



# UNIT-7

## Understanding the Personality Development of Children

### Learning Outcomes

**By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:**

- ✓ Assess the process of psychosocial development in children
- ✓ Explore the difference in personality and temperament.

## Unit 7

# Understanding the Personality Development of Children

## Introduction

### Personality

Personality is defined as recognisable characteristics of a person, which differentiates him/her from others in different situations and positions, especially in social gatherings.

### Development of Character

Development of character is the result of the connection between the inherited (genetic) structure of a person and his/her surroundings. Character development starts as early as from the time of birth or sometimes even before the time a person is born, since genes are a part of the process.

Compared to adults, character has a great potential for development and change and can be very flexible amongst children.

### Environmental Aspects

The development of personality is impacted by many factors. Environment is the major factor. Environmental aspects play an important role in character development. These include:

1. Social aspects;
2. Cultural aspects;
3. Socioeconomic aspects;
4. Educational aspects;
5. Public guidance; and
6. Wellness issues

### Implicit (Hidden) Aspects

Implicit aspects could be:

1. Biological factors, such as, a balanced personality, sex-related, protecting and assimilatory pushes (to bring into conformity with the customs of society), and genetic temperament differences;
2. Parental education;
3. Wellness and emotional states; and
4. Public connections

These are some other factors that affect personality.

### Freud

Various psychologists and researchers stated several concepts, describing the development of personality. All of them had different point of view. Freud was a famous psychoanalyst who designed the

psychoanalytic concept with respect to character development from a sex-related perspective. Freud was primarily concerned with emotional development.

For Example: The learning concept is another concept of character development that is involved mainly with a child and his/her social background and which increases the idea that actions are customized by experience.

### **Customization of Psychoanalytic Concept**

The psychoanalytic development concept was customized by Erik Erikson and Stack Sullivan. They summarized the significance of public transactions between parents and children as well as the child's social growth.

### **Life-Cycle of a Human Being**

Erikson defined eight levels of psychosocial growth, concentrating on the particular developing projects at each level. These were termed psychosocial crisis.

The life-cycle is separated into eight developing levels:

1. Infancy (childhood/early years);
2. Toddler;
3. Pre-school;
4. School-age;
5. Puberty (the teenage years);
6. Young maturity;
7. Middle years; and
8. Old age

#### **1. Infancy (Childhood/Early Years)**

Infancy is the term used for the first year of life. It ranges from the time of birth until around the child's first birthday.

#### **Main Characteristics of Infancy**

Infancy is characterised by very rapid changes, which includes:

- I. Physical changes;
- II. Psychological (mental) changes; and
- III. Social growth and development

During this stage, the child begins to set himself up as a dependent and begins to build a stronger self-awareness (knowledge about one's self). As soon as the child begins to discover the physical world, conventional social relationships are created. The caregiver must also be vigilant in providing love and warmth in addition to food and clothes. This is the easiest stage of life at which to identify the relationships during the development. This stage is the root of personality development and is responsible for future emotional balance and the development of intelligence.

Developing a sense of believe in proper care giver will signify the basis of guarantee thus establishing believe in one self as well.

### The Creating Tasks of Origins

The creating tasks of origins are:

- i. Learning;
- ii. Walking;
- iii. Talking;
- iv. Developing relationships with others;
- v. Establishing emotional relationships with primary medical service suppliers;
- vi. Learning to eat meals; and
- vii. Creating specific sleeping and eating times.

## 2. The Toddler Stage

The stage of life from one year to three years old is known as being a toddler. During this stage, the child becomes more energised and active, which helps him improve his physical autonomy. Still a child *is* a child, who does not have expertise and judgment, so limits are beneficial for the child's own protection since injuries are very typical.

### Theory of Erikson

**Results of Restrictions:** Restrictions may come out as clashes with parents

#### a. Negativism

Erikson focused on autonomy (independence) vs. pity and doubt in this stage of life. The wish of a child to become self-dependent and do whatever he wants to do often result in negativism. This is observed when the child becomes aware of the word **no** and begins to use it regularly.

#### b. Frustration

Disappointment/frustrations lead to outbursts of anger. This is typical. The child's psychosocial abilities improve at a faster rate. At this level, the child's curiosity and interests improves but his spoken and perceptive and observant capabilities are at lack - far behind his physical growth. He becomes aware of his connections to his parents. This is demonstrated by the fact that in the past, all of the child's needs were met. Now he must be surrounded by limits. The child has to follow guidelines to keep an acceptable connection with his mother and father but may feel restricted. This level is also called as a crucial time during which a child determines a primary belief in one self and a feeling of making an effort.

### c. Anxiety

At toddlerhood, the child begins to recognize the fact that he/she is a separate person and there are restrictions between him or her and the parents. As a result, stress increases due to not being sure yet of their capability to care for themselves.

### Developing Projects for Toddlers

The developing projects for this stage are as follows –

- a. Long-term separation from parents;
- b. Gaining control of bowel and bladder function (such as, asking a parent to take him to the washroom);
- c. Using words to connect with others; and
- d. Becoming less dependent on the main care provider

## 3. Preschool Stage

Early childhood is between the ages of three to six years old. It is also known as the preschool stage.

### Development during Preschool Stage

An increase in language or vocabulary and continuously talking are attributes of this level. Moreover, constant questioning is the device by which the child examines the world and his environment and learns more about it.

However, a point of concern for the parents is the creation of long stories and imaginary friends. This concern is actually helpful in the development of personality. At this stage, the child pretends to behave as a mature person. He co-operates with all family members and becomes responsive to parent requirements. Despite this, the child is still psychologically connected and reliant on the mother and father.

### The Developing Projects for Preschool Age

According to Erikson's psychosocial theory the developmental tasks of the preschool years include: Improving the capability to connect and understand others;

- i. Self-care;
- ii. Studying the difference between genders (male/female) and creating sex-related modesty;
- iii. Studying right from wrong and good from bad; and
- iv. Creating family relationships

## 4. School-age Stage

The stage of life between six years to twelve years old is usually known as the school-age stage.

The school age stage is the entrance into a new phase of life. Children move out of their houses into a world where they have to find their own aims and goals. Their self-perception and intellectual capabilities change.

### **Comparison with Peers**

School-age is also considered to be a critical stage as the children begin to compare themselves with peers. Children begin to evaluate themselves against peers or friends. This is a good method for making one's place in the society or school. The children become more confident and more responsible which helps them in the development of personality.

### **Ascribed To Achieved Status**

Ascribed status is status provided by someone or it is the status from the time of birth. One does not need to struggle for it. Achieved status is the status for which one has to struggle to make his identification.

The school-age stage is often considered to be the time in which children make the changeover from ascribed to achieved status. In school-age, a child is regarded as a collective rather than as an individual at home. It does not matter how a child is treated in his family (loved or hated), unless it has affected the child's personality in one way or another. As a result, a child achieves his own status. The child in school forgets many desires that may not allow him to fit into the team. This makes him ready to stay in a bigger community rather than in the family unit.

### **Sense of Belonging**

During school-age, a sense of belonging is developed in children who feel accepted in the group and wider community. This feeling contains identification with the community in which the child is a member, along with a dedication to its principles and values.

### **Feeling of Liability or Responsibility**

A feeling of responsibility, including a potential desire to live up to the objectives that one has set for himself, increases at this level of growth in the child's character.

The child obtains a new set of principles and he begins to view his community from different viewpoints. He also develops a self-perception that allows the child to control his dreams and ways of communication.

### **Distinguish Between Right and Wrong**

At this level, children have firm beliefs and standards of what is right and what is wrong. They can easily differentiate right from wrong and can select the right way to move on.

### **Adolescence Stage/Puberty**

The adjusting level between childhood and adulthood is termed adolescence or puberty.

The adolescence stage is followed by rapid:

- a. physical growth;
- b. psychological growth; and
- c. sociological growth

**Starting Phase**

This level of development formally starts in the teenage years and ends when a person is old enough to deal with and manage his lifestyle and show responsibility for his choices.

**Developing Projects**

The developing projects experienced by a child at this age are identified by;

- I. Body and appearance;
- II. Creating proper connections with individuals of the same age;
- III. Recognizing gender based roles suitable for one's age;
- IV. Becoming independent;
- V. Developing morality;
- VI. Changes in behaviour; and
- VII. Adopting principles, which are needed for performing tasks in society

**Period of Revolt**

A child in the adolescence stage experiences unexpected changes in feelings and power. This is considered to be a period of psychological revolt or clashing. An adolescent still varies between child-like dependence and the need for freedom. Freeing from the mother and father to gain personal experiences and to learn from personal experience occurs. During this critical level, a child does not like adults' control but continues to seek their assistance. As a result, unexpected variations in feelings are common.

**Role of Peers in Socialisation**

Professional groups play a crucial part in the process of socialising and developing public connections. The self-concept is progressively altered as a result of responses of his colleagues towards him.

**Personality Development****Role of Temperament (Nature)**

A child's behaviour is directly dependent on his determined temperament. The growth and change of the child is also affected by this. The child generates different exciting elements from the same environment.

For example, a child with high energy and a natural, low capability to adjust to the environment will find him confined and limited. In comparison, a child with a dependent nature gets more attention from concerned parents and supporting teachers.

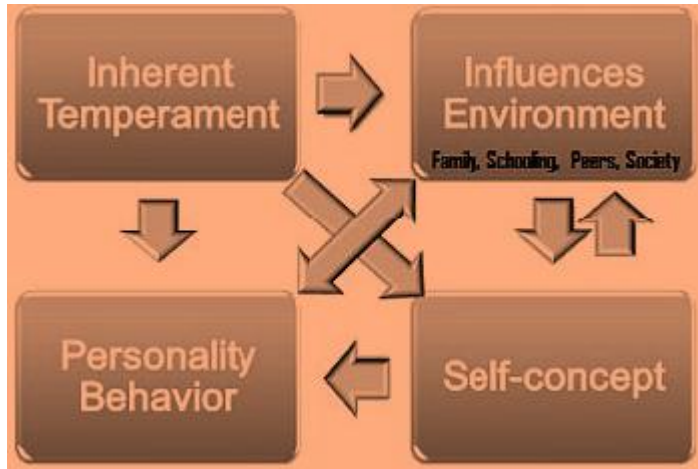


Fig: 7.1

### Process of Personality Development

The natural events during the child years impact a child's behaviour and character development. This in turn impacts the environment. All these environmental factors affect a crucial part of child's personality called self-concept.

### Self-Concept

A child's idea about himself significantly affects personality development. The way the peers of a child think about him is a procedure through which a child fine-tunes his self-concept. If a child faces rejection or hatred by their peers, he endures feelings of loneliness.

### Role of Parent's Motivation

Parents play a great role in the development of personality. They help to develop self-concept in a child which can makes him more confident and accepted by society.

### Personality Development in Childhood



Fig: 7.2

## Features of Positive Parenting

Positive parenting is important in the development of skills in a child. Making clear observation about a child's character and offering on-going assistance can help him through the confusion of the teenage years. By making the home a comfortable place in which to live, a child gains a powerful base for maximum character development. A child who is satisfied from within feels good and confident. The perspective "I am OK, you are OK" is developed towards the people around him. A strong self-concept reduces the conflicts that occur at this stage of psychosocial growth.

## Family Structure

Change in the family structure or situation impacts personal connections. Examples of changes in family structure include but are not limited to the birth of a brother or sister, separation or divorce, death of a family member, or job loss. These all play a big part on personality development.

## Personality Traits

The distinguishing features of personal nature are termed as personality traits.

It can be explained as a characteristic of a child who decides how he adapts to the surroundings and how he responds to each personal scenario. The mixture and combination of various attributes is specific to each individual. Specialists have separated these attributes into three main categories:

### I. Cardinal (Basic) Traits

The person is known particularly for these attributes as they are present for the whole life. These are the most dominant ones. The effects of these traits are exhibited later in life and are not usually seen during child years.

#### Central Traits

Central traits are the roots of personality development. They are typically used to describe a person as an individual.

#### Common Personality Traits

Some common personality traits are

- i. Frustrated or cheerful;
- ii. Extravert (bold person) – friendly and fun loving;
- iii. Introvert (shy person) – quiet and sober;
- iv. Openness - creative and independent;
- v. Agreeableness - soft-hearted and trusting;
- vi. Conscientiousness – structured and careful; and
- vii. Emotional balance – relaxed and secure

### 2. Secondary Traits

These are traits that appear only in a particular situations or conditions

Examples are:

- I. Impatiently waiting for something, standing in a queue;
- II. Nervousness before an examination;
- III. Anxiety before travelling; and
- IV. Nervousness before an interview

### Types of Personalities

#### Self-Actualised Personality:

- Self esteem;
- Belonging and love;
- Safety; and
- Problem-centred, not self-centred

#### Person-Centred Perspective:

- Congruence(authenticity and realness);
- Empathy (process of understanding); and
- Unconditional positive regard (non-judgmental respect)

### Childhood Trauma Personality

Any harm to the mind of a child that happens as a result of a seriously upsetting event is known as childhood trauma.

**Main Damages** include physical changes inside the mind which affects the future responses of a child. Even adults cannot face extreme pressures. When a child is suffering from pressure, he may face a great change in his personality. The main damages also include psychological changes along with cognitive and language development problems.

### Reasons of Childhood Trauma

Childhood trauma is mostly found in those children who are experiencing strict discipline from their parents who are disturbed for some reasons.

Common causes of trauma are as follows –

- Separation from parents;
- Sexual, physical, or verbal abuse;
- Feeling threatened or being scolded in the presence of other people;
- Neglect;
- Serious illness;
- A disturbing environment;
- Living with domestic violence; and
- Invasive medical procedures



Fig: 7.3

### Results of Childhood Trauma

The reaction of a person suffering from childhood trauma may be completely different from that of others who did not experience trauma. He does not react like other people.

Common results include

- I. A childhood trauma victim is always feels sad and lonely;
- II. Anger and moodiness are frequent;
- III. His psychology is severely damaged;
- IV. A sense of fear remains, which leads to those who repeatedly experience trauma;
- V. He considers this world to be a dangerous and harmful place;
- VI. He is distrustful;
- VII. He frequently feels guilt and shame; and
- VIII. He has difficulty concentrating and is frequently confused.

### Mother- the First Role Model for a Baby

Mothers are typically the first role models for their babies. A child often tries to copy the mother in everything but cannot do so until sufficient character is developed to identify her actions. A child only observes the actions of a mother without understanding their meanings. At first, the personality of a mother operates as an environmental pressure upon a child and he cannot totally grasp the personality.

### The First Thing a Child Learns

The first thing a child learns from the mother is responding to certain acts. The child begins to feel love and affection and will try to do the same things, like pressing his cheek to the mother's cheek, kissing, cooing (producing murmuring sound) in response to her cooing, and smiling.

**In the later stage**, the child also begins to show fear and anxiety, nervousness, and mental disturbance.

### **Adoption of Nature**

Children are very strong observers so mothers must be cognizant of all they do in front of their babies. A child at an early age is not able to distinguish between good and bad, right or wrong, sincerity and insincerity; he exhibits them as the mother does.

- I. If a mother is dishonest in front of her child, the child will adopt this habit of lying as this is what he has observed his role model doing.
- II. Children also adopt forms of expression. A mother should remain calm and polite so that the child follows in the same manner.
- III. Children learn ways of eating, drinking, talking, and working from the mother. It is up to the mother to form the child into a good member of the family or society.

## **Personality Development in Children**

Research has revealed that every child has his own personality, own ways of talking, drinking, standing, and sitting. Even children from the same parents are different in their nature.

Parents are often surprised to discover that their children's personalities vary greatly from sibling to sibling. It is exciting to think that children with the same inherited background, living in the same place, sharing the same things are completely different from one another. Brothers and sisters deal with different things in different ways.

### **Judgment of Personality Traits**

The personality of a child is visible from infancy. Some children are polite and calm from the beginning while others are naughty or fussy children. These qualities reflect their personality as it may be in the future.

### **Effect of Names on Personality**

A mother and father should remain vigilant about the names they are going to give their children. It is said that a name may affect personality development.

For example, if one child is labelled as sharp and another is labelled as shy, it will not take long before the children will actually pull these traits into part of their personality.

## **Psychosocial Development**

### **Theory of Erikson**

Erik Erikson presented the Theory of Psychosocial Development. He studied the development of personality from infancy - through - adulthood. All people pass through different phases of his life which help the development of personality.

### **First Stage of Life**

Erikson suggested providing safety and a sense of security in the first year of the baby's life. If it is not done, it will have a negative impact on his personality; he may fear everything and consider this world unsafe and a place of restlessness.

### **Role of Parents**

The parent's role in the development of a baby's personality is considered to be of primary importance. Considerations to keep in mind are as follows

#### **a. Dealing with a Child**

Different children show different responses towards different things. Some show extreme responses to light, disturbance, and heat-range changes while others seem unchanged. Mothers and fathers of ultra-calm children should play energizing music and promote exercising so that their children do not become dull. Children who are especially tuned in to motivating elements may benefit from a relaxing atmosphere.

#### **b. True Guidance**

If a child is getting frustrated and things are not going in the right way while playing or reading, the parents should guide him towards different toys or books before continuing the activity in which the child exhibits frustration. This will help the child learn to overcome frustration and enjoy his time.

#### **c. Anxiety Response**

Some babies are very sensitive. They cannot bear changes in the existing things or separation from their parents, even for a short period of time. Such children who are facing anxiety issue should be reassured and loved. They should be given their favourite toys or allowed to perform their favourite activities. This helps them to come out of the fear. On the other hand, there are certain babies who accept changes willingly. The parents should consider them as a blessing of God and give them enough love and motivation.

#### **d. Socialisation**

Some children are naturally social. They interact easily with everyone around them. On the other hand, some children are shy or cry in the presence of people other than family members. The basic role of parents of such children is that they expose them to public situations. They should go to parks and public areas where there are a lot of people. They should promote confidence to go play and interact with other people and babies. This will help them in the socialization process.

### **Place in Siblings**

The birth order of a child in the family is also important.

**Single Child**

A single child in a family are considered to be more confident because they receive all of the parental attention and love. They may also be more demanding and are sometimes said to be stubborn.

**Elder Child**

The first-born child is often found to be a leader because he is always treated as a big kid. He is more responsible than his age dictates. This sense of being “big” remains throughout their lives and helps them in future.

**Middle Child**

A middle child is often considered more patient and a better listener than a first born or younger siblings. These qualities help him in his adult life. Researchers say in jest that they do not know if the middle child is blessed or cursed.

**Younger Child**

The youngest child is often found to be more stubborn but is more confident and intelligent. This may be explained by the idea that they receive the love of both parents and siblings. The youngest child may also exhibit an outgoing, talkative personality.

**Essential Elements in Personality Development**

The most essential elements in personality development are -

**Playing**

Playing is the first right of a child. It is also said to be the root in personality development. It is observed that a child who plays more is more physically active and shows better levels of fitness. He does not suffer from diseases very frequently. Activities like swimming, running, walking, and even, screaming helps him to attain a fit physique.

**Communication Skills**

Communication skills are also a very essential element in personality development. It is the first duty of parents to help their children with socialization. Shy individuals have no position in this world or in the community. They always sit behind other as a result they are left alone. Parents should help their child develop communication skills. They should also work to clear confusions their child encounters.

**Proper Balance of Emotions**

Proper balance of emotions is also essential in personality development. Children often have no control over their emotions. They are not able to face their defeat in competition. They may become violent or cry. It is the duty of parents to teach their child that winning and losing are both part of a game. One cannot win every time. They should teach the child to face difficulties without losing control over

emotions. If a child is unable to control his emotions and cannot handle difficult situations, this may cause problems later in life

Personality development in children is also very important from future point of view. Some feelings are rather important to maintain balance. These feelings include

**Curiosity:** Children should have the curiosity about everything. This quality helps them discover and learn.

**Fear:** Fear is not necessarily a good thing but sometimes, it proves to be beneficial to a child (i.e. fear that something or someone may harm him).

### **Child's Temperament**

Understanding child's temperament is must for parents. It is a fact that personality develops over of time.

### **Factors Affecting Personality**

There are many factors that affect personality. They include

#### **I. Environment**

Environment has a strong impact on personality as well as on temperament. A child should be kept in a friendly and peaceful environment. This will help him in becoming a peaceful member of society.

Temperament includes;

- a. ability to accept things;
- b. the level of activity; and
- c. tendency to get troubled.

Parents often face problems in dealing with their children's temperament. Dealing with this can be frustrating but parents should not get overly nervous and handle each situation with patience. Although it is difficult to change the temperament of a child, parents should try their best to do so if they deem the temperament to be problematic. They must use strategies that will help them deal with the child's temperament.

### **Difference in Personality and Temperament**

Personality and temperament are two different things. Researchers agree that personality is more difficult to understand.

Different researchers have different point of views. Some believe that personality is inherited from parents; others have contradictory (opposite) views. The traits are not completely developed from birth. Parents can easily mould personality; it is the role of the parents to help develop an acceptable personality in their child.

If a child shows too much fear or anger, the parents must help to get the child out of this temperament. If a child is more outspoken, parents should guide him in the right way.

## Temperament Traits

Temperament traits can be observed in children through different methods.

They include

- a. Interviews;
- b. Observations; and
- c. Questionnaires.

There are nine temperament traits that are measured using a spectrum scale that indicates mild to extreme responses.

Nine temperament traits are described below:

- a. **Activity:** Is the child comfortable or uncomfortable with new activities?
- b. **Proper management:** Does the child manage his routine properly is he lacking in these skills?
- c. **Performance:** Does a child perform a task easily or with frustration?
- d. **Mood:** Is the child moody (exhibit frequent mood swings) or is the child able to regulate his moods?
- e. **Response:** Does a child give proper response in a desirable way or does he respond quietly?
- f. **Persistence and attention span:** Does the child fight till the end or does he quit easily?
- g. **Distractibility:** Is the child easily distracted from what he is doing or can he block out exterior disruptions and continue with the present activity?
- h. **Social:** Is the child more social or shy?
- i. **Sensory threshold:** How does the child respond to a motivating force?

## Types of children

### I. Flexible Children

Flexible children are more efficient in all activities. They are more polite, happy, and regular in daily routines. They adapt to changes easily and they do not get easily upset.

### II. Role of Parents in Life Of Flexible Children

Parents have fewer struggles with more flexible children. The parents need to provide enough love, warmth, and basic necessities that will help them become an extraordinary person.

### III. Difficult Children

Difficult children are often referred to as “hard - to - please” children. They are irregular in their daily routines. They may be fussy or noisy, and show more intense reactions.

#### Role of Parents in Life of Difficult Children

Controlling difficult children by providing them enough space for playing will allow these children to be successful. Parents should guide them in right ways and help to change their directions when they are off-track.

**IV. Slow Children**

Slow children are mostly selective and fussy. They prefer to take rest rather than playing and studying.

**Role of Children in Life of Slow Children**

Slow children, with the passage of time, become more positive and active with continuous positive modelling. Parents should involve the children in different activities using fun and enjoyable techniques to allow independence to develop.

**Temperament of Parents**

Parents should also have a complete understanding of their own temperament. They should be vigilant in labelling their children. They should not scold them in front of others. This shatters their confidence. When a parent begins to understand the child's temperament, he or she can manage himself with the environment.

**i. Appreciate the Uniqueness of Children**

Parents must respect the uniqueness of their child. They should never compare him with other children. This may damage the child's self-confidence.

**ii. Communication**

Parents must communicate with their children consistently to gain an awareness of the children's needs. They must listen to their children with patience.

**iii. Role Model**

Children imitate their parents so it is important to be a good role model.

**iv. Enjoy with children**

Parents must enjoy with their children. They should take part in different activities like dancing and singing.

The mutual understanding between children and parents is the basic necessity in the development of personality. Parents who can fulfil all the requirements and needs of their children and understand them will find life to be more peaceful.

**Further Reading:**

- ✓ *Social and Personality Development, (2009), By David Shaffer*
- ✓ *Personality Development: A Psychoanalytic Perspective, (1999), edited by Debbie Hindle, Marta Vaciago Smith*
- ✓ *Personality Development, (2003), By Simanowitz, Valerie, Pearce, Peter*