
Chapter 4

Human Development

❖ Development

- Development refers to the pattern of progressive, orderly, and predictable changes that begin at conception and continue throughout life.
- It is influenced by the interrelation of biological, cognitive and socio-emotional processes.
- The factors influencing development lie in the interaction of heredity and environment.

❖ Life-Span Perspective on Development

- Development is a lifelong process.
- The biological, cognitive and socio-emotional processes of human development are interwoven in the development of a person throughout the life-span.
- Development is multi-directional.
- Development is highly plastic.
- Development is influenced by historical conditions.
- Development is studied by many disciplines.
- An individual responds and acts on various contexts.

❖ Context of Development

- The socio-cultural contexts of development are to be found in the following systems:
- **Microsystem** refers to the immediate environment in which an individual lives.
- **Mesosystem** refers to the relations between these contexts.
- **Exosystem** refers to the events in the society in which the child does not take part directly but they influence him/her significantly.
- **Macrosystem** refers to the culture in which an individual lives.

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- **Chronosystem** refer to the events that occur in the life of an individual.

❖ The Stages of Development

- **Prenatal Stage**

- It refers to the period from conception to birth and lasts for about 40 weeks.
- The prenatal development is influenced by genetic, environmental factors and maternal characteristics.

- **Infancy**

- **Motor development:** The movements in newborns are regulated by reflexes, which are building blocks of the motor development. Motor development runs parallel with the development in brain.
- **Sensory development:** The newborns can hear, see and taste but are colour deficient. They can only distinguish between red and white colours.
- **Cognitive development:** The newborns lack object permanence and their process of thinking develops after 8 months.
- **Socio-emotional development:** Infants develop close emotional bond with their parents, known as attachment.

- **Childhood**

- **Physical development:** Children gain control over the upper part of their body and torso. The brain is developed and size of skeleton, muscles and organs also increases gradually.
- **Motor development:** Fine and gross motor development takes place.
- **Cognitive development:** Early childhood is characterised by preoperational thought, egocentrism and centration. Concrete operational thought develops in later years.
- **Socio-emotional development:** The child becomes aware of his/her surroundings through the process of socialisation and later he/she can differentiate between each other's characteristics.

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- **Moral Development:** The child learns to distinguish between right and wrong.
 - **Adolescence**
 - It refers to the stage of life which begins at the onset of puberty when sexual maturity or the ability to reproduce is attained.
 - **Physical development:** The release of hormones develops primary and secondary features.
 - **Cognitive development:** The thoughts of adolescents become more abstract, logical and creative. Formal operational thought appears between the age of 11 and 15 along with hypothetical deductive reasoning. Adolescents also develop egocentrism comprising imaginary audience and personal fable.
 - **Challenges:** According to Erikson, the main challenge of adolescence is to make some progress towards a sense of identity.
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Delinquency, substance abuse and eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia are some other major challenges faced by adolescents.
 - **Adulthood**
 - An adult is referred to as a responsible, mature, self-supporting person, who is well-integrated in the society.
 - Choosing and developing career is an important task for an adult.
 - An adult marries, has children and creates a family of his/her own.
 - Physical changes occur during adulthood because of the maturational changes in the body.
 - **Old Age**
 - Old people have to deal with situations of retirement, widowhood or illness.
 - Loss of energy and decline in health and financial assets are also challenges of old age.

❖ Important Terms and Definitions

- **Adolescence:** The developmental period of transition from childhood to early adulthood signifying the ability to reproduce. Adolescence is also characterised by a period of rapid change.
- **Animism:** The belief of treating inanimate objects with life-like qualities.
- **Centration:** It implies the attention or focus on only one particular feature to understand an event or an object.
- **Cephalocaudal trend:** The prenatal growth from conception until 5 months in which the greatest growth occurs from the top at head with physical growth in size, weight and feature differentiation gradually working from top to bottom.
- **Concrete operational stage:** The third Piagetian stage lasts from 7 to 11 years approximately. The thoughts in this stage are made up of operations that allow a child to do the tasks mentally, which were done physically before.
- **Deductive thought:** Reaching a conclusion or a specific hypothesis from general ideas in a research.
- **Development:** It refers to the pattern of progressive, orderly, and predictable changes that begin at conception and continue throughout life.
- **Egocentrism:** Keeping oneself at the centre of everything and not being able to understand other people's perspectives or ideas.
- **Evolution:** The theory given by Charles Darwin, in which the organisms change their functions and structures over time according to the demand of nature.
- **Gender:** Differentiation between male and female in social terms.
- **Identity:** The image of oneself with the realisation of one's own values, behaviour and commitments.
- **Menarche:** It is the first menstrual cycle in a female human being.
- **Motor development:** The development of muscular reflexes in order to perform physical activities.

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- **Object permanence:** It is a significant foundation of memory as infants began to realize the existence of objects even when they are not seen or touched. .
 - **Operations:** The mental actions that are performed by a child, which were done before physically.
 - **Phenotype:** The noticeable features, i.e., genotype, through which individuals are recognised.
 - **Preoperational stage:** The stage in which the children cannot perform logical operations. It is thus marked by certain deficiencies such as centration, irreversibility and egocentrism.
 - **Primary sex characteristics:** These are directly related to reproduction that is necessary for it.
 - **Proximodistal trend:** The gain of control by children in their torso than other extreme parts.
 - **Puberty:** A stage characterised with the attainment of sexual ability and reproduction.
 - **Secondary sex characteristics:** Physical features associated with the achievement of sexual maturity.
 - **Self:** The individual's awareness about oneself or one's own identity.
 - **Sensorimotor stage:** The first stage in which children understand the world by coordination of sensory and motor actions and recognise the permanence of objects.
 - **Teratogens:** The agents from environment that causing disturbances in normal development, leading to serious abnormalities or death.