

Psychological Development Across the Lifespan

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Lifespan Development as a Psychological Framework

The notion that lifespan development was going through certain stages throughout life became the dominant paradigm of age psychology (although most research is still devoted to the early period of life); this is the view that the entire educated society now adheres to. Unlike Erickson, modern scholars hold pluralistic views and study all aspects of development, not just psychosocial ones.

Biological Social and Environmental Influences

The findings explain the gradual changes in personality, social relations, and cognitive development in terms of biological influences related to the age of psychological changes and social and environmental influences, both inherent in a certain age and occurring at any age. Moreover, in contrast to Erikson's optimistic view that normal healthy development is always directed forward and upward, the predominant tone of development research in recent years has become empirical and unadornedly realistic. Development after adulthood is seen as a series of changes rather than a continuing upward movement, as an adaptation to a changing reality rather than progress. It cannot be said that modern-age psychology is pessimistic; on the contrary, some of its findings are encouraging (Bergh, 2013).

Psychological Development During Adolescence

Many new data on this stage relate to familiar things: sexual behavior, social development, struggle for liberation from parental control, problems with self-esteem, and anxiety. However, in contrast to the long-held belief that adolescence is a period of intense anxiety, according to several modern studies, this is not the case. According to one work, 11% of adolescents have serious chronic difficulties, 32% – temporary and probably situational, while 57% tend to “basically positive healthy development.” Although alcohol and drug use, smoking, sexual activity in adolescence are growing and pose serious difficulties for some adolescents, a number of researchers believe that most often this behavior is “purposeful, self-regulating and aimed at solving development problems”.

Midlife Transition and Adult Development

The attention of specialists in the field of psychology is attracted by the difficult transition in the face of men and women at the age of forty to forty-five, when their careers reach the top, dreams fade, children move away from the family, and physical cheerfulness begins to elude (Shin & Cooney, 2006). Other scientists have found that the identity of an adult is not at all rigid and immutable and completely determined by the circumstances of childhood, as was previously thought; most adults are able to adapt and successfully make the transition to new life circumstances. It is equally obvious that the mental and behavioral development of the human depends on the environment, and, as many modern scientists justly believe, to a much greater extent than from the body. If this were not so, then the existence of the whole system of education would lose its meaning. The same goes for improving the content and methods of teaching and upbringing. However, it is accurate to say that the extent to which a person's mental development at one stage depends on the environment is not possible (Shin & Cooney, 2006). This is the essence of the problem under discussion. The second problem concerns the relative impact of spontaneous and organized education and upbringing on [human development](#). Spontaneous is understood to be education and upbringing, which is carried out without consciously set goals, a certain content, and thoughtful methods, under the influence of a person's stay in society among people and randomly developing relationships with them that do not pursue educational goals. Organized education and upbringing are purposefully carried out by special private and public education systems, beginning with the family and ending with higher educational institutions. Here, the goals of development are more or less clearly defined and consistently implemented. Under them, programs are made, and methods of teaching and educating people are selected. Undoubtedly, a person develops psychologically under the influence of spontaneous and organized environmental influences, but which of them is stronger and has a greater impact on his behavior is still problematic. One of the specific varieties of this problem is the relative influence of the family school, school and society on human development. The next problem is the ratio of makings and abilities. It can be represented as a series of particular issues, each of which is difficult enough to solve, and all of them together form a real psychological problem (Leidy, 1994).

Major Theories of Child Development

In psychology, many theories have been created that differently explain the child's mental development and its origins. They can be combined in two major directions – biological and sociological. In the biological direction, the child is considered a biological being endowed by nature with certain abilities, character traits, and forms of behavior. Heredity determines the whole course of his development – and his pace, fast or slow, and his limit – will the child be gifted, achieve much, or be mediocre? The environment in which the child is brought up becomes only a condition of such initially predetermined development, as though exhibiting that given to the child before its birth (Vahia et al., 2011).

Recapitulation Theory and Biological Development

In the biological direction, a theory of recapitulation arose, the main idea of which is borrowed from embryology. The embryo (human embryo), during its intrauterine existence, goes from a simple two-celled organism to a human. In a month's embryo, one can already recognize a representative of vertebrate type – he has a large head, gills, and tail; in 2 months, he begins to acquire a human appearance, on his pasty limbs, fingers are marked, the tail is shortened; By the end of 4 months, the embryo has features of a human type.

Concepts of Age and Childhood

So, age psychology is a special field of psychological knowledge. Considering the development process, it gives a characteristic of different age periods and, consequently, operates with such concepts as “age” and “childhood.” Age, or age, is a cycle of development, having its own structure and dynamics. More details on this definition of LS Vygotsky will stop later, and now we note only two points (Tanabe, 1997).

Psychological Age and Chronological Age

First, the psychological age may not coincide with the chronological age recorded in the birth certificate and then in the passport. The age period, with its unique content – the features of the development of **mental functions** and personality, peculiarities of relationships with others, and its main activity – has definite limits. But these chronological boundaries can shift, and one person enters a new age period earlier and another – later. Particularly strongly “swim” the boundaries of the age stages of maturity.

Childhood as a Historical Phenomenon

Secondly, the initial age periods form a childhood – an entire era, which, in essence, is a preparation for adult life, independent labor. Childhood is a historical phenomenon: both its content and duration have changed over the centuries. Childhood in primitive society was short, in the Middle Ages lasted longer; the childhood of the modern child was even more extended in time and filled with complex activities – children copy in their games the relationship of adults, family and professional, master the basics of science. The specificity of childhood is determined by the level of socioeconomic and cultural development of society in which a child lives, is brought up, and is trained (Vahia et al., 2011). When does childhood end in our time? Traditionally, child psychology – as the first part of the age – covers the development of the child from birth to 7 years. But modern childhood continues after admission to school. The junior schoolboy remains a child. Moreover, some psychologists also consider adolescence as a “protracted childhood.” Whatever viewpoint we did not adhere, we have to state: the real

adulthood is waiting for the child only at the school threshold, at 15 or 17 years.

Methods of Developmental Research

The organization of psychological research can be different. The cut method is often used in sufficiently large groups, using specific techniques, and a certain aspect of development is studied, for example, the level of development of the intellect. As a result, data that are characteristic of this group are obtained – children of the same age or schoolchildren who study in the same curriculum. When several slices are done, a comparative method is connected: the data for each group are compared, and conclusions are drawn about the development trends observed here and what they are caused. In the example of the study of intelligence, we can identify age trends – by comparing the thinking patterns of preschool children from the kindergarten group (5 years), junior schoolchildren from primary school (9 years), and adolescents from the middle classes (13 years). In order to obtain such material, we had to find, in accordance with our research task, groups of children of different ages. If the task is different – to determine the dependence of the development of the intellect on the type of training, we select and compare other groups – children of the same age but students in different curricula. In this case, we draw another conclusion: where the best data are obtained, training is more efficient; children who study according to a certain program develop intellectually faster, and we can talk about the developmental effect of learning.

Controlling Variables in Age Psychology Studies

Of course, when selecting groups for some reason to conduct cuts, psychologists try to “equalize” other significant differences to ensure that the groups have the same number of boys and girls, that children are healthy, without significant deviations in mental development, etc. The remaining numerous individual differences are not taken into account. The data that we have, thanks to the method of slices, are average or average.

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