

RE-STORYING THE LIVES OF FAMOUS INDIVIDUALS: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

The Late Life Success Theory assumes that people go through a process of development, wherein these certain feats highlight the different ages. These highlights form the stages that people go through similarly as they pass through life but the experience behind is unique to each of them. This study aimed to create a list of life stages people go through based on their individual perception of development and achievement so as to allow for identification of stages towards a satisfying late life. This study used narrative research design where the researcher gathered documents about the life story of famous individuals who are respected and recognized for their contribution in their various fields through their published biographies. The biography included the experiences of the subject beyond 60 years old. The researcher then recorded their life experiences and collected information about the background of these stories. Thereafter, the stories were analyzed. The researchers then “restorying” them into a context that makes sense. The following stages have been identified: Stage 1- Overcoming a Misfortune Beginning Life; Stage 2- Teenage as the Constructive Passage to Adult Life; Stage 3- Becoming Part of the Adult World; Stage 4- Expanding Influence and Commitment; Stage 5- Leaving a Legacy. Looking into the lives of famous individuals, a certain pattern of similar experiences has been created. They went through a process of development towards the end of life wherein there are certain challenges which highlighted the different stages. These are to be experienced and faced positively. Once successfully handled, these are considered milestones of success which lead towards the full exploration and understanding of the human lives.

Keywords: *Re-storying, Life Stages, Success Theory, Older Persons, Late Life*

INTRODUCTION

The Late Life Success Theory assumes that people go through a process of development, wherein, these certain feats highlight the different ages. These highlights form the stages that people similarly go through as they pass through life but the experience behind is unique to each of them.

To provide understanding of the changes after some time in configurations of self-improvement, social historians have made broad utilization of three substantial analytical constructs: the life stages, the family cycle, and the life course. The life stages are formative stages, each with its distinct social, psychological and biological characteristics, through

which people go through the course of their lives. Life stages examination has put premium on the evolving definition, demarcation, and social experience of the periods of individual improvement (Cayton, Gorn & Williams, 1993).

Throughout each of these stages, manifold changes in the development of the brain are happening. What transpires and approximately when these developments come to pass are genetically determined (Child Development Institute, 1999). However, amongst the most significant inferences to surface from recent scholarship is that the life stages are historical constructs, molded by the interface of demographic, institutional, economic and cultural factors (Cayton, Gorn & Williams, 1993). Environmental situations and

conversations with important individuals within that environment have significant impact on how each person profits from each developmental event (Child Development Institute, 1999).

During each stage, growth and development happen in the primary developmental areas including physical, intellectual, language and social-emotional (Child Development Institute, 1999). The meanings, implications and experience of the life stages differ according to class, ethnicity, gender and historical era (Cayton, Gorn & Williams, 1993). It is beneficial to be acquainted with what some of these stages are so that when people navigate through them they can be aware of what is happening and know that it is typical (Weiler & Schoonover, 2001).

Developmental stages have a close link with feelings of success. People tend to find achievement in their individual development which basically adds up to a satisfying life. A fulfilling life is made up of a balance of all facets of life. It is fulfilled by meeting financial needs comfortably, great relationships, living out passion, having a true sense of self-identity which people achieve as they go through different stages of their lives leading to achievement of the ultimate dream (Weiler & Schoonover, 2001). Also, success in the different parts of life holds different meaning for each individual.

Public guidelines intend to uphold well-being, and ultimately the quality of late life. Positive outlooks of ageing are underpinned by an array of approaches to successful ageing. These optimistic perspectives mirror a move far from a transcendently pathological view of later life, which misrepresented how much chronic ill-health could be attributed to ageing and which to a great extent dismissed the heterogeneity of the older population. A more positive understanding of old age sees it as an era of well-being and opportunity, with preservation, or expansion, of the psychological assets to handle life's trials. Successful ageing is not merely about the preservation of health, but about make the most of one's psychological assets, namely resilience and self-efficacy (Bowling & Iliffe, 2011).

The Late Life Success Theory assumes that experiences, positive or negative, help a person to grow into a mature individual and help him/her in achieving a satisfying old age. These experiences create the stages of development based on how the person succeeds in the era of life which emphasizes old age as the ultimate

measure of a successful life. Furthermore, readings suggest that experience teaches a person certain aspects of life in order to become a mature individual, eventually pointing towards old age. Achieving successes in these periods of life make it a milestone. This constant exposure together with the biological and physical development creates the definition of that certain stage.

In order for a person to move through the different stages, the person has to be immersed in the situation and find his/her way out successfully. Each stage is unique and is comparable to the others. Therefore, a person has to be successful in each in order to have a satisfying late life. Every single stage of life is in the same way significant and essential for the welfare of humanity (Armstrong, 2008). The proponent, through this study, aimed to create a list of life stages which people go through based on their individual perception of development and achievement so as to allow for identification of stages towards a satisfying late life.

Problem Statement

This study aimed to validate the assumption of the Late Life Success Theory that humans go through a process of development which highlights the different ages. The validation was done by identifying the milestones of success achieved within ages as humans continuously go through the process of development through exploration of the lives of famous individuals.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used narrative research design. Narrative research is ideal for capturing the comprehensive stories or life experiences of a particular life or the lives of a lesser quantity of entities. The techniques for executing this research comprises of concentrating on examining one or two individuals, accumulating records through the compilation of their stories, reporting individual experiences, and chronologically arranging (or using life course stages) the meaning of those experiences.

The researcher gathered documents about the life story of famous individuals who are respected and recognized for their contribution in their fields through their published biographies. There were five famous people identified as subjects of the study. They excelled in different arenas of life such as religion, humanitarian work, efforts for global peace, media and entertainment, and politics. There were thirty nine documents reviewed to narrate their life stories. The biographies included the

experiences of the subject beyond 60 years old.

The researcher then recorded their life experiences and collected information about the background of these stories. Individual stories were then situated within their historical settings (time and place), their culture (racial or ethnic) and individual experiences (their occupations, their homes) of the persons under study. Thereafter, the stories were analyzed and the researcher “restory” them into a structure that makes sense. Restorying is the procedure of restructuring the stories into some broad form of framework. This frame may comprise of collecting stories, scrutinizing for vital components of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then redrafting the stories to arrange them within a sequential structure. During the course of restorying, the researcher provided an underlying link among ideas. This storyline included information about the setting or milieu of the participants' experiences. Beyond the order of events, the researcher detailed themes that arose from the story in order to deliver a more comprehensive discussion of the implication of the story. Hence, the qualitative data analysis illuminated both the story and themes that emerged from it (Creswell, 2006).

RESULTS

The Restorying

This section narrates the journey of five individuals towards living a life of legacy. This recounts the life they have lived and the challenges and triumphs they have experienced. This narrates to us stories worth telling. It weaves five lives into one story of success.

The Journey to Eons of Success

In the distant past, when the world was young and full of troubles, five people lived. They are five fortunate people to have walked the earth and flourished. They thought that they would have been forgotten, their stories became legacies that are now written in the world's history. For eternities, these stories shall be passed on.

Birth into a Troubled World

At the most troubled period five infants were born and were exposed to the shadows of the lonely world. They shall then reshape the story of the new world. At that time, death, famine, war and chaos ruled the earth. Their births were gifts to the expectant parents, but only to wake up that they shall face hard truths. The grey

curtains rolled at their young age, living memories too painful to remember. But the journey did not end; they unveiled the curtains to see the sunrise.

Explorations in Childhood

In their younger years, they were allowed to grow with grace and talents even amidst difficulties. They grew into children of good deeds and talents preparing them for the splendors and perils of the world. They were endowed with gifts to make them survive the harsh world.

Splendors and Perils of Teenage

When teenage came, it was both a period of great opportunities, but it was not without troubles. Life was indeed perilous at their teenage years. They explored the world and got pained. It was also a time of splendor, pains were rewarded with gains.

Triumphs and Defeats of Adulthood

As they grow into adults in a period of establishment of life, it was not without challenges, but, it was also full of rewards. They soared high and reached far. They managed to live adult life using the skills they had acquired when they were young. Their abilities were recognized continuously and proved to be useful as they face challenges in life.

Dawns and Dusks in Old Age

As they approached late life, they enjoyed the bounties brought about by their past experiences; however, the weakness of their physical form brought them defeats.

At their later lives, they have proven that they have stories worthy to be told from generation to generation. These are stories of five children who grew up to become contributors to the wonderful history of the world. Five different stories that when read tell us a single story of success, a life well-lived and worthy of remembering, a life filled with wonderful moments. They may not live forever but their lives are meant to be remembered for eternities. It narrates of the journey to eons of success.

DISCUSSION

Portrayals of life stages can be found in early Greek writings from the time of Hippocrates, and are based on noticeable changes in individuals during life, mainly based on biology. As significant as the stages themselves

are the change periods amid stages, the periods of most apparent change, times which are sometimes difficult (Wheelwright, 2005).

Starting from conception to the day of demise, a human's life is continually developing and changing. However, most of these changes and developments are exclusively caused by the diverse stages we undergo as human beings. The development phases are purely determined by biological and sociological heritage chance upon by human beings. There are several developmental stages in the life of a human being which necessitates to be addressed with great attention so as to allay the negative effects linked with aging. Human life can be paralleled to journey where one traffics from one point to another, facing countless challenges and moments of pleasure distinct from others' (UK Essays, 2015).

Looking at the world's most successful people, whether they are millionaire investors, reputable entrepreneurs, or elite sportspersons, likelihoods are they have one major thing in common. Today's most successful individuals have a tendency to be creatures of habit. These are the persons that have found success in their undertakings because they have discovered a formula that works and have acquired ways to form the helpful habits that keep them enthralled on a continued path of success (Lorenzen, 2017).

Descriptions of periods of development in childhood emanated from numerous sources. Thinkers such as Lawrence Kohlberg, Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget, and Erik Erikson have postulated means to comprehend development and contemporary inquiry has afforded essential knowledge concerning the nature of development. Moreover, phases of childhood are described in cultural terms by the customs, laws, and social institutions that compose a society. While researchers and authorities customarily demarcate the period of early childhood as birth to eight years old, others consider age five a better end point as it corresponds with admittance into the traditional practice of formal schooling (Net Industries and its Licensors, 2016).

A crucial instant in early childhood socio-emotional development takes place approximately the age of one year. This is the period when attachment formation comes to be critical. The attachment theory proposes that individual disparities in later life functioning and personality are molded by a child's early experiences

with their careers. The value of emotional attachment or lack of attachment, shaped early in life possibly will function as a prototype for subsequent relationships (Net Industries and its Licensors, 2016).

However, in the case of the subjects in this study, early childhood is somewhat tough. They were challenged to overcome the misfortunes of beginning life. The first decade of their lives was characterized by losses. These deaths seem to have contributed to how they faced life as adults. When a traumatic incident befalls young children, their immature brains enter emergency survival mode, much alike it does for any person of any age. Children's brains do not have the equal degree of emotional maturity as adults, which means that they are incapable to reason, rationalize or problem-solve like adults. They are also not capable of changing their emotional states as well as adults, and they have different comforters than adults. One of the most common reactions to a major trauma in childhood is to vigorously leave the body for the reason that the pain is simply too excessive. This likewise permits the body to numb the pain. This escape mechanism is a life-preserving survival process that takes place instinctively. Several adults who underwent trauma as a child often find it difficult to experience any emotion—even the 'good ones'—later in their lives. Suppressed emotion will surface in certain way—most often as anger, rage or unsuitable behavior that will cause distress to those closest to them. Once again these are unconscious reactions that come about without any conscious awareness and they are being triggered by the deep human drive to survive before the other drives of being happy, successful or clever (Maggie Dent, 2012). Far too many children who have experienced the passing of a parent find it difficult to overcome fears of abandonment in later relationships (Stepp, 2012).

Adolescence is the time of developmental transition in the middle of childhood and adulthood, encompassing various personalities, intellectual, physical and social developmental alterations. The beginning of puberty indicates the start of adolescence and puberty now takes place earlier, on average, than in the past. The completion of this developmental stage is intertwined more so to emotional and social influences and can be rather confusing (Cleveland Clinic, 2015).

The course of adolescence is an era of preparation for adulthood during which time several fundamental developmental experiences take place. Teenage serves as the constructive passage to adult life. Besides physical

and sexual maturation, these experiences comprise movement in the direction of development of identity and economic and social freedom, the possession of skills necessary to perform adult roles and relationships, and the ability for abstract reasoning (World Health Organization, 2018).

Based on the accounts, adolescence indeed embodies one of the serious transitions in the life span and is illustrated by a remarkable leap in growth (World Health Organization, 2018). At the start of their teenage life, they got focused on activities in school and with peers which will help them in their late life. As children grow, they begin to devote extra time with their friends and fewer times with their parents. Consequently, friends can impact a child's behavior and thinking, which is the core of peer pressure. Peer pressure can be a helpful stimulus when it encourages a child to perform satisfactorily in school or to be involved in sports or other activities (Cleveland Clinic, 2015).

Even though adolescence is a period of remarkable growth and potential, it is also a period of great risk through which social situations apply powerful influences (World Health Organization, 2018). Peer pressure can be a deleterious stimulus when it provokes a child to go into drinking, smoking, to practice unsafe sex, or using drugs, or other dangerous activities (Cleveland Clinic, 2015). Adolescents trust on their families, schools, health services, their workplaces and their communities to acquire wide-ranging significant skills that can aid them to deal with the demands they face and make the shift from childhood to adulthood successful (World Health Organization, 2018).

The transition to adulthood is a time in the life progression when young people are confronted with the test of becoming part of the adult world. To some, this is a period to increase their supports and soar. For others, the burdens that go with the undertaking of growing-up are tremendous. Nevertheless, for others, it is hard for them to chase their ambitions irrespective of desire and inspiration because they are not prepared and not resourced. The lack of a definite path to adulthood, and the reality that typical and beneficial growing-up occasionally encompasses leaving a job, returning to school, or moving back into a parents' home, it may be more challenging to conclude when abudding adult is in need of support, struggling, and failing (Tanner, 2009).

Though childhood and adolescence are frequently

manifested by ceremonial rites of passage, the move from young adult to middle-aged adult is manifested neither by distinct rites of passage nor by expected sequential events. The movement from young adulthood to middle adulthood is habitually a slow one. Social indications, specifically changes in work and family domains, possibly will be superior gauges of developmental change than chronological age alone (Net Industries & its Licensors, 2016).

Erikson indicated that the principal psychosocial task of middle adulthood, which includes the ages 45 to 65-is to cultivate generativity, or the yearning to expand one's influence and commitment to family, society, and future generations. In other arguments, the middle adult is concerned with developing and guiding the next generation (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015).

The middle adult who was not able to develop generativity goes through unproductivity or self absorption and experiences its related self-indulgence and invalidism (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015). It may be that middle adulthood is best recognized for its notorious midlife crisis: a period of review that leads to probing long held principles and ideals. The midlife crisis may perhaps cause in a person separating from a spouse, swapping occupations or transferring from the metropolis to the outskirts.

Usually starting in the early or mid 40s, the crisis frequently arises in reaction to a feeling of mortality, as middle adults understand that their youth is restricted and that they have not attained all of their sought after aims in life. Certainly, not every person experiences pressure or distraught during middle age; in its place, they may just go through a midlife transition, or change, rather than the emotional turmoil of a midlife crisis. Other middle adults choose to reframe their experience by viewing themselves as existing in the prime of their existence rather than in their deteriorating years (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015).

As they reach late life, people look back on the life they have resided and come off with either a feeling of contentment from a life well lived or a feeling of remorse and despair over a life wasted. Those who feel pleased of their achievements will feel a sense of integrity. Effectively accomplishing this stage means contemplating with little qualms and an overall sense of contentment. These persons will gain understanding, even when facing demise. Those who are ineffective

throughout this stage will feel that their life has been futile and will experience countless worries. The person will be left with feelings of resentment and despair (Cherry, 2018).

Success in this phase will lead to the virtue of wisdom. Wisdom permits an individual to revisit their life with a feeling of finality and fullness, and also take death devoid of fear, leaving a legacy to the people left behind (McLeod, 2017).

Synthesis

A life of success is characterized by positively facing challenges of every stage. The initial stage of life is challenging to most people due to our lack of control of the external environment but successfully passing through this stage would make a person capable of facing challenges later on. On the contrary, the end of life seems to be a time to harvest the fruits of all the things a person has done in his limited life.

Highlighting each stage of life are the challenges they have to overcome together with other changes. Each stage is contributory to the success of the succeeding stages. The ultimate measure if all the stages have been successfully experienced is the status in the old age. Losing loved ones in childhood seems to have contributed to the emotional and psychological strength of successful people. Allowing a child to experience loss would enhance the capacity to face future failures and defeats and eventually face every struggle positively. Adolescence has always been challenging but to the

successful people it is about ensuring that the initial life structures are well established. Development of skills and talents that would be helpful later on has been the focus of this period. This transitional stage will greatly influence the life they will live. Adulthood has been divided into two phases. The first part being the actual hard work to fully establish the life they imagined. Initial contributions to their field are slowly being noticed. The second part is the period of being recognized and becoming influential making it easier to fully actualize the life they wanted. These two stages lead to a successful end of life, which is the leaving of legacy, making all the things they have done to be remembered by those lives they have touched.

CONCLUSION

Looking into the lives of famous individuals, a certain pattern of similar experiences has been created. They go through a process of development towards the end of life wherein there are certain challenges that highlight the different stages. These are to be experienced and faced positively. Once successfully handled, these are considered milestones of success which lead towards the full exploration and understanding of the human lives.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended to get more samples of the subjects under study. Future researchers might look into the lives of famous people who would represent different walks of life.

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