

ERIKSON'S THEORY OF PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT :-

Erik Erikson

Developmental researcher who formulated the, *Stages of Psychosocial Development*. Erikson contended that each stage of life has its own psychosocial task, a crisis that needs to be resolved.



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Erik Erikson, a German psychoanalyst heavily influenced by Sigmund Freud, explored three aspects of identity: the **ego** identity (self), **personal identity** (the personal idiosyncrasies that distinguish a person from another, **social/cultural identity** (the collection of social roles a person might play).

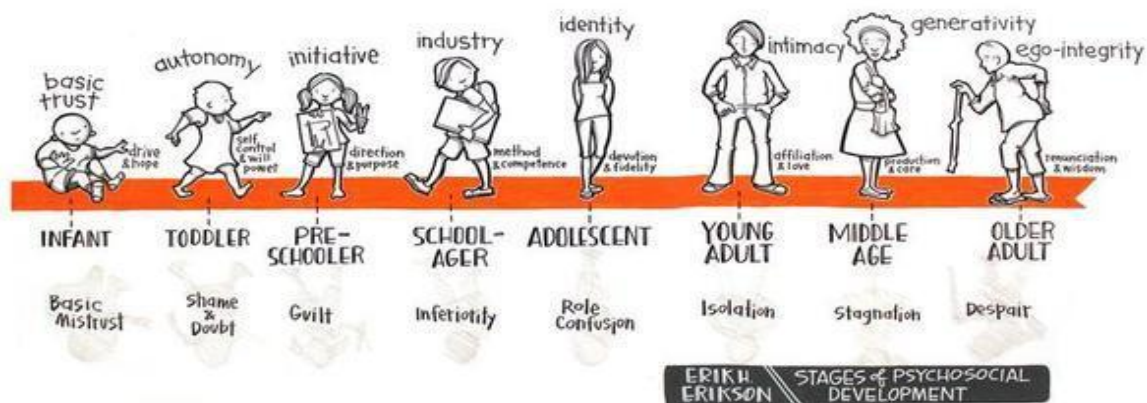
According to Erikson, the ego develops as it successfully resolves crises that are distinctly social in nature. These involve establishing a sense of trust in others, developing a sense of identity in society, and helping the next generation prepare for the future.

Erikson's theory of ego psychology holds certain tenets that differentiate his theory from Freud's. Some of these

include:

- The ego is of utmost importance.
- Part of the ego is able to operate independently of the id and the superego.
- The ego is a powerful agent that can adapt to situations, thereby promoting
- mental health.
- Social and sexual factors both play a role in personality development.

Erikson's theory was more comprehensive than Freud's, and included information about "normal" personality as well as neurotics. He also broadened the scope of personality to incorporate society and culture, not just sexuality.



Erikson describes eight developmental stages as we grow from childhood to adulthood and the trauma of resolving certain critical conflicts we face at each of these stages. Till we resolve the particular conflicts of a particular stage, we cannot move to the next stage.

Erikson's psychosocial theory of development considers the impact of external factors, parents and society on personality development from childhood to adulthood. According to Erikson's theory, every person must pass

through a series of eight interrelated stages over the entire life cycle.

1. Infant (Hope) – Basic Trust vs. Mistrust
 2. Toddler (Will) – Autonomy vs. Shame
 3. Preschooler (Purpose) – Initiative vs. Guilt
 4. School-Age Child (Competence) – Industry vs. Inferiority
 5. Adolescent (Fidelity) – Identity vs. Identity Diffusion
 6. Young Adult (Love) – Intimacy vs. Isolation
 7. Middle-aged Adult (Care) – Generativity vs. Self-absorption
 8. Older Adult (Wisdom) – Integrity vs. Despair
- These eight stages, spanning from birth to death, are split in general age ranges.

Stage 1: INFANCY: BIRTH-18 MONTHS OLD

Trust vs. Mistrust:

During the first year of life, a child has a great need for dependency. Feeling of Trust vs. Mistrust is developed in this state and these feelings depend upon the behaviour of the parents. If the parents care for the infant in a very affectionate way, the child learns to trust other people. Lack of love and affection on the part of the parent's results in mistrust. This stage makes a serious impact on a child that influences his behaviour throughout his life.

Trust vs. Mistrust

Approximate Age:

- o Birth-1 ½ years

Positive Outcomes:

- o Feelings of trust from environmental support

Negative Outcomes:

- o Fear & concern regarding others



In the early stages of organisational life when a person knows very little about the job and is dependent on others for guidance, he develops the feelings of trust or mistrust towards others in the organisation depending upon how the other people respond to his needs and help him to find his place in the system.

The major emphasis is on the mother and father's nurturing ability and care for a child, especially in terms of visual contact and touch. The child will develop optimism, trust, confidence, and security if properly cared for and handled. If a child does not experience trust, he or she may develop insecurity, worthlessness, and general mistrust to the world.

Stage 2: TODDLER / EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS: 18 MONTHS TO 3 YEARS

Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt:

The second stage occurs between 18 months and 3 years. At this point, the child has an opportunity to build self-esteem and autonomy as he or she learns new skills and right from wrong. The well-cared for child is sure of himself, carrying himself or herself with pride rather than shame. During this time of the “terrible twos”, defiance, temper tantrums, and stubbornness can also appear. Children tend to be vulnerable during this stage, sometimes feeling shame and low self-esteem during an inability to learn certain skills.

Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt

Approximate Age:

- 1 ½ -3 years

Positive Outcomes:

- Self-sufficiency if exploration is encouraged

Negative Outcomes:

- Doubts about self, lack of independence



In this stage of life a child begins to assert independence and experiences a great need to operate on his own. If the child is allowed to control those aspects of life that the child is capable of controlling, a sense of autonomy will develop. If he encounters constant disapproval by parents or elders a sense of self doubt and shame is likely to develop.

Likewise, in the organisation life, a person wants to operate independently after the initial training. If he is allowed to do so, a sense of autonomy will develop. But if he is criticized and disapproved by the others for making mistakes, he will tend to have self doubts about his competency and experience a sense of shame for not doing the things right.

Stage 3: PRESCHOOLER: 3 TO 5 YEAR

Initiative vs. Guilt:

When a child is four and five years old they try to discover how much they can do. If the parents and other members of the family encourage the child to experiment and to achieve reasonable goals, they will develop a sense of initiative. But if on the other hand, they are blocked at every stage and made to feel incapable, they will develop a sense of guilt and lack of self confidence.

Initiative vs. Guilt

- Approximate Age:
 - 3-6 years
- Positive Outcomes:
 - Discovery of ways to initiate actions
- Negative Outcomes:
 - Guilt from actions and thoughts



In the same way organisational members try to use their creative and acquired talents as they settle down in their jobs. But if things go wrong, other people make them feel guilty that they have wasted the resources of the organisation. But if the things go according to his planning, they will develop a sense of initiative. During this period we experience a desire to copy the adults around us and take initiative in creating play situations. We make up stories with Barbie's and Ken's, toy phones and miniature cars, playing out roles in a trial universe, experimenting with the blueprint for what we believe it means to be an adult. We also begin to use that wonderful word for exploring the world—"WHY?"

While Erikson was influenced by Freud, he downplays biological sexuality in favor of the psychosocial features of conflict between child and parents. Nevertheless, he said that at this stage we usually become involved in the classic "Oedipal struggle" and resolve this struggle through "social role identification." If we're frustrated over natural desires and goals, we may easily experience guilt.

The most significant relationship is with the basic family.

Stage 4: SCHOOL AGE CHILD: 6 TO 12 YEARS

Industry vs. Inferiority

From ages 6 to 12, as a child grows up but before reaching the stage of puberty, he learns many new skills and develops social abilities. If the child experiences real progress at a rate compatible with his abilities he or

she will develop a sense of industry. If the situation is the reverse of it, he will develop a sense of inferiority. Likewise, in our organisational life, we try to work hard to make a position for ourselves. If we are not successful in our efforts, we will develop a sense of inferiority and low esteem otherwise we will develop a sense of industry.

Industry vs. Inferiority

- 83 **Approximate Age:**
 - 6-12 years
- 83 **Positive Outcomes:**
 - Development of sense of competence
- 83 **Negative Outcomes:**
 - Feelings of inferiority, no sense of mastery



During this stage, often called the **Latency**, we are capable of learning, creating and accomplishing numerous new skills and knowledge, thus developing a sense of industry. This is also a very social stage of development and if we experience unresolved feelings of inadequacy and inferiority among our peers, we can have serious problems in terms of competence and self-esteem.

As the world expands a bit, our most significant relationship is with the school and neighbourhood.

Parents are no longer the complete authorities they once were, although they are still important.

Stage 5: ADOLESCENT: 12 TO 18 YEARS

Identity vs. Role Confusion:

As a child reaches puberty and almost to the end of his adolescence (teenage years) he experiences conflict due to the socially imposed requirements that he should become an independent and effective adult. In this period he has to gain a sense of identity rather than to become confused about who he is. The autonomy, initiative and enterprise developed in the earlier stages are very important in helping the teenager to successfully resolve this crisis and prepare for adulthood. My [website](#) will help you in it.

Identity vs. Role Confusion (adolescence)

Adolescence

- is the period of discovering more about oneself and for search for identity
- Decision making about career options, self concept and attitudes
- The question **WHO AM I?** helps adolescents to reflect about themselves

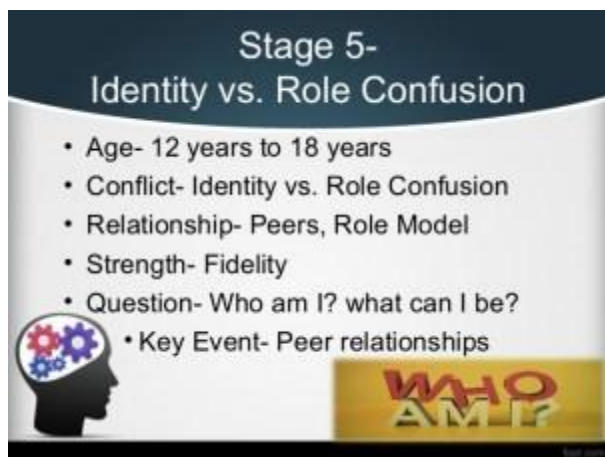


Adolescence

In the organisational setup also every employee has to make contributions to the institution and establish

himself as a high performing member. If he does it, he is identified in the eyes of the management but if fails to establish himself he becomes just another employee in the eyes of the management whose identity is diffused. Up until this fifth stage, development depends on what is done to a person.

At this point, development now depends primarily upon what a person does. An adolescent must struggle to discover and find his or her own identity, while negotiating and struggling with social interactions and “fitting in”, and developing a sense of morality and right from wrong.



Some attempt to delay entrance to adulthood and withdraw from responsibilities (moratorium). Those unsuccessful with this stage tend to experience role confusion and upheaval. Adolescents begin to develop a strong affiliation and devotion to ideals, causes, and friends.

Stage 6: YOUNG ADULT: 18 TO 3

Intimacy vs. Isolation

During young adulthood or the adults during the twenties, need is felt to develop intimate relations with others. The sense of identity developed during the teenage years allows the young adult to begin developing deep and lasting relationships.



However, if he feels it awkward to develop such relationships, he will feel isolated. In the organisational life also, people may desire to develop close contracts with others who are significant and important in the system. Those who can do it, have a sense of intimacy. For those others who find it difficult to do it, experience a sense of isolation in the system.

Intimacy vs. Isolation

- Young adulthood (18-40 years of age).
- Develop a relationship and joint identity with a partner.
- Or can become isolated and stay away from meaningful relationships.
- Questions if the person is ready for new relationships, or if there is a fear of rejection.
- Important events: Romantic Relationship



At the young adult stage, people tend to seek companionship and love. Some also begin to “settle down” and start families, although seems to have been pushed back farther in recent years.

Young adults seek deep intimacy and satisfying relationships, but if unsuccessful, isolation may occur. Significant relationships at this stage are with marital partners and friends.

Stage 7: MIDDLE-AGED ADULT: 35 TO 55 OR 65

Adulthood/Generatively Vs. Stagnation:

This is the stage of middle adulthood. If a person becomes absorbed in his own career advancement and maintenance and he does not care for the development and growth of his children, which is a socially imposed demand on him, he will have a feeling of stagnation or self absorption in his life. On the other hand, a person who sees the world as bigger than himself and fulfils his social obligations will be generative and have a feeling of generatively.

Generativity vs. Stagnation

- **Approximate Age:**
 - Middle Adulthood
- **Positive Outcomes:**
 - Sense of contribution to continuity of life
- **Negative Outcomes:**
 - Trivialization of one's activities



Likewise in the organisation, as a person reaches his mid career, there is an expectation and need to mentor others in the system and help them to develop and grow in the organisation. If a person does not do this effectively, he senses a feeling of stagnation in the system.

Career and work are the most important things at this stage, along with family. Middle adulthood is also the time when people can take on greater responsibilities and control.

For this stage, working to establish stability and Erikson's idea of generativity – attempting to produce something that makes a difference to society. Inactivity and meaninglessness are common fears during this stage.

Major life shifts can occur during this stage. For example, children leave the household, careers can change, and so on. Some may struggle with finding purpose. Significant relationships are those within the family, workplace, local church and other communities.

STAGE 8: LATE ADULT: 55 OR 65 TO DEATH

Integrity Vs Despair:

In this stage, a person is developed as a highly mature person. He has gained a sense of wisdom and perspective that can really guide the younger generations. This stage lasts from middle adulthood to death. In this stage conflict is experienced by individuals as their social and biological roles get diminished due to the ageing process and they experience a sense of uselessness.

Integrity vs. Despair

- 30 **Approximate Age:**
 - o Late adulthood
- 30 **Positive Outcomes:**
 - o Sense of unity in life's accomplishments
- 30 **Negative Outcomes:**
 - o Regret over lost opportunities of life



If they resolve the issue, they can experience happiness by looking at their consolidated lifelong achievement. If they fail to do so, they will have a sense of despair. Erikson believed that much of life is preparing for the middle adulthood stage and the last stage involves much reflection. As older adults, some can look back

with a feeling of integrity — that is, contentment and fulfilment, having led a meaningful life and valuable contribution to society. Others may have a sense of despair during this stage, reflecting upon their experiences and failures. They may fear death as they struggle to find a purpose to their lives, wondering “What was the point of life? Was it worth it?”