

B.Ed.1st Yr. Course-1 Credit-4

Erickson's theory of Psycho-social development

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Erik Erickson, the famous psychoanalyst, is credited with developing the theory of psycho-social development. Erickson postulated that the development of an individual is the result of his interaction with his social environment. Right from his birth, his social development puts him under specific pressures or conflicts (called crises) by making specific demands at different ages or developmental stages of his life. The individual tries to meet these specific demands or resolve the crises by reacting psychologically in his own way, depending upon his circumstances. The complexity of the demands from the social environment goes on increasing as the child advances on the ladder of growth and development. So, at each stage of his development, the child faces a new crisis i.e. an issue that needs to be resolved at that particular stage of development. The way in which the 'crisis' of each stage is resolved has a major bearing on the development of one's personality which in turn is reflected as the positive

and negative aspect of one's behavior. Erickson discovered eight such issues or crises.

<i>STAGES OF PSYCHO-- SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT</i>	<i>SPECIFIC AGE OR PERIOD</i>
<i>Trust vs Mistrust</i>	<i>Birth to 1.5 Yrs.</i>
<i>Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt</i>	<i>1.5 Yrs. to 3Yrs.</i>
<i>Initiative vs Guilt</i>	<i>3 to 6 Yrs.</i>
<i>Industry vs Inferiority</i>	<i>6 to 12 Yrs.</i>
<i>Identity vs. Role Confusion</i>	<i>Adolescence (12 to 20 Yrs.)</i>
<i>Intimacy vs. Isolation</i>	<i>Early Adulthood (20 to 45 Yrs.)</i>
<i>Generativity vs. Stagnation</i>	<i>Middle Adulthood (45 to 65 Yrs.</i>
<i>Ego Integrity vs. Despair</i>	<i>Later Adulthood (65 Yrs. onwards)</i>

Since these behaviors, traits, modes of adjustment or psychological build-up are acquired through one's interaction with social environment, the stages of

development are referred to as **psycho-social development**.

Stage 1: The period of Trust vs Mistrust: In the first one and a half years of life, the infant is confronted with the crisis termed as trust vs mistrust. As a child is completely dependent upon its mother or caretaker, the way it is nourished, handled, protected safe and comfortable, may provide the baby with a sense of security or insecurity a feeling of trust or mistrust in the mother or caretaker and ultimately in its surroundings.

Stage2: The period of Autonomy vs. Shame &Doubt: Having gained a primary sense of trust and security with regard to his environment, the child with his newly developed motor skills and language ability tries to explore his environment and experiments with his strengths and limitations for achieving a sense of autonomy and independence. Within the bounds of safety, he must be provided a reasonable degree of freedom. Children who are denied the opportunity to develop a sense of independence by over-protective, harsh or restrictive parents begin to doubt their ability and ultimately begin to feel embarrassed or ashamed in the presence of others. However, the development of the sense of doubt and shame within reasonable limits is not harmful.

Stage 3: The period of Initiative vs Guilt: Equipped with the sense of trust and autonomy, the child now begins to take initiative in interacting with his environment. He asks questions about each and everything and explores his environment ceaselessly. The extent to which the initiative for carrying out mental operation is encouraged or discouraged goes a long way in developing ability in the child to initiate plan and carry out activities in later life. To resolve this conflict, we should allow our child to experiment with his initiative by properly guiding and encouraging him to develop a habit of self-evaluation of the results of his initiative.

Stage 4: Period of Industry vs Inferiority: At this stage the child begins to attend to school. Now, in case the child performs well in school/home or other social environment or admired for intellectual or motor pursuits he will be likely to develop a sense of industry filled with a sense of achievement. Such a child will consequently be motivated to work harder and achieve more in terms of productivity. If his performance remains inferior to that of his peers, or his does not satisfy his teachers and parents with his performance, he may look down upon himself and develop a sense of inferiority.

The teacher and school environment thus play a very significant role in helping the child to get out of this crisis.

The School becomes the place where success and failure are defined. Therefore, it is the duty of the teachers and the school authorities to structure classroom and School environment in such a way as to help the students to maintain a positive attitude and view themselves as capable and valuable individuals.

Stage 5: The period of Identity vs Role Confusion:

Equipped with the sense of trust, autonomy, initiative and industry adolescents begin to search for their own personal identity. The sudden changes in their bodies, their mental functioning and the changing demands of the society compel him to ask questions like, who am I? What have I become? The extent to which an individual is able to develop a sense of identity will depend upon the degree of success he achieves in resolving the crises related to all the previous stages. Failure in resolving the crises of those periods, would be likely to result in role confusion and consequently the individual will not be able to find himself. He may then feel completely bewildered, not knowing what to do and how to behave on his own. He may be unable to make the decision about his educational or professional career or about making friends. On the other hand , if the psycho-social development of the adolescents results in his achieving a sense of identity, it will result in the individual developing the required confidence in his

ability to do things, make him properly balanced in terms of emotional reactions and will place him in harmony with his environment.

Teachers and parents can play a very constructive role in helping adolescents through this identity vs confusion crisis. The adolescents, craving for identity must be fully recognized and it should be clearly understood that adolescents want to be identified as adults and must therefore, be treated as such and not as children as many teachers and parents tend to do. They should never be belittled or humiliated in front of their peers or anyone else for that matter. They must be assigned responsibilities independently or collectively and be trusted for their promises and conduct.

Stage-6: The period of Intimacy vs Isolation: During this stage of early adulthood the individual tends to develop a sense of intimacy or commitment to a close relationship with another person. Thus, during this stage, the individual seeks to form close personal attachments by merging his identity with that of another person. The relationships develop into such a close involvement that he tends to risk even the loss of his ego or image as is evidenced in the harmonious relationships between husband wife and intimate friends, and in the ideal relationship between a teacher and his pupil. When one fails to develop an

adequate sense of intimacy, one tends to develop a sense of isolation—a pulling away from relationships and breaking off ties. A certain degree of isolation is crucial to the maintenance of one's individuality and development of personality in the desired direction, but if it exceeds certain limits, it may become serious handicap in the maintenance of close ties and may lead to loneliness and self-absorption. The crisis could be resolved by striking a balance between the two—the need for intimacy and the need to maintain one's individuality.

Stage-7: The period of Generativity vs. Stagnation: An individual's life up to this stage is taken up with trying to establish himself in a professional career. Now, he craves to satisfy his needs for generativity, a concern to establish and guide the next generation. This is realized through nurturing his own children, guiding and directing other young people and by engaging in some kind of creative, productive or fruitful activity that may prove beneficial to society.

As opposed to the sense of generativity, there is a tendency on the part of the individual to become egoistic and selfish. This leads to stagnation, psychological invalidism and personal impoverishment. A balanced adjustment between the extremes of the need for generativity and the need for inactivity is thus required, so that in the time of inactivity

one may become more energetic and be able to put his renewed efforts for the welfare of society and future generation.

Stage-8: The period of Ego-integrity vs. despair: This stage of later adulthood is confronted with the final crisis of one's lifespan. Ego-integrity refers to the integration or culmination of the successful resolution of all the seven previous crises in the course of one's life. The successful resolution of the previous crises provides a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction to one's ego. When one reflects on one's past and feels satisfied over what has been done, one is sure to develop a positive outlook about oneself and the world around.

On the other hand, persons who have not been able to successfully resolve previous crises of the developmental stages are sure to feel differently. They look back on their lives with despair and feel dissatisfied with the way they have lived their lives. The thought that they now have no time left for changing the course of their lives and doing what should have been done, makes them feel miserable and, consequently, they are doomed to develop a deep sense of despair. These people can become desperately afraid of death.

At the same time, despair is not the absolute negative aspect of one's personality. To feel satisfied or dissatisfied

about one or the other issue is common and natural. One may regret many mistakes and deficiencies of one's life, but this should not be stretched to the point where one develops a sense of disaffection with one's ego and begins to hate oneself and then sink into a state of utter depression. It is, therefore, essential to strike a balance between the conflicting needs of ego-integrity and despair. If the final crisis is successfully resolved the old adult would develop an optimistic and well-balanced outlook towards himself as well as society and live the remaining days of his life as gracefully and productively as possible.