UNIT 5: HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

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5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit will help us to learn

- the meaning of growth and development
- how growth and development is related
- the principles of growth and development.
- the developmental periods of early childhood, late childhood and adolescents

5.2 INTRODUCTION

A foetus inside a mother's womb is in constant interaction with her internal environment for its growth and development. After birth, the child is in incessant struggle with the outer world which further nurtures the child's growth and development. Since this process of growth and development is systematic in nature, understanding the subject is needed for parents and teachers so that they can apply appropriate intervention mechanisms for

the child's effective growth and development. It is important to note that the rate or speed of development varies at different ages of the child. For example, children grow very fast during the first three years and when they attain 6 - 12 years of age, their rate of growth is comparatively slower. It accelerates again in the adolescent stage. In this unit, you will learn about how children grow and develop at different stages, what types of different developments occur in humans at the physical, psychological and social levels at those stages of development.

5.3 MEANING OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Growth refers to the increase in the size or weight of any internal or external body parts. Development, on the other hand, refers to the overall psychological and physical growth in humans throughout their life span.

Though they are different constructs, growth and development are inseparable processes. Generally, at certain points of time in a human being's life span, the processes of growth and development go on simultaneously.

5.4 LIFE SPAN APPROACH TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN GROWTH & BEHAVIOUR

The growth of a human being stops after a certain age but the development continues at a slow but gradual pace. The growth of an individual may be hindered through illness, malnutrition or other environmental factors in the child's life.

The progress of development is divided into stages and each stage is dependent on the previous stage for its successful manifestation. Generally, the life of an individual can be divided into the following major developmental periods:

- Pre-natal period (from conception to birth)
- Neo-natal period (birth to 10-14 days)
- Babyhood (2 weeks to 2 years)
- Early childhood (2 years to 6 years)
- Late childhood (6 years to 12-13 years)

- Adolescence (from 12-13 years to 18-19 years)
- Adulthood (from 18-19 years and onwards)

5.4.1 PRINCIPLES OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The various aspects of growth and development that help us to understand the process of development and the various dimensions involved in it are:

Growth differs across individuals: Growth rate is not constant in an individual and also differs from others noticeably during childhood. This may happen due to certain unique hereditary characteristics, metabolism rate differences or other factors. Appropriate counselling by parents to their children is needed to make them accept this normal fact of life which will help them to develop a sense of self acceptance.

Development is a continuous process: Unlike growth, the developmental process is continuous. It starts in an individual's birth and ends at his or her death.

Development follows a pattern: Development does not occur in a haphazard way. There are successive stages of development and each has to be successfully passed to move on to the next. For example, a child has to learn how to sit without support before he learns how to stand up.

Development proceeds from general to specific responses- The early responses of a child - whether physical (e.g. hand movements) or emotional (anger, fear etc) - are very general and random in nature and not directed towards a particular target. At early stages babies wave their arms on seeing a particular object shown before them and gradually learn how to hold that with their hands. Similarly, in early stages of language development the child may use a particular word to describe an object, animal or any food item. Gradually, as his / her vocabulary increases, he/she will learn to use correct and specific words. Thus, clumsy movements/ responses are gradually replaced by specific and co-ordinated ones.

Development is a product of interaction of heredity and environment Both hereditary and environment contribute to changes in development. The

influence of hereditary and social factors on an individual's personality development has already been discussed in the previous chapters.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS -1

1. What is the difference between growth and development?
2. What are the principles of development?

5.5 DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS AT DIFFERNT STAGES OF CHILDHOOD

Developmental tasks are the broad 'jobs' of childhood that need to be completed successfully in each stage, so that the child learns life skills at the appropriate time.

5.5.1 Early Childhood Stage

The first 2 - 6 years of a baby's life encompasses his/her early childhood days. It is a period where the baby's physical, mental, emotional, social and language development starts. It is a period of slow growth but rapid development.

The characteristics of early childhood are as follows:

Physical and motor development: A moderate level of height increase is observed at this stage. Different types of body structures like a fat build, a muscular body or a thin build are noticed in children at this stage. Development of permanent teeth takes place along with the increase in the co-ordination of motor muscles, which enable the child to interact with toys and other objects.

Language development: In this stage, the baby learns to construct sentences which may be supplemented to a great extent by their gestures. This phase of 'learning to speak' is necessary for socialization and achieving independence. Children learn to comprehend what others say to them which help them to communicate with others. They begin to learn more words and their meanings.

Emotional development: Emotions are heightened at this stage and children have no control over their emotions. At this stage, some common emotions exhibited by children are anger, fear, joy and jealousy. Most of the children express their anger by showing temper tantrums. A strong sense of insecurity gives rise to another emotion which is fear. This insecurity may crop up due to jealousy when the child has a baby brother or sister, and the child perceives that their parents love the new sibling more than him.



Family neighbourhood, peer groups and the school play a significant role in the social development of a child. The child inherits values from his/her family.

Social development : Family, neighbourhood, peer groups and the school play a significant role in the social development of a child. The child inherits values from his/her family. A good family provides a good social atmosphere for the child to develop healthy social habits. The child struggles to adjust with the new environment the school provides. He or she develops friendship with other children of their age in the school and neighbourhood who help them in social adjustment.

5.5.2 Late Childhood Stage

Late childhood ranges from 6 years to 12 years, and impacts profoundly on a child's personal and social adjustments. Let us discuss the characteristics of this stage in more detail.

Physical development:

In this stage a slow but steady growth can be observed. Physical growth is prominent as the bones harden with the increase in height and weight. There are improvements in child's motor development which makes him/her physically restless. At school, the child learns certain playing skills like throwing, catching, riding a bicycle, swimming along with artistic skills like writing, drawing, painting, sewing etc. The permanent teeth start appearing and gradually all twenty eight out of thirty two replace the baby teeth.

Social development :

The child at this stage goes through social learning and develops a sense of sharing and camaraderie with peers. The primary school provides an ideal environment for such socialisation. The child gradually understands social norms and standards through active participation in the society.

Emotional Development

As the child starts realizing the do's and don'ts through social interaction, they realize that unpleasant emotions are socially unacceptable to their peers. As a result they develop an urge to learn to regulate outward expressions of their emotions.

5.5.3 Adolescence Stage

The range of this stage differs from country to country and culture to culture. It is generally accepted that in India, the period of adolescence ranges from 12/13 years to 18/19 years.

Early adolescence starts from 12/13 to 16/17 years and late adolescence extends to a short period from 17 years to 18/19 years where the adolescent reaches the age of legal maturity. Early adolescence is usually referred to as teenage.

Rapid physical development: Rapid changes in the biological level such as the secretion of growth hormones in the glandular system (e.g. endocrine glands) impacts physical appearance to a noticeable extent. Adolescents experience an increase in height, weight, changes in voice, muscular growth, appearance of pubic hair, growth of hair on the faces, arms, legs etc. The difference in physical appearance of males and females can be made out clearly at this stage.

Early adolescence starts from 12/13 to 16/17 years and late adolescence extends to a short period from 17 years to 18/19 years

Cognitive development: A rapid development in cognitive abilities is observed in this stage. Understanding of things at a much deeper level and consideration for others' emotions develop in adolescents. They learn to solve issues through logical analysis and a systematic approach. They memory power also develops and adolescents can retain facts and information for longer periods. The child's inclination towards imitation learning subsides; independent thinking and critical observation skills develop.

Emotional immaturity: Rapid development and changes in both physical and psychological aspects create a period of 'storm and stress' in this stage. Emotions of anger, fear, shame, disgust give rise to variation in moods, nervousness, sensitiveness, stubbornness, disobedience etc. Sexual urges

become prominent which may become a cause for emotional disturbances. Besides, adolescents strive for independence at this stage, which gives rise to emotional conflicts. Their ideas and views often appear contradictory with that of their parents and other members of society.

Social consciousness development: The period of adolescence is predominantly a period of social development and adjustment. The most important social development during this period is the increased influence of the peer group. The selection of peer group is very important in this stage as it shapes the behaviour of the adolescent to a great extent. An adolescent's interests, attitudes and values are influenced by peers. Adolescent boys and girls become self conscious about their place in society and often try to act as adults. This creates a conflict with their parents who often refuse to treat them like grown-ups.

Moral consciousness: The development of morality or ethical consideration i.e. the ability to distinguish between the bad and good, true and false, or between virtue and vice, influences the building of general personality. The initial ground of morality development lies in the child's upbringing. The family is the place where the adolescent receives moral training and lessons on value. As independent thinking develops, moral consciousness takes a concrete shape. A strong moral sense and intolerance towards immoral and illegal activities can be seen in adolescents in this stage.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS -2

1. What are the different types of development usually observed in late childhood?
2. What are the developmental tasks in the adolescent period?



ACTIVITY

1. List the important development tasks which you think are most important in each developmental stage.
2. What are the possible factors that may hinder the development of ethical or moral consciousness among adolescents? Why do you think so?



5.6 LET US SUM UP

- Growth refers to the increase in the size or weight of internal or external body parts.
- Development basically refers to the overall psychological and physical growth in humans throughout their life spans.
- Growth differs across individuals and development follows a pattern.
- In early childhood days a baby's physical, mental, emotional, social and language development starts. It is a period of slow growth but rapid development.
- Social and emotional development finds prominence in late childhood days.
- Moral consciousness and cognitive development are prominent in adolescent period.



5.7 FURTHER READING

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5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR ROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress 1

1. Growth refers to the increase in the size or weight of any internal or external body parts. Development refers to the overall psychological and physical growth in humans throughout their life spans.

2. The principles of development are :
   - Development is a continuous process
   - Development follows a pattern
   - Development proceeds from general to specific responses
   - Development is a product of interaction of heredity and environment

Answers to Check Your Progress-2

1. The various developmental tasks in late childhood are:
   - Physical development
   - Social Development
   - Emotional Development
2. The various developmental tasks in adolescent period are:
   - Cognitive Development
   - Emotional immaturity
   - Social Consciousness development
   - Moral Consciousness



5.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. State the meaning of growth and development.
2. Discuss the principles of growth and development.
3. Analyse the Life-span approach.
4. Explain the development processes in early and late childhood stage.
5. What are the problems that adolescence stage have to confront with?

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