

How psychological perspectives relate to child development and behaviour:

The psychosocial approach

Approach and theorists

Key aspects of the approach or theory relating to children's development and behaviour

Application of the approach for childcare practitioners and educators in schools and settings

Psychosocial:

Erikson

Key words:

- Sequence
- Conflict
- Psychological stage
- Autonomy
- Initiative

- Erikson developed the theory of 'psychosocial development'.
- Unlike Freud, who felt that our biological instincts were primarily responsible for our behaviour, Erikson emphasised that social interaction was the driving force.
- Erikson believed that a child's personality develops in stages, and he described the social interaction of individuals across their lifespan and the role of relationships in social development.
- Erikson believed that each stage of development builds on the stage before it in sequence. During each stage, there is a conflict based on the development or failure to develop to a new psychological stage. As the individual successfully manages these conflicts, they will develop new psychological strengths. However, failure to deal with these conflicts can lead to the individual not developing the skills needed for a strong sense of self.

Stage 1: Trust versus mistrust (birth to 1 year of age). During this time, the infant struggles to develop trust in the world. Erikson felt that children learn to trust when caregivers are nurturing, responsive and reliable.

Stage 2: Autonomy versus shame and doubt (18 months to 3 years). This stage is demonstrated by the child's increasing desire to discover. Teachers help children by understanding the child's needs for both independence and dependence, and by supporting the child to explore the world around them from a secure base. Erikson believed that if this does not happen, then a child will experience feelings of shame and doubt.

Stage 3: Initiative versus guilt (3 to 6 years old). At this time, the child is eager to learn new skills, use language to ask questions, and interact with peers. The child does, however, still rely on the comfort and security provided by teachers. If a child's developing sense of initiative is neglected or ignored, Erikson believed that they might begin to show signs of aggressive behaviour, either physically or verbally.