

Discuss one or more explanations of personality development. (24 marks)

According to Sigmund Freud, what we do and why we do it, who we are and how we became this way are all related to our sexual drive. Differences in personalities originate in differences in childhood sexual experiences. In the Freudian psychoanalytical model, child personality development is discussed in terms of "psychosexual stages". In his "Three Essays on Sexuality" (1915), Freud outlined five stages of manifestations of the sexual drive: Oral, Anal, Phallic, Latency, and Genital. At each stage, different areas of the child's body become the focus of his pleasure and the principal source of sexual arousal. Differences in satisfying the sexual urges at each stage will inevitably lead to differences in adult personalities. Conflicts between the sex drive and rules of society are present at every stage. A proper resolution of the conflicts will lead the child to progress past one stage and move on to the next. Failure to achieve a proper resolution, however, will make the child fixated in the present stage. This is believed to be the cause of many personality and behavioural disorders.

Freud believed that personality has three structures: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id is the Freudian structure of personality that consists of instincts. In Freud's view, the id is totally unconscious i.e. it has no contact with reality. As children experience the demands and constraints of reality, a new structure of personality then emerges called the ego, the Freudian structure of personality that deals with the demands of reality. The ego is called the executive branch of personality because it uses reasoning to make decisions. The id and the ego have no morality. They don't take into account whether something is right or wrong. The superego is the Freudian structure of personality that is the moral branch of personality. The superego takes into account whether something is right or wrong. The superego as what we often refer to as our "conscience."

During the oral stage (birth to 18 months), the child is focused on oral pleasures (e.g. sucking). Too much or too little gratification can result in an Oral Fixation or Oral Personality, which is evidenced by an obsession with oral activities. This type of personality may have a stronger tendency to smoke, drink alcohol, over eat, or bite his or her nails. Personality wise, these individuals may become overly dependent upon others, gullible, and group followers. On the other hand, they may also fight these urges and develop negative personalities and aggression toward others.

In the Anal Stage (18 months to three years), the child's focus of pleasure is on eliminating and retaining faeces. Through society's pressure, mainly via parents, the child has to learn to control anal stimulation. In terms of personality, after effects of an anal fixation during this stage can result in an obsession with cleanliness, perfection, and control (anal retentive). On the opposite end of the spectrum, they may become messy and disorganized (anal expulsive).

The pleasure zone in Phallic Stage (ages three to six) switches to the genitals. Freud believed that during this stage boys develop unconscious sexual desires for their mother. Because of this, he begins to rival with his father and sees him as competition for the mother's affection. During this time, boys also develop a fear that their father will punish them for these feelings. This group of feelings is known as Oedipus Complex. Later it was added that girls go through a similar situation, developing unconscious sexual attraction to their father. However, Freud strongly disagreed with this. It has been called the Electra Complex.

It's during the Latency Stage (age six to puberty) that sexual urges remain repressed and children interact and play mostly with the same sex.

The Genital Stage (puberty on) begins at the start of puberty when sexual urges are once again awakened. Through the lessons learned during the previous stages, adolescents direct their sexual urges onto the opposite sex, with the primary focus of pleasure is the genitals.

Erik Erikson (1902-1994) maintained that children develop in a predetermined order. Instead of focusing on cognitive development, however, he was interested in how children socialize and how this affects their sense of self. Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development has eight distinct stages, each with two possible outcomes. According to the theory, successful completion of each stage results in a healthy personality and successful interactions with others. Failure to successfully complete a stage can result in a reduced ability to complete further stages and therefore a more unhealthy personality and sense of self. These stages, however, can be resolved successfully at a later time. Erikson suggested that in the first year of life the psychological conflict is about trust in intimate relationships and that the positive outcome would be to be trusting and the negative outcome would be mistrust. Personality development is considered successful if the individual has more good traits than bad traits.