as a whole. We respond to different changes in life and it is considered as an on-going process throughout the life-span development. There are three types of contextual influences, and they are normative age-graded influences, normative history-graded influences and non-normative life events. In normative age-graded influences, we make comparisons; determine issues and sourcing solutions within the same age group, who has a higher likelihood of going through a particular same event eg. Puberty, menopause or retirement. In normative history-graded influences, we make comparisons; determine issues and sourcing solutions with the same group of people from the same generation based on past history experiences eg. World War II, SARS period. In non-normative life events, it is more likely to address the issue based on individual's needs, as such events may not happen for everyone but they do affect the individual's life in many different ways eg. Death of loved ones, suicidal cases.

Development involves growth, maintenance, and regulation. At different stages in life, we have different goals to address. For example, a toddler has a lot to learn at the initial stage which what we called growth eg. Learning to eat, toilet-trained, and as a toddler grows up and reaches adulthood, issues like maintaining and regulating of his/her own development aspects is of a

major one eg. Prevention against cancer, knowledge upgrading to facilitate understanding of a concept.

Theme 2

Biological, cognitive, and socioemotional processes (25 marks)

There are three developmental processes and periods in the life-span development, and they are biological processes, cognitive processes and socioemotional processes (John Santrock, 2009). Each of us will go through these three processes (they are interlink to one another), in which allow us to be different from the others distinctively.

Biological processes refer to the scientific process whereby an individual develops from a baby to a full-grown adult, starting from the most fundamental, genetically stage in which makes us all different since birth to the most complicated stage of hormonal changes, and lastly reaching the final stage of ageing. We have to understand the biological changes for every stage, as well as understanding how it can affect an individual both emotionally and physically. Take for an example, a teenager who is going through puberty might have a tendency to be temperamental which may be due to a series of hormonal changes in the body. Adults in the middle adulthood (35-45 to 60s) will undergo a stage called menopause, which may lead to depression if it is not diagnosed early. For both cases, getting supports from family and friends plays a very crucial role.

Cognitive processes refer to how an individual thinks, reacts and processes information at different stages in life. Almost everything that we do everyday

requires us to think and react accordingly. How we response to an event affects us in many ways, both negatively and positively. Take for an example; a teenager may not be able to see the importance of studying hard at that point of time, but gradually realized that in order for him/her to enter the working society, a certain qualification or relevant background is required.

Socioemotional processes refer to how an individual feels towards the people around him/her, and how well he/she can cope with his emotions. Most of us decide and do a certain thing based on intuition and feelings. However sometimes, we tend to overlook certain issues and make mistakes which may affect us inevitably. Take for an example, a married couple who used to believe that they were once in love and are meant to be together, decided to end their vows and go on separate ways. Family issues like this not only affect the husband and wife involved, but also affect their children and their other loved ones.

It is important to understand the different life stages and processes involved, and also finding out the various roles that each and every client is playing, in order to understand their problems better.

Theme 3

Developmental issues (nature vs. nurture; stability vs change; continuity vs discontinuity) (25 marks)

Personally, I am a strong believer that the stage of nurturing plays a very critical role, and how much to an extent, an individual is being nurtured determines his/her entire attitude towards life.

The environment around us and the biologically aspects in us do play a part on how we react to certain issues. But having no personal experiences and proper nurturing system, it is hard to overcome many major issues in life.

For instance, a child who comes from a rich family background may not be born to be intelligent. Parents who are able to send their kids for adequate enrichment courses may be one way in which parents can help their kids to cope with their studies. The children that I work with are mainly autistic children, they are very good examples as to why I personally feel nurturing plays a bigger role than nature itself. Most of the children come from well to do families, and their parents believe that it is not an ending phase for their children even though they are diagnosed with a learning disability.

Humans are always constantly on the go, and they are forced to meet up with various demands in life, and thus having changes is somewhat inevitable. I also believe that most of us have the tendency to change to a different person, given the fact that we are constantly looking for means to become a better person, or at least become someone he/she feels the most comfortable to be.

A very good example would be myself. Before I entered the working society, I used to be a very isolated person. I have interaction issues with people, and I had very low self-esteem. After the first year of working, I gained a lot of experiences at work, and it somewhat boosted my confidence level which allows me to see what I can actually be doing and contributing to the company. Even till today, I still have doubts in myself when dealing various

issues eg. Dealing with parents etc. I still have a lot to change to become a better individual in the time to come by.

Since I am a supporter of nurturing, I am also a believer in continuity. I personally feel that it takes time for most of us to be able to accept certain concepts in life, as well as, getting used to the changes that will be on going throughout the life-span. Gradual changes is an inevitable phase that all of us will have to go through. Even if it is a major, sudden change that occurred, and which in return affects someone involved, it still requires a period of time for him/her to mould slowly to an altered situation.

An ex-student of mine from a Primary School Student Care Centre, who used to stay in Girls' Home, was always constantly giving the school teachers and the student care teachers many disciplinary problems. It took her almost a year (from the day she was released from the Girls' Home) to realize that she has to stop all those rebellious acts and that she has to place her focus in her studies (as she will be taking her PSLE in the following year).

On contrary, nature and nurture; stability and change; continuity and discontinuity, do work hand in hand in some cases.

However, to a great extent, I still believe that nurturing, changes and continuity are factors as to why a person is unique in their own way, as it is a way to identify themselves from the others as they grow up and enter different phases in life.

Theme 4

Theoretical approach (ie., Theory of Development) that appeals the most to you in crafting your very own life-span development perspective

(25 marks)

I personally feels that all the various life-span theories mentioned in John Santrock, 2009, add up in all to explain the human development, as each and every of the theories are based on a point of view and they are mainly focused on just one or two areas in general.

The most appealing theoretical approach that summed up my own life-span development would be the Erikson's Psychosocial Theory.

Erickson's Theory is based on how humans behave psychologically towards a social aspect eg. Interacting with the others throughout the entire human life span. It is a more completed and detailed theory as different stages of human development are elaborated in some forms of psychosocial linkage. It is also a theory that leads us to understand how a person finds his or her identity amongst the rest.

The eight stages of Erickson's Theory are as stated:

Trust vs. mistrust (1st year of life)

My mum is a babysitter and observing how a baby stop crying when his parents or my mum carried him, shows how a baby is able start distinguish the different people around him. He will also giggle whenever my family members or his parents play with him.

Autonomy vs. shame and doubt (1 to 3 years old)

The most basic tasks that he has to be trained are mainly being able to tell my mother whenever he wants to pass motion or urinates, as well as having to get him to eat on his own from his bowl with a spoon.

Initiative vs. guilt (3 to 5 years old)

Introducing of a rewarding system is being used at this stage, as a way to encourage him to get him to take the next step to learn more and do more on his or her own initiatives.

Industry vs. inferiority (6 years to puberty)

My cousin who used to be under my mother's care when he was around 7 years old, was being enrolled to take up piano classes and he was doing quite well in that area. He used to be a shy boy and interacting with other peers at the kindergarten was always an issue. He completed the piano course and obtained grade 8 for piano, and ever since then, he will perform for the family during gatherings.

Identity vs. identity confusion (10 to 20 years)

My cousin (as mentioned above) did not continue in the area of arts, in which he excels rather well in. He was in a dilemma deciding which diploma course to take up, and having to make a major swop in interests was a tough and confusing phase for him. He was not sure what identity he would want to be seen as at that point of time.

Intimacy vs. isolation (20s, 30s)

Marriage is the key word for this phase. This is a phase whereby most of my friends are attached, and break free from being single to being in a relationship. Those who are still singles are mostly still searching for their sole identity and sense of belongings. I have met a lot of single parents at my previous work place (Student Care Centre), and most of them feel that seeking isolation or singlehood is still a better option for them.

Generativity vs. stagnation (40s, 50s)

This is another stage of life, whereby families will be completed with children. Imparting of knowledge and beliefs to the next generation is the next phase, in order to kill the stagnant livelihood at this stage. Those couples who are not able to conceive will go through a rather stagnant life as compared to those who are able to. I have met couples who are not able to conceive (due to late marriages), and most of them feel that it is not a completion of a family, and there are times in which they have thoughts of adopting children to break the monotonous life.

Integrity vs. despair (60s onwards)

The last phase of human life span is to be termed as having any regrets or fulfilling all tasks in life before death. My grandfather passed away 3 months ago, and certain issues were brought up eg. (Did we, as his family members, manage to fulfill his dreams and spend quality time with him when he was still around? Was he waiting for death or hoping to get his loved ones to care for him and leave without any regrets?).