

Theoretical Perspectives on Human Development

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★ These notes cover all the topics in Unit 2 in a systematic sequence to help in easy understanding and revision.

Unit - 2

Theoretical Perspectives in Human Development

Theoretical perspectives help us to understand how individuals grow, develop and behave. Different theories explain development from different viewpoints.

In this Unit we will study :

- 2.1 Psychodynamic Theories
 - 2.1.1 Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory
 - 2.1.2 Erikson's Psychosocial Theory
- 2.2 Behaviourist Theories
- 2.3 Humanistic Theory and Social Theory
- 2.4 Cognitive Theory
- 2.5 Ecological Theory

★ Theories of development provide a framework to understand human growth and behaviour.

2.1 Psychodynamic Theories

Psychodynamic theories focus on unconscious mental processes and how early childhood experiences influence personality development.

Key Points :

- Behaviour is influenced by unconscious drives and conflicts.
- Early experiences with parents are important.
- Personality develops in stages.
- Inner conflicts create anxiety.
- Coping with anxiety shapes behaviour.

★ Psychodynamic theories explain how unconscious forces influence thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

2.1.1 Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) developed the most influential psychodynamic theory.

Key Points :

- Personality is the result of unconscious motives and conflicts.
- Human behaviour is determined by biological drives.
- Development occurs in a series of psychosexual stages.
- Anxiety arises from conflicts between id, ego and superego.

★ Freud believed that much of our behaviour is controlled by unconscious forces.

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i) Structure of Personality (According to Freud)

Freud described personality as having three components.

Component	Nature	Function
Id	Present from birth. Works on pleasure principle.	Seeks immediate gratification of basic drives.
Ego	Develops in early childhood. Works on reality principle.	Mediator between id and superego. Deals with reality.
Superego	Develops through social influence.	Represents moral values and ideals. Acts as a judge.

★ Ego tries to balance the demands of id, superego and the reality of the external world.

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ii) Psychosexual Stages of Development

Freud proposed that personality develops through five psychosexual stages.

Stage	Age	Focus Zone	Main Task / Conflict
1. Oral Stage	0 - 1 year	Mouth	Sucking, biting, weaning.
2. Anal Stage	1 - 3 years	Anus	Toilet training, control.
3. Phallic Stage	3 - 6 years	Genitals	Oedipus/Electra complex.
4. Latency Stage	6 - 12 years	—	Learning, school, peer relations.
5. Genital Stage	12 years & above	Genitals	Mature relationships, reproduction.

★ Fixation at any stage can lead to personality problems in later life.

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iii) Defense Mechanisms

Ego uses defense mechanisms to reduce anxiety.

Some common defense mechanisms are :

- Repression : Pushing unacceptable thoughts into unconscious.
- Denial : Refusing to accept reality.
- Projection : Attributing one's own unacceptable feelings to others.
- Displacement : Redirecting feelings from original object to another.
- Sublimation : Channeling unacceptable drives into socially acceptable activities.

★ Defense mechanisms help in reducing anxiety and protecting the ego.

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iv) Psychosexual Stages (Continued)

Stage	Age	Focus Zone	Main Task / Conflict
(1) Oral Stage	0 - 1 year	Mouth	Sucking, biting, weaning.
(2) Anal Stage	1 - 3 years	Anus	Toilet training, control.
(3) Phallic Stage	3 - 6 years	Genitals	Oedipus / Electra complex.
(4) Latency Stage	6 - 12 years	—	Learning, school, peer relations.
(5) Genital Stage	12 years & above	Genitals	Mature relationships, reproduction.

v) Strengths of Freud's Theory

- First theory to explain personality in a systematic way.
- Emphasizes the role of early childhood.
- Highlights the influence of unconscious motives.
- Useful in understanding emotions and conflicts.

★ Freud's theory shows that early experiences and unconscious forces shape our personality.

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vi) Limitations / Criticism of Freud's Theory

- Based on case studies; not scientifically proven.
- Overemphasis on sexuality.
- Ignores cultural and social factors.
- Too complex and difficult to verify.
- Not much relevance in modern research.

vii) Application in Education

- Teachers should understand emotional conflicts of students.
- Importance of creating a safe and supportive environment.
- Guidance and counselling can help in resolving conflicts.
- Encouraging positive behaviour and self-control.

★ Understanding students' inner conflicts helps teachers in better guidance and support.

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2.1.2 Erikson's Psychosocial Theory

Erik Erikson (1902-1994) expanded Freud's theory by adding social and cultural factors.

Key Points :

- Development occurs throughout the entire life span.
- Personality develops through eight psychosocial stages.
- Each stage presents a crisis or conflict.
- Successful resolution leads to healthy personality.
- Social environment plays a key role.
- Identity is the central theme in Erikson's theory.

★ Erikson believed that life is a continuous process of growth and change.

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i) The Eight Psychosocial Stages

Stage	Age	Psychosocial Crisis	Virtue (Positive Outcome)
1. Infancy	0 - 1 year	Trust vs. Mistrust	Hope
2. Toddlerhood	1 - 3 years	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt	Will
3. Early Childhood	3 - 6 years	Initiative vs. Guilt	Purpose
4. School Age	6 - 12 years	Industry vs. Inferiority	Competence
5. Adolescence	12 - 18 years	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Fidelity
6. Early Adulthood	18 - 40 years	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love
7. Middle Adulthood	40 - 65 years	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Care
8. Late Adulthood	65 years & above	Integrity vs. Despair	Wisdom

★ Each stage has a conflict; healthy resolution leads to a positive virtue.

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ii) Explanation of Stages (Brief)

1. Infancy (0-1 year) : Baby learns trust by receiving love, care and consistency.
2. Toddlerhood (1-3 yr) : Child learns independence and makes own choices.
3. Early Childhood (3-6 yr) : Child shows initiative in activities and needs encouragement.
4. School Age (6-12 yr) : Child learns skills and develops sense of achievement.
5. Adolescence (12-18 yr) : Teenager explores identity and future goals.
6. Early Adulthood (18-40 yr) : Young adult builds close relationships.
7. Middle Adulthood (40-65 yr) : Adult contributes to family, society and future generation.
8. Late Adulthood (65+ yr) : Elderly person looks back on life with satisfaction and wisdom.

★ Life is a journey of growth, challenges and achievements.

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iii) Strengths of Erikson's Theory

- Covers the entire life span.
- Includes social and cultural influences.
- Emphasizes personal growth and identity.
- Easy to understand and practical.
- Helpful in counselling and education.

iv) Limitations of Erikson's Theory

- Not scientifically tested.
- Some stages overlap.
- Cultural differences are not fully considered.
- Based on personal observations.

★ Erikson's theory is useful in understanding how a person develops in social and cultural environment.

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2.1.2 Erikson's Psychosocial Theory (Continued)

v) The Eight Psychosocial Stages

Stage	Age	Psychosocial Crisis	Virtue (Positive Outcome)
1. Infancy	0 - 1 year	Trust vs. Mistrust	Hope
2. Toddlerhood	1 - 3 years	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt.	Will
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★ Erikson believed that healthy personality develops when crises are resolved positively at each stage.

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vii) Strengths of Erikson's Theory

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vii) Limitations of Erikson's Theory

- Not scientifically tested.
- Some stages overlap.
- Cultural differences are not fully considered.
- Based on personal observations.

★ Erikson's theory helps us understand how a person develops in social and cultural environments.

2.2 Behaviourist Theories

Behaviourist theories focus on observable behaviour and how it is learned through environment and experience.

Key Points :

- Behaviour is a response to stimuli.
- Learning occurs through conditioning and reinforcement.
- Internal mental processes are not important.
- Environment plays a major role in shaping behaviour.
- Behaviour can be controlled and modified.

★ Behaviourist theories emphasize learning through stimulus, response and reinforcement.

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2.2.1 Ivan Pavlov's Classical Conditioning Theory

Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936) developed the theory of classical conditioning through experiments on dogs.

Key Points :

- Learning occurs by associating two stimuli.
- A neutral stimulus becomes a conditioned stimulus.
- Response is automatic and involuntary.
- Behaviour is learned through repeated pairing.

Elements of Classical Conditioning :

Element	Meaning	Example (Pavlov's Experiment)
1. Unconditioned Stimulus (UCS)	Stimulus that naturally elicits a response.	Food
2. Unconditioned Response (UCR)	Natural response to the UCS.	Salivation
3. Neutral Stimulus (NS)	Stimulus that does not produce response.	Bell sound
4. Conditioned Stimulus (CS)	NS that, after pairing with UCS, produces response.	Bell sound (after pairing with food)
5. Conditioned Response (CR)	Learned response to the CS.	Salivation to bell sound

★ Classical conditioning shows how association between stimuli leads to learned behaviour.

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The Process of Classical Conditioning (Pavlov's Experiment)

1. Before Conditioning :

- Food (UCS) → Salivation (UCR)
- Bell (NS) → No response

2. During Conditioning :

- Food (UCS) + Bell (NS) → Salivation (UCR)
(Repeated several times)

3. After Conditioning :

- Bell (CS) → Salivation (CR)
(Without food)

Strengths of Pavlov's Theory

- Based on scientific experiments.
- Simple and easy to understand.
- Explains the basis of many learned behaviours.

Limitations of Pavlov's Theory

- Only explains involuntary responses.
- Does not explain complex human behaviour.
- Not all learning occurs through conditioning.

★ Pavlov's theory explains how neutral stimuli can become meaningful through association.

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Applications of Classical Conditioning

- Used in therapy to treat phobias.
- Used in advertising to create positive association.
- Helps in habit formation.
- Used in classroom learning.

★ Classical conditioning is widely used in daily life and education.

Summary - Pavlov's Classical Conditioning

Focus	Association between stimuli.
Type of Learning	Involuntary and automatic.
Key Concept	Neutral stimulus becomes conditioned stimulus.
Example	Bell sound causes salivation after being paired with food.
Main Contribution	Explained the basic principles of learning through conditioning.

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The Process of Classical Conditioning (Contd.)

4. Extinction :

- When UCS is repeatedly not paired with CS, the conditioned response gradually disappears.

5. Spontaneous Recovery :

- After extinction, the CR may reappear after some time when the CS is presented again.

6. Generalization :

- Similar stimuli to CS can also produce CR.

7. Discrimination :

- The ability to respond to CS and not to similar other stimuli.

★ Pavlov's theory shows that learning occurs through association between stimuli.

2.2.2 B. Frederick Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory

B. F. Skinner (1904-1990) developed the theory of operant conditioning.

Key Points :

- Learning occurs through consequences of behaviour.
- Focuses on voluntary behaviour.
- Behaviour is shaped and controlled by reinforcement and punishment.
- Environment plays a major role.

★ Skinner believed that behaviour is learned and can be changed by its consequences.

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i) Operant Conditioning - Basic Concepts

Concept	Meaning
Operant Behaviour	Voluntary behaviour that an individual emits.
Reinforcement	A consequence that increases the likelihood of behaviour.
Punishment	A consequence that decreases the likelihood of behaviour.
Extinction	When a behaviour is no longer followed by reinforcement.
Shaping	Reinforcing successive approximations towards a desired behaviour.
Discrimination	Learning to respond to a specific stimulus and not to others.

★ Operant conditioning explains how consequences influence future behaviour.

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ii) Types of Reinforcement

Type	Description	Example
1. Positive Reinforcement	Adding a pleasant stimulus to increase behaviour.	Giving praise for good work.
2. Negative Reinforcement	Removing an unpleasant stimulus to increase behaviour.	Stopping a loud alarm when button is pressed.
3. Primary Reinforcer	Naturally satisfying stimulus.	Food, water, rest.
4. Secondary (Conditioned) Reinforcer	Learned stimulus that becomes reinforcing.	Money, grades, tokens.

iii) Types of Punishment

1. Positive Punishment : Adding an unpleasant stimulus.
Example - Scolding, giving extra work.
2. Negative Punishment : Removing a pleasant stimulus.
Example - Removing toys, cancelling privileges.

★ Reinforcement increases behaviour while punishment decreases behaviour.

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iv) Schedules of Reinforcement

Schedule	Description	Example
A. Continuous Schedules		
1. Fixed Ratio (FR)	Reinforcement after a fixed number of responses.	Getting a stamp after 5 problems.
2. Variable Ratio (VR)	Reinforcement after an average number of responses.	Lottery, fishing.
B. Intermittent (Partial) Schedules		
3. Fixed Interval (FI)	Reinforcement after a fixed time interval.	Salary at the end of month.
4. Variable Interval (VI)	Reinforcement at varying time intervals.	News of the results, pop quizzes.

★ Schedules of reinforcement determine the strength and persistence of behaviour.

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v) Applications of Operant Conditioning

- Used in classroom management.
- Helps in modifying behaviour (good or bad).
- Used in therapy for behaviour problems.
- Used in training animals and employees.
- Forms the basis of behaviour modification techniques.

Summary - Skinner's Operant Conditioning

Focus	Voluntary behaviour and its consequences.
Key Concept	Reinforcement and punishment shape behaviour.
Learning	Occurs by trial and error.
Environment	Controls and strengthens behaviour.
Main Contribution	Showed that behaviour can be modified by controlling consequences.

★ Operant conditioning is widely used to shape and modify voluntary behaviour.

2.2.2 B. Frederick Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory (Continued)

vi) Strengths of Skinner's Theory

- Scientific and systematic.
- Explains learning in real life situations.
- Useful in education, therapy and behaviour modification.
- Emphasizes on observable behaviour.
- Helps in developing good habits.

vii) Limitations of Skinner's Theory

- Ignores mental processes.
- Overemphasis on external control.
- May reduce creativity and independence.
- Not all behaviour is learned by conditioning.
- Human behaviour is more complex.

★ Skinner's theory shows that consequences of behaviour determine future behaviour.

2.3 Humanistic Theory and Social Theory

Humanistic theories focus on the whole person, self-growth, potential and personal experience. Social theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and culture in development.

Key Points :

- Human beings are basically good.
- Emphasis on self-actualization and personal growth.
- Importance of free will and personal choice.
- Social environment and culture influence development.
- Learning occurs through meaningful interaction.

★ Humanistic and social theories highlight the importance of personal growth and social interaction.

2.3.1 Abraham Maslow's Theory

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) proposed the theory of hierarchy of needs and self-actualization.

Key Points :

- Human beings have a hierarchy of needs.
- Lower needs must be satisfied before higher needs become important.
- Self-actualization is the ultimate goal.
- People have the potential for growth.
- Emphasizes positive human qualities.

Hierarchy of Needs (From Lower to Higher)

1. Physiological Needs	Food, water, shelter, sleep, etc.
2. Safety Needs	Security, stability, protection.
3. Love and Belonging Needs	Friendship, family, love, acceptance.
4. Esteem Needs	Respect, achievement, recognition.
5. Self-Actualization	Realizing one's full potential.

★ Maslow believed that self-actualization leads to a fulfilling and meaningful life.

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i) Self-Actualized Person (According to Maslow)

- Realistic about self and others.
- Accepts self, others and nature.
- Spontaneous and natural.
- Problem-centred, not ego-centred.
- Independent and self-reliant.
- Continues to grow and develop.

ii) Limitations / Criticism of Maslow's Theory

- Not scientifically tested.
- Based on personal observations.
- Cultural differences are not considered.
- Hierarchy of needs may vary.
- Self-actualization is difficult to measure.

★ Maslow's theory encourages individuals to achieve their full potential and live a meaningful life.

2.3.2 Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) emphasized the role of social interaction and culture in cognitive development.

Key Points :

- Learning is a social process.
- Language is the key tool of thinking.
- Interaction with more capable others helps learning.
- Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is important.
- Culture provides tools and symbols for thinking.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The gap between what a child can do alone and what he/she can do with guidance.

Concept	Meaning
What the child can do alone	Actual Development Level
What the child can do with help	Potential Development Level
The gap between the two	Zone of Proximal Development

★ Vygotsky believed that social interaction and language are essential for cognitive growth.

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i) Key Concepts of Vygotsky's Theory

Concept	Meaning
Scaffolding	Support given by a more capable person.
Language	Tool for thinking and communication.
Social Interaction	Learning occurs through interaction with others.
Culture	Provides tools, symbols and values.
Internalization	Turning external activities into internal thinking.

ii) Limitations / Criticism of Vygotsky's Theory

- Difficult to apply in large classrooms.
- Depends on quality of interactions.
- Cultural context may limit generalization.
- Measurement of ZPD is not easy.

★ Vygotsky's theory shows that children learn best through meaningful social interaction.

2.4 Cognitive Theory

Cognitive theory focuses on mental processes such as thinking, reasoning, memory and problem solving.

Key Points :

- Development occurs through changes in thinking.
- Children actively construct knowledge.
- Focus on how children understand the world.
- Emphasizes stages of cognitive development.
- Learning is influenced by mental structures.

★ Cognitive theory explains development as a result of changes in mental processes and structures.

2.4.1 Jean Piaget's Theory

Jean Piaget (1896-1980) proposed the theory of cognitive development. He is known for his work on how children think and learn.

Key Points :

- Children construct knowledge through interaction with environment.
- Cognitive development occurs in a fixed sequence of stages.
- Children actively organize and adapt information.
- Two main processes : Assimilation and Accommodation.
- Aim of development is Equilibration (balance).

★ Piaget believed that children are little scientists who explore, discover and learn.

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i) Stages of Cognitive Development (According to Piaget)

Stage	Age	Description	Key Feature
1. Sensorimotor Stage	0 - 2 years	Understanding through senses and actions.	Object permanence develops.
2. Preoperational Stage	2 - 7 years	Use of symbols and language.	Egocentric thinking.
3. Concrete Operational Stage	7 - 11 years	Logical thinking about concrete events.	Conservation develops.
4. Formal Operational Stage	11 years & above	Abstract thinking and reasoning.	Hypothetical and deductive thinking.

★ Piaget's stages show how thinking develops from simple actions to abstract reasoning.

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ii) Important Concepts in Piaget's Theory

Concept	Meaning
Schema	Mental framework or pattern of thought.
Assimilation	Adding new information to existing schema.
Accommodation	Changing schema to fit new information.
Equilibration	Balancing assimilation and accommodation.
Egocentrism	Inability to see things from another's point of view.
Conservation	Understanding that quantity remains same despite change in appearance.

★ Piaget's concepts explain how children think, learn and adapt to their environment.

2.5 Ecological Theory

Ecological theory explains development as a result of interaction between individual and different environmental systems.

Key Points :

- Development is influenced by multiple environmental systems.
- These systems interact with each other.
- Change in any system affects the individual.
- Emphasizes context and environment.
- Focus on mutual interaction between person and environment.

★ Ecological theory highlights that development occurs within a network of interrelated systems.

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2.5.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) proposed ecological systems theory. He described five environmental systems that influence development.

System	Description	Example
1. Microsystem	Immediate environment in which the child lives.	Family, school, peers.
2. Mesosystem	Interaction between two microsystems.	Home-school interaction.
3. Exosystem	Indirect environment affecting the child.	Parent's workplace, community services.
4. Macrosystem	Culture, values and beliefs of society.	Customs, laws, economic system.
5. Chronosystem	Changes in environment over time.	Technology, social changes, history.

★ Bronfenbrenner believed that all systems together influence human development.