

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

CIRCUMSTANCES SHAPING MAN'S VIRTUES – A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY BASED ON ERIK ERIKSON'S STAGES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN TAMIL NADU.

Dr. Sreesupria PR¹, Dr. K. Sujatha², Dr. Kousalya N³, Dr. Senthil Kumar SK^{4*}, Dr. Kishore Kumar K³, Dr. Rakshana S³

¹Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Government Tirupur Medical College, Tirupur, Tamil Nadu, India.

²Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Government Erode Medical College, Tamil Nadu, India.

³CRMI, Coimbatore Medical College, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India.

^{*4}Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Government Medical College and ESI Hospital, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India.

Corresponding Author: Dr. Senthil Kumar SK, Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Government Medical College and ESI Hospital, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India.

ABSTRACT

Background: Erikson divides man's life into eight stages from infancy till maturity. At each stage, a virtue is developed that is carried lifelong. Each virtue is influenced by various personal and social factors. Our objectives were to analyse the attainment of the Virtues of first six stages and association of different life circumstances with the virtues in a group of college students aged 18 to 25.

Methods: A semi-structured questionnaire, also containing the first 60 items of Modified Erikson's Psychosocial Stage Inventory (MEPSI), was used. Students from different colleges across Tamil Nadu, India, participated. The data collected were analyzed using chi-square test, Pearson's correlation and logistic regression.

Results: More than half of the participants scored less than 4 under each subscale except in the subscale of the virtue hope (N=244). Significant associations were found between the virtues and factors affecting them like breast feeding practices, experiences of punishments in early childhood, extracurricular activities, acceptance of own body and having a constant romantic relationship etc. (p-value < 0.05).

Conclusion: Our study supports Erikson's theory in many aspects. Successful resolution of the conflicts of each stage is affected by the external situations like parenting, schooling, self-image, friendships, peer relationships, etc. Negative attributes are promoted if the influencing factors are not handled right. Some factors that affect the virtues as suggested by Erikson could not be proved to be associated with virtue development. Successful resolutions of fidelity and love conflicts are significantly correlated. (p -value < 0.05).

Keywords: Erikson's theory of psychosocial development; Parenting and children's mental health; Adolescents' ego-identity; young adult's intimacy

INTRODUCTION

‘Childhood constitutes the most important element in an adult’s life, for it is in his early years that a man is made.’- Maria Montessori

Our life is an ever-dynamic process, wherein every incident is either a cause or an effect. What causes today, may be unprecedentedly tomorrow’s effect. Similarly, an individual’s personality development commences right from childhood. Erik Erikson, a psychoanalyst, published a theory known as Erikson stages of psychosocial development in 1950s, in which, human personality development is divided into 8 age related sequential stages. These stages develop as an individual grows and makes new decisions during his lifetime (from childhood to old age) and are affected by various social, psychological and biological factors ¹.

Each Eriksonian stage is defined by two opposing psychological tendencies – a positive virtue and a negative maldevelopment. Virtues shall not only rightfully shape current decisions but also help in subsequent stages of development, hence contributing to a stable foundation for a strong personality. The opposite is true with the adoption of the maldeveloped quality ².

In a typical Indian household, parents are mostly unaware of the factors that influence the development of their kid’s personality and growth, and believe in the folk wisdom of parenting. Hence they often react impulsively succumbing to their emotions and take in hand corporal punishments and verbal abuse as a tool to discipline the children ³.

Therefore, through this study, we aspire to analyze the first 6 Eriksonian virtues in a group of college students aged 18 to 25 and determine the impact of various personal and social circumstances in the development of Eriksonian attributes.

MATERIALS & METHOD

A cross sectional study was conducted among the college students in Tamil Nadu from various streams in the age group 18-25 years. Institutional Ethical Committee approval was obtained. Students who were willing to participate, who had access to internet and social media platforms and who were able to understand English were included. A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared, and it included the basic demographic data and questions regarding their feeding practices, freedom of choice, performances in the activities of interest during childhood, their inferiority complexes, body shaming circumstances and romantic life. The questionnaire also included the first 6 subscales of Modified Erikson Psychosocial Stage Inventory (MEPSI). It is a valid and reliable tool, designed to measure the strength of psychosocial attributes developed in an individual as one goes through Erik Erikson’s stages of development ⁴.

The questionnaire was uploaded in Survey heart app and was circulated in What’s app, to the groups containing college students and the participants were encouraged to share it to other college students they knew of. The study period was from May 2021 to August 2021. Data entry and analysis was done using SPSS statistical software version 22. Data was presented as frequency tables and the associations between various responses from the participants and the MEPSI score were assessed using chi square test and Pearson’s correlation. p value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant. Those associations found significant by Chi-squared test was then analyzed using logistic regression. After the survey, the participants were enlightened about the theory of Erik Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development and also some healthy child rearing practices.

RESULTS

A total of 244 responses were collected. All the participants were between 18 to 25 years of age and the mean age was 20.68 years. Majority were females (69.3%) and 180 (73.8%) pursued MBBS and the rest pursued other courses like B.E., B.D.S., B.Sc., B.Com., B.A.

Trust, Autonomy, Initiative, Competence, Ego identity, Intimacy are the positive attributes and Mistrust, Self - doubt, Guilt, Inferiority, Role confusion, Isolation are the negative attributes of the virtue Hope, Will, Purpose, Confidence, Fidelity and Love respectively. The highest mean MEPSI sub-scale score of 3.60 was observed in the virtue Confidence (Table 1). For classifying the participants as to have a positive and a negative attribute, a score of 4 was taken as the cut-off. It was observed that the majority of the participants scored less than 4 under each subscale except for the subscale of the virtue hope.

Table 1: Scores of the participants in the MEPSI scale

S.no	Virtue	Frequency n (%)	Mean subscale score
1	Hope		3.07
	Trust	205 (84.0%)	
	Mistrust	39 (16.0%)	
2	Will		3.53
	Autonomy	71 (29.1%)	
	Shame or self-doubt	173 (70.9%)	
3	Purpose		3.56
	Initiative	62 (25.4%)	
	Guilt	182 (74.6%)	
4	Confidence		3.60
	Competence	68 (27.9%)	
	Inferiority	176 (72.1%)	
5	Fidelity		3.37
	Ego-identity	43 (17.6%)	
	Role confusion	201 (82.4%)	
6	Love		3.20
	Intimacy	31 (12.7%)	
	Isolation	213 (87.3%)	

A majority, 189 (77.5%) of the participants reported that they were breast-fed in their childhood, but 67 (27.5%) participants said that their moms were working and hence were not with them throughout the day in their childhood. A count of 213 (87.3%) of the respondents had one or more siblings.

Of the participants, 113 (46.3%) had the problem of bedwetting in their childhood and 30 (26.5%) of them faced insults or were punished by their parents or elders. About 64 (30.9%) of the students said that they were given the freedom of choice of dress, toys and foods during their childhood while 116 (47.5%) reported that they were punished or treated harshly for denying their parent’s choices. (Table 2).

Table 2: Associations of the virtues: Hope, Will and Purpose with various factors

S.no	Particulars	%	Attributes		p value	Odds ratio
			Negative n (%)	Positive n (%)		
Virtue - Hope						
1	Feeding practice					
	Breast fed	189 (77.5)	25 (13.2)	164 (86.8)	0.029	0.446
	Bottle fed	55 (22.5)	14 (25.4)	41 (74.6)		
2	Intimacy with mom					
	Mostly with me	177 (72.5)	24(13.5)	153(86.5)	0.093	0.544
	Working woman	67 (27.5)	15(22.3)	52(77.7)		
3	Siblings					
	Yes	213 (87.3)	33(15.5)	180(84.5)	0.584	0.764
	No	31 (12.7)	6(19.4)	25(80.6)		
Virtue – Will						
4	Problem of bedwetting or defecation in pants					
	Yes	113 (46.3)	87(77)	26(23)	0.052	1.751
	No	131 (53.7)	86(65.6)	45(34.4)		
5	Insulted / treated harsh for bedwetting (n = 113)					
	Yes	30 (26.5)	20(66.6)	10(33.4)	0.045	0.382
	No	83 (73.5)	67(80.7)	16(19.3)		
6	Given the choice of dress, toys and food					
	Yes	207 (84.8)	143(69.1)	64(30.9)	0.139	0.445
	No	37 (15.2)	30(81.1)	7(18.9)		
7	Treated harsh for opposing your parents					
	Yes	116 (47.5)	79 (68.1)	37(31.9)	0.833	1.066
	No	128 (52.5)	86 (67.2)	42(32.8)		
Virtue - Purpose						
8	Freedom of choice for friends during preschool age					
	Yes	223 (91.4)	60(26.9)	163(73.1)	0.080	0.286
	No	21 (8.6)	2(9.5)	19(90.5)		
9	Freedom of engaging in the activity of your interest					
	Yes	190 (77.9)	53(27.9)	137(72.1)	0.094	0.517
	No	54 (22.1)	9(16.7)	45(83.3)		
10	Treated harsh by your parents for not performing well in your Preschool					
	Yes	51 (20.9)	10(19.6)	41(80.4)	0.285	1.512
	No	193 (79.1)	52(26.9)	141(73.1)		
11	Treated harsh for engaging yourself in the activities of your interest					
	Yes	32 (13.1)	3(9.4)	29(90.6)	0.025	3.725
	No	212 (86.9)	59(27.8)	153(72.2)		

A group of 31 (12.7 %) respondents said that they weren't mostly allowed to engage themselves in activities other than academics even during their primary schooling. While 37(15.2%) said that

they did not perform well in their areas of interest, 27 (11.1%) of the participants were inhibited from participating in the activities of interest by their parents or teachers because they didn't perform well, despite their interest. Also, 125(51.2%) of them were punished or insulted in front of their schoolmates for one or the other reasons.

During their teenage, 87(35.7%) of the participants said that they weren't able to accept their body as it was that time, be it because of being obese, overweight, underweight or being comparatively shorter or taller than their peers and 124 (50.8%) of them reported that they were body shamed. While 32(13.1%) of the participants confessed that they were confused and doubtful about their sexuality during their teen years, and of them, only three (9.4%) said that they were forced by elders, peers or parents to accept a sexuality that they felt they did not possess. And a sum of 55 (22.5%) participants confessed that they were sexually bullied in their school.

While 195 (79.9 %) of the students were allowed to choose a career option of their own choice, 49 (20.1%) of the students reported that they felt that they did not have the ability to choose a career path on their own in their late teens. 37(22.4%) of the participants felt that they had difficulty in developing easy relationships because of the non-acceptance of their body, sexuality or their career option.

A majority of 198 (81.1 %) of the respondents said that they have a reliable physical social circle and 52 (21.3%) have been in a constant romantic relationship in the past. While 45 (18.4%) students said that they currently have a romantic partner, 108 (44.3%) of the students said that they have a fear of getting into a committed romantic relationship with someone. This was either because of the experiences of their past relationships or because of their friends' relationships. A good sum of 203 (83.2%) students said that they have an emotional bond with at least somebody in their lives. (Table 3)

Table 3: Associations of the virtues: Confidence, Fidelity and Love with various factors.

S.no	Particulars	%	Attributes		p value	Odds ratio
			Negative n (%)	Positive n (%)		
Virtue - Confidence						
1	Allowed to engage yourself in activities other than studies in your Primary school					
	Yes	213 (87.3)	148(69.5)	65(30.5)	0.016	0.244
	No	31 (12.7)	28(90.3)	3(9.7)		
2	Encouraged by parents, teachers and elders when you excelled in the areas of your interest					
	Yes	210 (86)	148(70.5)	62(29.5)	0.152	0512
	No	34 (14)	28(82.4)	6(17.6)		
3	Perform well in your field of interest					
	Yes	207 (84.8)	141(68.1)	66(31.9)	0.001	0.122
	No	37 (15.2)	35(94.6)	2(5.4)		
4	Shouted at, insulted or punished in front of your class mates					
	Yes	125 (51.2)	91(72.8)	34(27.2)	0.811	1.071
	No	119 (48.8)	85(71.4)	34(28.6)		
5	Reassured and motivated or inhibited from doing that activity in future when you didn't do well in your field of interest					
	Motivated	217 (88.9)	152(70.0)	65(30.0)	0.039	0.292
	Inhibited	27 (11.1)	24(88.9)	3(11.1)		

Virtue - Fidelity						
6	Accept your body as it was in your teenage					
	Yes	157 (64.3)	118(75.2)	39(24.8)	0.000	0.146
	No	87 (35.7)	83(95.4)	4(4.6)		
7	Body shamed					
	Yes	124 (50.8)	104(83.9)	20(16.1)	0.534	1.233
	No	120 (49.2)	97(80.8)	23(19.2)		
8	Confused about your sexuality					
	Yes	32 (13.1)	29 (90.6)	3(9.4)	0.189	1.726
	No	212 (86.9)	172(81.1)	40(18.9)		
9	Sexually bullied					
	Yes	55 (22.5)	46(83.6)	9(16.4)	0.781	1.121
	No	189 (77.5)	155(82.0)	34(18.0)		
10	Allowed to choose a career option of your interest					
	Yes	208 (85.2)	167(80.3)	41(19.7)	0.040	0.240
	No	36 (14.8)	34(94.4)	2(5.6)		
11	Have the ability to choose your career path in the late teens					
	Yes	195 (79.9)	156(80.0)	39(20.0)	0.052	0.356
	No	49 (20.1)	45(91.8)	4(8.2)		
12	Have difficulty in developing easy relationship because of non-acceptance of body, sexuality or career choice					
	Yes	37 (22.4)	32(86.5)	5(13.5)	0.525	1.402
	No	128 (77.6)	105(82.0)	28(18.0)		
Virtue - Love						
13	Have a reliable physical social circle					
	Yes	198 (81.1)	21(10.6)	177(89.4)	0.027	2.454
	No	46 (18.9)	1(2.2)	45(97.8)		
14	Been in a constant romantic relationship					
	Yes	52 (21.3)	12(23.1)	40(76.9)	0.011	0.366
	No	192 (78.7)	19(9.9)	173(90.1)		
15	Have a romantic partner					
	Yes	45 (18.4)	18(40.0)	27(60.0)	0.000	0.105
	No	199 (81.6)	13(6.5)	186(93.5)		
16	Have fear to get into a committed romantic relationship					
	Yes	108 (44.3)	5(4.6)	103(95.4)	0.001	4.86
	No	136 (55.7)	26(19.1)	110(80.9)		
17	Have an emotional connection with anybody in your life					
	Yes	203 (83.2)	27(13.3)	176(86.7)	0.534	0.705
	No	41 (16.8)	4(9.8)	37(90.2)		

Chi-squared test was applied to find association between various responses and the positive and the negative attributes of the participants as measured by the MEPSI scale. Significant association was found between breast feeding and development of Trust in childhood (p value = 0.029). The history of being insulted by parents or elders for bedwetting or fecal incontinence is associated with self-doubt or shame (p value = 0.045). Being treated harshly or being punished for engaging in activities of interest is found to be associated with Guilt (p value = 0.025). Being allowed to participate in activities other than academics during primary schooling (p-value = 0.016) and performing well in activities of interest (0.001) and motivation from teachers and parents (0.039) are found to be associated with the development of competence. Significant association was found between the state of non-acceptance of the body and Role-confusion (p-value = 0.000). So is the parental restriction of the students from choosing their own career path (p-value = 0.040). Having a reliable physical social circle (p-value = 0.027) and the history of being in a constant romantic relationship in the past (p-value = 0.011) are associated with the development of Intimacy in the participants. Being in a relationship presently or having a romantic partner is strongly associated with Intimacy in the students (p-value = 0.000), while those who have a fear of getting committed in a relationship are found to be more Isolated (p-value = 0.001) (Table 2, 3)

On applying logistic regression, the following associations remain significant: breast feeling and hope (p-value = 0.032); being treated harsh and insulted and the negative attribute of purpose (p-value = 0.035), performing well in extra-curricular activities and confidence (p-value = 0.014); accepting one’s own body and fidelity (p-value = 0.001); past (p-value = 0.046) and present romantic relationship with the virtue love (p-value = 0.001) (Table 4).

Table 4: Logistic regression and adjusted Odd’s ratio for various virtues.

S no	Particulars	Virtue	p value	Adjusted OR	95% CI
1	Feeding practices	Hope	0.032	2.24	1.07 – 4.69
2	Insulted /treated harsh for bedwetting	Purpose	0.05	2.62	1.00 – 6.84
3	Treated harsh for engaging yourself in the activities of your interest	Purpose	0.035	0.27	0.08 – 0.91
4	Allowed to engage yourself in activities other than studies in your Primary school	Confidence	0.084	3.03	0.86 – 10.63
5	Perform well in your field of interest	Confidence	0.014	6.34	1.46 – 27.64
6	Reassured and motivated or inhibited from doing that activity in future when you didn’t do well in your field of interest	Confidence	0.215	2.25	0.62 – 8.10
7	Accept your body as it was in your teenage	Fidelity	0.001	6.96	2.31 – 21.01
8	Allowed to choose a career option of your interest	Fidelity	0.128	3.21	0.71 – 14.47
9	Have a reliable physical social circle	Love	0.099	0.38	0.12 – 1.20

10	Been in a constant romantic relationship	Love	0.046	0.08	0.01 – 0.95
11	Have a romantic partner	Love	0.001	55.45	5.07 – 60.08
12	Have a fear to get into a committed romantic relationship	Love	0.13	0.41	0.13 – 1.30

Significant but low degree correlations were found between the scores of: Love and hope ($r = 0.136$, $p\text{-value} = 0.034$); Fidelity and Hope ($r = 0.149$, $p\text{-value} = 0.019$). A moderate degree correlation was found between Fidelity and Love ($r = 0.302$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$) and a negative low degree correlation was found between Love and Confidence ($r = -0.127$, $p\text{-value} = 0.048$) (Table 5).

Table 5: Pearson Correlation between various virtues

Virtues		Hope	Will	Purpose	Confidence	Fidelity	Love
Hope	r	1					
	p - value	-					
Will	r	-0.008	1				
	p - value	0.901	-				
Purpose	r	0.082	-0.003	1			
	p - value	0.199	0.960	-			
Confidence	r	-0.430	0.025	0.055	1		
	p - value	0.509	0.696	0.395	-		
Fidelity	r	0.149	0.130	-0.026	0.005	1	
	p - value	0.019	0.840	0.687	0.937	-	
Love	r	0.136	-0.960	0.056	-0.127	0.302	1
	p - value	0.034	0.806	0.380	0.048	0.000	-

DISCUSSION

The human mind is exposed to various extremities of circumstances. Each of them has different effects on the mind and thus on the human personality. Children and their minds, as they grow up, are kneaded by numerous hands of external circumstances in life and each of those leaves an impression and is capable of favoring or deterring the process of acquiring a virtue. Erik Erikson explains this by staging human life into 8 sequential phases. Various circumstances promote or impede this process of psychosocial development. And our study aimed at analyzing the first six virtues in a group of 244 college students aged 18 to 25, and their association with various circumstances of life capable of affecting them as proposed by Erikson and also a few of our own innovation.

We aimed at analyzing only the first six virtues keeping in consideration the age group we had chosen, with the idea of just covering the Eriksonian stages that this age group has gone through and is undergoing. Interpreting the scores of the MEPSI scale, we understand that a majority of 205 (84 %) has developed the positive attribute of trust under the subscale of hope, while in the other sub-scales, the majority is on the side of negative attribute, signifying that they haven't

attained the latter virtues yet. But as suggested, the process of resolution of each conflict doesn't end at the respective Eriksonian stage, it is a lifelong process ⁵.

Of the participants, 77.5% reported that they were breastfed more in the first year of life. Erikson explains that being breast fed in the early infancy helps in the development of Trust. Consistently, in our study we established an association between breast feeding practices and the attributes of virtue Hope. Against this, in a cohort study by Jennifer N. Lind et al., there was no association between the practice of breast feeding and the psychosocial development of the children at 6 years ⁶. This could be because of the age at which we measured the virtue, which is subject to change with time.

A considerable sum of 27.5 % of the participants responded that their mothers were busy or working and hence were not able to be with them all the time in their childhood, but there was no association of this with the virtue of hope. But in a study by Darcia Narvaez, et al., it was concluded that maternal intimacy, along with other factors provided necessary support for the positive psychosocial development as suggested by Erikson ⁷. Mitchell J suggested that the toddlers undergo a trauma of separation when a new sibling is born ⁸. But we found no association between having a sibling and psychosocial development, to suggest that the trauma of separation could affect the virtue hope. But having a sibling induces the elder child to find his/her new social circle, because the mother is then spending more time with the newborn, which could probably improve the process of the second Eriksonian Virtue acquisition.

Erikson posited that anal sphincter control gained in the second stage of psychosocial development helps in the development of the virtue Will. We interpret that the problem of defective anal sphincter control and even bed-wetting in early childhood don't have associations with the development of the virtue of will, but the literature suggests that children with bed-wetting problem have increased other psychosocial problems in adolescence ⁹. Punishments and insults that the children beget following such episodes of fecal incontinence and bed-wetting are told to impede the development of Autonomy as an attribute in the second Eriksonian stage. We, again, have no such association to support this point, while a study by Al-Zaben and Sehlo supports this with its conclusion that punishments for bed-wetting are strong predictors for poor psychosocial development ¹⁰. Understanding that bed-wetting and fecal incontinence aren't done on purpose by the children, but rather are a reflection of some abnormality in the child's physical or mental system could help them overcome the issue better than being punished or insulted every time this happens.

We also found no association of freedom of choice of food, toys, dress, friends and that of pursuing activities of interest other than academics and any other kinds of punishments with the attributes of virtue Will, Purpose and confidence. Though our study hasn't shown any association between the developed virtues and being allowed to participate in extracurricular activities during schooling, performing well and better than their peers in any such activities was strongly associated with the positive attribute of competence under the psychosocial virtue of confidence, as pointed out by Driessens CM, in their study, which supports the Erikson's theory, that extracurricular activities buffered the negative impacts of school and family on the psychosocial wellbeing ¹¹. Though beyond the scope of our study, this protective effect of extra-curricular activities could further be extended to the late adolescence and young adulthood, as in a study among university students by Guilmette et al., university students' past and present extracurricular activity participation was positively associated with higher levels of academic success and emotional wellbeing ¹².

Erikson speaks about adolescent stage as where an individual weighs out his/her past experiences, societal expectations especially put forth by peers, and their dreams in establishing values and

finding themselves, and thus called the stage of ego-identity. An adolescent undergoes various confusions about his/her own body, sexuality, career and interpersonal relationships. When handled right the individuals are expected to develop the positive attributes of a feel of self and being true to oneself, independence and control over life. We explored this phase of life with various questions regarding the participant's body, self-esteem, peer pressure, sexuality and other confusions of adolescence. Of all these, accepting their own body as such it was during their adolescence is found to have a strong association with the virtue of fidelity and its positive attributes. Those who reported that they weren't able to accept the body back then are 6.96 times at a higher risk of maldevelopment of fidelity. Against what was expected the most out of our study, confusion about their sexuality in adolescence didn't prove to influence the development of the virtue of self-identity, while Rose, et Al, in their study showed that sexual confusion lead to problem behavior which itself is a reflection of role confusion and lack of self-identity¹³. This could be due to variety of reasons; one – may be the participants of our study were hesitant in disclosing their confusions regarding sexuality back then, because of the extensively prevalent social stigmata on the topic, two – may be there weren't enough subjects who really had such a confusion in their life. We strongly recommend elaborate studies in this aspect of adolescence and measures to de-stigmatize these normal aspects of human life for a better collective living.

Adding more twists to the plot, unlike what we expected, sexual bullying, body shaming and difficulty in creating easy but meaningful relationships in their adolescence due to the former two reasons, doesn't have any association with the virtue of fidelity. Such traumas of the past if handled elegantly, could be fruitful in terms of the personality development, but in case if that victimized the individual, that could turn personality disastrous and interpersonal relationships poorer, favoring development of negative attributes, who might need psychological help, as shown in various studies on bullying such as by Ando et al., and on shaming by Madowitz et al^{14,15}. This warns all of us to march towards a broader social acceptance of the diversity that the humans are adorned with and to transmit the same to the younger generations.

Erikson also considered the freedom of choices in adolescence to be influencing the landing of ego-identity. Multitudes of circumstances that give choices to the adolescents, like their dressing, looks, styles, etc., are moderated by their peers who in turn play a crucial role in adolescent psychosocial development¹⁶. We thought that difficulty in creating easy relationships in this age would deter the process of acquiring a positive attribute. But we have no statistical evidence to support this, while a whole lot of studies in the past have shown that peer relationships and friendship favor psychosocial development, supporting Erikson's theory, such as the work by Moore and Boldero. They showed that those with friendship satisfaction had high identity scores in the EPSI scale¹⁷.

Besides the fierce debates about adolescent autonomy and parental control, adolescents need the freedom of choices, at least when it comes to the point of choosing careers. Career also plays an important role in this Eriksonian stage of life. While a grieving sum of 14.8 percent of our participants registered that they weren't given the freedom of choice of career, we found no association of this to the virtue of fidelity. This again was unexpected, but additional studies are warranted to find the influence of freedom of choice in career and parental control over the psychosocial development.

Entering into the last Eriksonian stage under study, with a secret blush, we are surprised by the results. Though, unlike what we wanted, there is no association between having a reliable social circle and the virtue of love, it was depressing to note that 20.5% of the participants reported that they don't have a reliable social circle. While many studies support the idea that having friends positively influences the virtue of love, we are not able to support that¹⁸.

Being in a constant relationship in the past is associated with the development of the attribute of intimacy in young adulthood. Also, having a romantic partner in the present is very strongly associated with the positive attribute of the virtue of love. Those who have a romantic partner are at 55 times higher chance of attaining the positive attribute of intimacy in young adulthood. These are consistent with Erikson's theory and also the study by Robert S. Weisskirch. And also those individuals with high intimacy are said to experience less loneliness, greater self-esteem, and more happiness than those with low intimacy¹⁹. We expected a negative association between the fear of getting committed into a serious romantic relationship and the virtue of love. But we couldn't statistically demonstrate this, and hence there is no such association in our study. But an anticipated sum of 44.3% of the students reported that they have a fear of getting into a serious relationship. This could be because of cultural implications or being averted by the responsibilities that a serious relationship demands. Anyway, being in a romantic relationship warrants the virtue of love, and those who aren't are at a higher chance of developing the negative attribute of isolation.

Just as expected, fidelity and love shows us a positive correlation explaining the role of a sense of self needed for the development of intimacy. This is consistent with the work of Jacob L et al., where the prior successful resolution of the conflict of ego-identity and role confusion favored the success in resolution of intimacy and isolation conflict². So this warrants the positive psychosocial virtue of Love in young adulthood and hopefully for the rest of the life, if the adolescence was well taken care of. Therefore this hints us, the researcher, parents and teachers to understand the importance of handling adolescence in an elegant way to support teenagers and to not disrupt their process of development for the rest of their lives. Body shaming, physical, mental and sexual bullying, peer influenced behavior, education, freedom of choices in required amount, love and care and many other factors could have an indirect impact on the virtues in the rest of the life. These correlations, although not found in other Eriksonian stages, favors the point that successfully attaining the virtues in the younger ages facilitates the attainment of the virtues in the forthcoming stages of life.

Limitations

Since the study involved only the age group of 18 to 25 years and an educated group, the results cannot be generalized to other populations. Since this was an internet-based survey using MEPSI scale, this could not be superior to a professional's assessment. Social stigma on many of the questions must have been a hindrance for the participants to open up in the survey, so a face-to-face interview could be considered superior to the survey. Also, this is a retrospective study which cannot be claimed to be better than a prospective study of children as they grow up.

CONCLUSION

Living as a human is simply not about surviving, but about experiencing life in its profoundness. In the modern era of health and science, physical well-being and prevention of physical illness is getting popular and people are at least slowly adapting a better lifestyle to stay physically fit and prevent illnesses, like exercising, dieting, etc. Unlike physical health, one's mental health is mostly dependent on how he/she conducts oneself in various situations, which in turn is influenced by the past experiences and how well the personality is developed. So it's necessary that optimum levels of psychosocial virtues are developed to experience a profound and satisfactory life.

Our study focuses more on the childhood virtues and its associated factors in Erikson's theory. Besides the frank and evident harm witnessed, in India and most other parts of the world, child rearing practices are mostly dictated by the traditions and folk beliefs, which are mostly unscientific and rather impulsive. While the major part of the child rearing process converges on to the aspect of disciplining the child, the most common tools used by parents are harsh

punishments and sometimes even verbal abuse. These not only muddle the immediate mental health of the child, but also have the potential of ruining the child's life by interfering with his/her psychosocial development lifelong and hinder the child by drawing many unnecessary boundaries for life. But parents also don't have any access to such information which can enrich the process of molding a human instead of ruining abundant possibilities of a happier life. It's high time that we make every parent aware of the psychosocial aspects of the child's growth and development and educate them about what's normal and what's not, just like how other beneficial schemes reach them and make them a part of the modern culture, that which is scientific and wholesome. More research on optimal parenting methods and how to take them to families all around the globe is suggested.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST - None declared.

REFERENCES

1. Orenstein GA, Lewis L. Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2023 Jan.
2. Orlofsky, J. L., Marcia, J. E., & Lesser, I. M. Ego identity status and the intimacy versus isolation crisis of young adulthood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1973; 27(2): 211–219
3. Isaac, R., Annie, I. K., and Prashanth, H. R. Parenting in India. In *Parenting across cultures*, p. 39–45; 2014
4. Darling-Fisher CS. Application of the Modified Erikson Psychosocial Stage Inventory: 25 Years in Review. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*. 2019; 41(3): 431 - 458.
5. Gilleard C, Higgs P. Connecting Life Span Development with the Sociology of the Life Course: A New Direction. *Sociology*. 2016 Apr; 50(2): 301-315.
6. Lind, J. N., Li, R., Perrine, C. G., & Schieve, L. A. Breastfeeding and Later Psychosocial Development of Children at 6 Years of Age. *Pediatrics*, 2014; 134(Supplement): S36–S41.
7. Darcia Narvaez, Tracy Gleasonb, Lijuan Wanga, Jeff Brooks, Jennifer Burke Lefever, Ying Cheng. The Evolved Developmental Niche: Longitudinal effects of caregiving practices on early childhood psychosocial development. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. 2013; 28(4): 759–773.
8. Mitchell, J. Siblings and the Psychosocial. *Organ. Soc. Dyn.* 2014; 14(1):1-12
9. Mariusz T Grzeda, Jon Heron, Alexander von Gontard, Carol Joinson. Effects of urinary incontinence on psychosocial outcomes in adolescence. *Eur Child Adolesc Psychiatry*. 2017; 26: 649–658.
10. Al-Zaben, F. N., & Sehlo, M. G. Punishment for bedwetting is associated with child depression and reduced quality of life. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. 2015; 43: 22–29.
11. Driessens, C.M. Extracurricular activity participation moderates impact of family and school factors on adolescents' disruptive behavioural problems. *BMC Public Health*. 2015; 15: 1110
12. Guilmette, M., Mulvihill, K., Villemare-Krajden, R., & Barker, E. T. Past and present participation in extracurricular activities is associated with adaptive self-regulation of goals, academic success, and emotional wellbeing among university students. *Learning and Individual Differences*. 2019; 73: 8–15.
13. Rose, H. A., Rodgers, K. B., & Small, S. A. Sexual Identity Confusion and Problem Behaviors in Adolescents. *Marriage & Family Review*. 2006; 40 (2-3): 131–150.

14. Ando M, Asakura T, Simons-Morton B. Psychosocial Influences on Physical, Verbal, and Indirect Bullying Among Japanese Early Adolescents. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*. 2005; 25(3): 268-297.
15. Madowitz J, Knatz S, Maginot T, Crow SJ, Boutelle KN. Teasing, depression and unhealthy weight control behaviour in obese children. *Pediatr Obes*. 2012; 7(6): 446-52.
16. Astha Kafle, Mamata Thakali. Social relations in adolescence: Role of parent and peer relationships in adolescent psychosocial development. 2013
17. Moore, S., Boldero, J. Psychosocial development and friendship functions in adolescence. *Sex Roles*. 1991; 25: 521–536.
18. Brendgen, M., Poulin, F. Continued Bullying Victimization from Childhood to Young Adulthood: a Longitudinal Study of Mediating and Protective Factors. *J Abnorm Child Psychol*. 2018; 46: 27–39.
19. Weisskirch, R.S. Psychosocial Intimacy, Relationships with Parents, and Well-being among Emerging Adults. *J Child Fam Stud*. 2018; 27: 3497–3505.