Influence Of Innate Factors Of Intelligence, Physical Appearance, Temperament And Degree Of Disability Towards Adjustment To The Environment

Discuss how innate factors of intelligence, physical appearance, temperament and degree of disability have a strong influence towards adjustment to the environment

For one to adjust and function properly in their environments, they have to have some level of intelligence, some physical attributes and a level of temperament. These innate factors have a strong bearing on the survival and how one functions in their environments. For instance, in the animal kingdom, if an animal lacks the level of intelligence required to adjust, it will die whilst those with the required levels of intelligence thrive. Moreover, in a herd of Zebras, if one of them has a disability or poor intelligence, it will fall prey to lions and hyenas because its ability to adjust will be impaired. As such, it is the point of departure of this essay to discuss how innate factors of intelligence, physical appearance, temperament and degree of disability have a strong influence towards adjustment to the environment with more emphasis on humans in general and children in particular.

Intelligence has been defined in many ways, including the capacity for logic, understanding, self-awareness, learning, emotional knowledge, reasoning, planning, creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving (Chan, 2003). There is however a strong disagreement among scholars on what intelligence really is, but simply put, intelligence includes the ability to benefit from past experience, act purposefully, solve problems, and adapt to new situations (Westen, 2010). As children grow up, they use this ability to adapt to new situations and new challenges in their environments. Physical appearance relates to the outward phenotype or look of human beings (O'Brien, 2010). There are infinite variations in human phenotypes, though society reduces the variability to distinct categories. Physical characteristics are defining traits or features about one's body. These are aspects that are visually apparent and they are the first things one sees when they look at someone and this could be their hair, clothes, nose, or figure. In psychology, as posited by Westen (2010), temperament broadly refers to consistent individual differences in behavior that are biologically based and are relatively independent of learning, system of values and attitudes. Lastly, disability is a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities. Many perceive it as a social construct over one's impairment (Kerr, 2017).

Children grow up in a unique environment and as they develop, they are supposed to adjust to these environments if they are to function normally in society (Ellis, 2007). They use their innate traits and abilities to adapt and if these traits and abilities fall short of societal expectations and requirements, they will not adjust properly and as such, they will suffer. According to Ellis (2007), intelligence, as defined above, relates to one's ability to adapt to their surroundings by using their problem solving skills and reasoning. Adjustment is a process by which an individual varies his behaviours to maintain balance between his needs and environment and intelligence is one among those factors which influence the adjustment status of an individual (Chan, 2003). An individual has to be able to decide between available options and the best way to act in any situation. If they fail to use their intelligence or if it is poor, then their ability to adjust is impaired,

thus affecting their functioning in their milieus. Take for instance, a child in the school setting, if the child fails to make sense of the school environment and if they fail to use their reasoning and problem solving skills in school, they will fail to adjust and thereby contributing towards their failure in school (Chan, 2003). This trait is very important as children grow up.

There are also several types of intelligence. In 1983 an American developmental psychologist Howard Gardener described 9 types of intelligence and they include naturalist, musical, logical-mathematical, existential, interpersonal, bodily-kinesthetic, linguistic, intra-personal and spatial intelligence (Ellis, 2007). Sternberg (2001) sees intelligence not as a narrow, monolithic quality that makes one good at getting top grades, but as an interplay between the analytical, practical and creative aspects of the mind. He calls this the Triarchic theory of intelligence. Analytical intelligence is what one probably imagines and it is the pure brain power with which one processes information. It is invoked when one needs to analyze something or solve problems. Creative intelligence comes into play when people need to think creatively and adjust effectively to new situations (Sternberg, 2001). This kind of intelligence is also responsible for synthesizing information and gaining insights. Practical intelligence involves the ability to deal with daily tasks in the real world and it deals with how well a person relates to the external environment. It is also directed towards goals which seek to adapt to or transform the world around an individual. In light of Stenberg (2001), for one to adjust effectively to their environments, they need to have these three forms of intelligence.

With regards to physical appearance, physical appearance has been see to affect self-esteem and lead to anxiety and maladjustment. Varni and Setogushi (1996) conducted a study in Asia and found out that investigated perceived physical appearance is a hypothesized predictor of psychological adjustment in 44 adolescents with congenital or acquired limb deficiencies within a path-analytic conceptual model. Standardized assessment instruments measuring perceived physical appearance, depressive symptoms, trait anxiety, general self-esteem, perceived scholastic competence, athletic competence, social acceptance, and close friendship were completed by the adolescents (Varni and Setogushi, 1996). In support of the apriori conceptual model, path-analysis findings indicated that the effect of perceived physical appearance on psychological distress is mediated by general self-esteem. Exploratory analysis suggested that the effect of perceived physical appearance on general self-esteem may be attenuated by potentially modifiable perceived competence or adequacy domains (Varni and Setogushi, 1996).

Carver, Pozo-Kaderman, Price, Harris, Derhagopian, Robinson and Moffat (2008) conducted a study on physical appearance and adjustment in the medical field and they suggested that patients adjust more poorly to breast cancer if they are heavily invested in body image as a source of their sense of self-worth. Physical appearance is a source of self-esteem and self-esteem assists in adjustment to the environment. A very good example is that of a chameleon. If it was not able to mimic the appearance of its environments, it was difficult for it to adjust and hence, it was going to be difficult for it to thrive as it uses its colour changes to hunt for insects (Carver et al., 2008). The same applies to an albino. They might find it difficult to adjust at school as all the other children are black and they are of a different physical appearance. This also goes with being a black pupil in a class full of white learners, the black pupil will obviously feel out of place and hence, fail to adjust to the environments due to poor self-esteem.

The other innate trait is temperament. According to Klanderman (2009), four temperaments is a proto-psychological theory that suggests that there are four fundamental personality types,

sanguine (enthusiastic, active, and social), choleric (short-tempered, fast, or irritable), melancholic (analytical, wise, and quiet), and phlegmatic (relaxed and peaceful). Klanderman (2009) conducted a study to determine whether temperaments seen in early childhood would have an effect on adjustment throughout life, especially during adjustment to college. Specifically, the researcher hypothesized that children with easy temperaments would have an easier time adjusting to college; whereas, children with slow-to-warm-up or difficult temperaments would have a more difficult time adjusting to college (Klanderman, 2009). In psychology, temperament broadly refers to consistent individual differences in behavior that are biologically based and are relatively independent of learning, system of values and attitudes. Some researchers point to association of temperament with formal dynamical features of behavior, such as energetic aspects, plasticity, sensitivity to specific reinforcers and emotionality and these affect one's adjustment.

Thomas, Chess, Birch, Hertzig and Korn (1968) began the classic New York longitudinal study in the early 1950s regarding infant temperament. The study focused on how temperamental qualities influence adjustment throughout life. Thomas et al. (1968) rated young infants on nine temperament characteristics, each of which, by itself, or with connection to another, affects how well a child fits in at school, with their friends, and at home. Behaviors for each one of these traits are on a continuum. If a child leans towards the high or low end of the scale, it could be a cause for concern. The specific behaviors in the study were activity level, regularity of sleeping and eating patterns, initial reaction, adaptability, intensity of emotion, mood, distractibility, persistence and attention span, and sensory sensitivity. Thomas et al, (1968) showed that easy babies readily adapt to new experiences, generally display positive moods and emotions and also have normal eating and sleeping patterns. Difficult babies tend to be very emotional, irritable and fussy, and cry a lot. They also tend to have irregular eating and sleeping patterns. Slow-to-warm-up babies have a low activity level, and tend to withdraw from new situations and people (Klein, 2012). They are slow to adapt to new experiences, but accept them after repeated exposure.

With regards to disability, children who have some disability might fail to perform some tasks that are considered normal in society and this affects their adaptability (Kerr, 2017). For instance, if a child is deaf, they will fail to hear any communication aired through sound and this will affect how they relate to their children. They will fail to become functional and hence, fail to effectively cope. If the disability is severe, children will fail to adjust in all spheres and if the disability is mild, they might adjust in other contexts and fail in others (Kerr, 2017). Nowadays there are methods that are being used to improve the adjustment of people to their environments and these come through assistive devices. For instance, there are hearing aids for those who are deaf and if that is their only disability, then they will be able to adjust properly to their environments hence, they will be able to function properly. All these innate factors can work as a compound factor and affect adjustment. For instance, in a child with Down's syndrome, intelligence might not be abstract and so is the physical appearance and self-esteem (Kerr, 2017). The child might fail to adjust to environments hence the need for schools to have special classes for these children so as to help them to adjust properly.

In conclusion, it therefore becomes safe to say that the innate factors discussed in this chapter have a strong bearing on the ability of people to adjust to their environments. If any of these traits is not so abstract in a child, their ability to adapt is impaired. As such, for a person to adapt easily to their environments, they need some level of intelligence, physical appearance, temperament and also a degree of disability that is not too much. Intelligence needs to be

improved if a child is to adjust effectively.

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