**The Influence of Childhood Experiences on Adult Personality Development**

**Abstract**

The present research explores whether childhood narratives influence adult personality development. This study also figures out how the narratives affect adult personality development. The research study views the various perspectives about childhood narratives and their influence on human life in their adult personality development. The writing analyzes the different opinions of different thinkers and writers who have put their experiences upon the issue. Furthermore, six English teachers of different government and private schools located in two districts of Nepal were interviewed to collect primary data. Some questions-answers were recorded as well based on the topic which were conducted with the teachers. Later, the data was analyzed through content. Then, the recordings were transcribed verbally for this writing perspective to support the research claim. From the research, it has been found that both nature and nurture play a crucial role in shaping an adult’s personality. Therefore, it is imperative young people be treated carefully, taking psychological impact into account.

**Keywords**: childhood, adult personality, changes, experience, positive

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Childhood is a crucial phase of human life so early experiences must have a deserving impact on one’s personality development which is analyzed with various norms. Even we are familiar with a proverb “Morning shows the day.” It is believed that early work hints at what the outcome will look like. Pilkington et al. (2022) claim that anyone who was deprived of maternal affection or nurturance in childhood tend more to accept that they do not hope for emotional support in their later life. Positive atmospheres are necessary for children to grow with a healthy body and a healthy mind. Daines et al. (2021) claim that children who were brought up with positive childhood experience are more likely to do better for their offspring, resulting in good family bonding and good health. In the education sector, Saracho (2023) argues that information on children’s physical and mental growth in early childhood education is important because such information helps parents and teachers to make decisions about how children learn better and what support the child needs. To extend the idea, childhood experience can be connected with adult life development in different sectors, too.

The significance of this research writing is to fill a gap whether childhood narratives have an influence on adult personality development or not, and next, how they affect personality development. This research centralizes on these two issues since no writers have shaded their light upon the issue. Different thinkers have analyzed child psychology, child behavior, adult personality and its development process and so on. The impact of childhood narratives is a dominating issue to be studied as personality plays a great role in what type of person he or she should become. If one can develop one’s behavior, his/her life will be meaningful, valuable and contented. Everyone wishes to be a good person in the future. For this, they must change their behavior from the beginning. Children's age is a crucial age to shape and cultivate good and constructive habits for a bright future. So, childhood narratives should be considered with full attention.

**3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Research has been done on various issues about childhood behavior, adult behavior and their development, but this writing prioritizes how childhood narratives bring changes on the adult personality development. More specifically, the following questions are analyzed.

1. What types of narratives infer positive and negative adult personality development?

2. How can childhood narratives be relevant to adult personality development later?

**4. METHODOLOGY**

Writing mostly depends on both primary and secondary data. The methods of required data collection and finding are on the basis of interviews, and use of some books and scholarly articles. In order to fulfill the objectives of the survey, the researcher wanted to collect primary data. As a result, he went to different government and private secondary schools located in the Kathmandu valley and met English teachers to collect their childhood narratives and their perspectives about how the narratives affect adult personality development. Six teachers were interviewed. Actually, the researcher went to Mahendra Adarsha School, Imadol, Tika Vidyashram School, Lalitpur, Kamyak School, Bagbazar, Kathmandu, and Nepal Tara School, Pepsikola, Kathmandu for my survey. The interviewees were selected based on their willingness to participate in the interview. Their personal identities were not disclosed in the research. For this, the researcher gave a questionnaire to them for brainstorming. The researcher informed them about his research purposes and plans in brief. When they were ready, the researcher asked them to share their five childhood narratives. After recording those narratives, the researcher started asking them some questions relevant to the narratives and their impact on people’s adult personality in the future. The researcher recorded their answers on his mobile phone.

Apart from this interview, the researcher googled scholarly journal articles relevant to his research topic and read them considering the main theme of those books. The researcher has cited them in his research writing in order to strengthen his claims. Thus, his writing is based on a qualitative research method rather than quantitative one since he collected different verbal information, analyzed them through content, and addressed the issues with logic and claims in words.

**5. RESEARCH GAP**

Many writers are found to have written many books relevant to childhood narratives, children’s growth, adulthood, personality and personality development. Wolfgang Schneider claims, “Memories of preverbal human infants do not resemble those of older children and adults—is no longer tenable” (Schneider, 2015, p. 17). Schneider implies that new research challenges this view, indicating that infants may form and retain memories in ways more similar to older individuals than previously thought. Similarly, Napoleon Hills (1994) clarifies in his book how a person develops his personality and behavior to be a successful being. In Jeffrey Jensen Arnett’s (2015) *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*, the writer analyzes the transition to adulthood development in human life where he elaborates how a person completes this transition period physically and psychologically. In the same way, Mary Eming Young, and Linda M. Richardson’s (2007) *Early Childhood Development from Measurement to Action: A Priority for Growth and Equity* themes about the value of Early Childhood Development (ECD) program and how early childhood environment and knowledge influence human life. However, this book has also failed to quote how childhood narratives affect adult personality development. Next, Scarborough J.’s (1998) *The Origins of Cultural Differences and Their Impact on Management* claims “The purpose of this book [*The Origins of Cultural Differences and Their Impact on Management]* is in part to develop such understanding but more to deepen it in order to provide readers with an appreciation of the reality that these differences are the result not of aberrant attitudes or faulty character but of unique combinations of historical, economic, social, physical, and religious forces that have shaped the various cultures over many centuries” (11). Jack Block’s (2002) *Personality as an Affect-processing System toward an Integrative Theory* highlights intra-individual functioning and the coherence and thematic unity of particular lives.

Personality psychology recognizes the shaping of human nature as a function of evolutionary pulls and pushes and the further shaping of perceptions and behaviors as a function of the cultural contexts in which lives are led. Arthur P. Bochner’s (2014) *Coming to Narrative a Personal History of Paradigm Change in the Human Sciences* states about the transition of thought in human life due to personal history. In the similar way, James Morgan Hart (1890) narrates how he passed his days at a German university with lots of new experiences in his book *German Universities a Narrative of Personal Experience*. In the book *Rethinking Narrative Identity* (2013), we can find an analogy between a crisis in identity and a crisis in narrative by drawing attention to what he calls “unsettling cases” of narrative and how it forms a psychological framework in the mind of the concerned people.

Nevertheless, it has been realized that no writer has analyzed the impact of childhood narratives on the adult personality. Thus, the researcher has committed to fulfill this gap via this research writing. From this writing, readers can understand how valuable childhood narratives are for shaping their adult personality. Apart from this, this writing analyzes what types of childhood behaviors become a better sort of adult personality and what types of upbringing spoils children in their future.

**2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Different writers have almost the same perspective on the impact of childhood narratives on personality development. Every individual has basically two types of memory that are explicit and implicit memory. Of them, implicit memory reveals a habit formation skill. Because of this quality, any narrative can become memorable for a long time. Nanu Pokhrel (a pseudo name), one of the interviewees, also highlights the childhood experiences. She said that what one experiences in early age, it remains forever. As childhood mind is very tender, it imprints what it receives as an experience. She claims that she has also learned many things from her childhood experiences. She said that she developed her better personality when her family migrated to a city area because she came to meet lots of people from different mental levels. She says, “Childhood memory is very important for everybody, so is the condition I got. Whatever I got in the childhood, I am living with the similar type of life now.” Wolfgang Schneider (2015) also claims in his book *Memory Development from Early Childhood through Emerging Adulthood* about the value of implicit memory.

Regarding the contents of the long-term store, it was proposed that information can be represented in two ways. Explicit or declarative memory refers to our capacity for the conscious recollection of names, places, dates, or events and comes in two types, episodic and semantic. Whereas episodic memory concerns events and experiences that can be consciously retrieved, semantic memory refers to our knowledge of language, rules, and concepts. By contrast, implicit or procedural memory represents a variety of non-conscious abilities, including the capacity to learn habits and skills and some forms of classical conditioning. (p.32)

Similarly, Eklabya Karki (a pseudo name), one of the interviewees, claims that childhood memory affects the adult personality. What one learns will result later. He clearly says, “The things we experience in our childhood, the things we do in our childhood, that do have a positive impact in our adulthood also. Whatever we do in our childhood that can be seen in our adulthood.” Thus, early experiences are directly connected to the later behavior.

Personality is influenced by childhood narratives apparently because a child has collected several experiences from his surrounding environment in which he is grown up. He starts to respond clearly to his environment from the age of three according to some scholars. Then, he continuously learns good and bad experiences throughout his life. Thus, childhood experiences are essential for shaping the adult personality. According to the findings of the survey done with the different English teachers, childhood experiences really influence the adult personality since people’s ideology is developed in our early ages. Another interviewee, Shiva Bhusal (a pseudo name), claims that early childhood ego and feelings result a massive difference in the later life. He further says, “If you are inspired positively or negatively that will last forever until and unless you are here on this earth. If my brother rejected me, I would not be right now what I am. In early stage if you are keen interested rather it is positively or negatively, it affects the life.” Further, Duane P. Schultz (2005) also shades some light on this matter in his book entitled *Theories of Personality* as:

Childhood experiences are important in Bandura’s theory. Childhood learning may be more influential than learning in adulthood. Our internal performance standards, which affect our self-efficacy, are established in childhood, along with a set of ideal behaviors. However, childhood experiences can be unlearned later in life, and new performance standards and behaviors may be substituted. We are not captives of the reinforcements we received in our early years. Because at least some behavior results from experience, it may be inferred that Bandura accepts the uniqueness of personality. Also, our ultimate and necessary goal in life is to set realistic performance standards to maintain an adequate level of self-efficacy. (p. 441)

Thus, it is unquestionably clear that early childhood experiences influence adult personality development. All the six interviewees accept this view as per their life experiences and perspectives.

Age factor also matters in grasping the lesson from the narratives. It is claimed that older children are more experienced and mature than younger ones. However, childhood is one of the best stages of human life for collecting new experiences and information. As per the difference in age, different aspirations, feelings, and emotions are realized. Moreover, interest and mindset also modify on the basis of one’s age. Basically, early age is the best for learning and developing a good discipline because the early experiences last long throughout life. Another interviewee, Sunita Sharma (a pseudo name), mentions that a behavior that one has possessed can be changed later life. She exemplified herself and said, “When I was a child, I was so faithful and loyal, but now not same as. It is not same as before, not that much loyal to my parents, not that much innocent.” The *book Memory Development from Early Childhood through Emerging Adulthood* highlights the age relevant experiences. In Wolfgang Schneider’s (2015) words:

However, although experience contributes to developmental differences, it does not seem to completely account for these differences. For instance, in laboratory research in which children of different ages were given comparable amounts of experience with an event, age differences remained, with older children producing more elaborate reports than younger children (e.g., Farrar and Goodman 1990; Fivush et al. 1992; Price and Goodman 1990). (p. 89)

Hence, age also matters in learning new things. It is sure that children can learn faster, better, and more things than adults or older ones. As per the age of someone, their aspirations, feelings and emotions are variant. Teenage is very much apt for acquiring new narratives and stories which can play a significant role in developing personality. Indeed, one can learn different narratives from the age of five. How one grows and what he experiences is a key factor in what he becomes in life.

According to the child's situation and atmosphere, the child’s attitudes and behaviors change. Moreover, childhood narratives have a significant value for his future career, thought, and state as the narratives form from a certain realization in a certain situation of life which gives a lesson in the days to come. Another interviewee (Birat Shrestha) also claims that early experiences remain forever in life. He says, “I used to be afraid of cat. In the same way, I am afraid of something else. For example, if I commit a crime, I am afraid of God; I am afraid of my boss; I am afraid of my father; I am afraid of my seniors. Thus, childhood narratives bring changes in the adult personality because according to the experiences gained from the beginning of the age, behaviors of people are determined. Such experiences get imprinted deep down in the brain a habit and appear for a long life. So, personality depends on what one has learned, how he has perceived, when he has learned and why he has achieved the things.

Therefore, according to a child’s experiences, characteristics, innate capability, his adult personality is developed. What one has learned and experienced will influence one’s later career because accordingly his mental, social, cultural, emotional, and physical development is seen. If one gets a positive environment from the beginning, he obviously shows a good personality while a bad environment results in a bad effect on one’s life. People copy and learn habits from different places like family, school, company, market, and society. Every individual is distinct by their nature, perspective, ideology, thought, and behavior. They develop their behavior differently. Another interviewee, an English teacher, Nanu Pokhrel (a pseudo name) expresses that every child is different with their own skills and ideology. In her words, “This is very important that every child is unique, and every person has different skills. This is because of the environment, their preference, and their inherent capacity also. What has a great effect on their life is also very important. There are so many good speakers of English language, but they are not poets.” In this reference, Games Clear (2018), in his book *Atomic Habit*, says:

We don’t choose our earliest habits, we imitate them. We follow the script handed down by our friends and family, our church or school, our local community and society at large. Each of these cultures and groups comes with its own set of expectations and standards—when and whether to get married, how many children to have, which holidays to celebrate, how much money to spend on your child’s birthday party. In many ways, these social norms are the invisible rules that guide your behavior each day. You’re always keeping them in mind, even if they are at the top of your mind. When you follow the habits of your culture without thinking, without questioning, and sometimes without remembering. As the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne wrote, *The Customs and Practices of Life in Society Sweep Us Along*.” (p.100)

Games Clear claims that habit formation plays a significant role in shaping one’s behavior. A child copies different behaviors from others that come to be his personality in the future. Without any consciousness and pondering, he develops a kind of personality, even without thinking and questioning.

In the case of learning personality, it depends upon one’s mental thought firstly because he updates according to his mental decision that he has approved of on the basis of his knowledge and experiences. Everyone is different by his mental, physical, social, and emotional phenomena. One can get real motivation from an incident of life while others do not. So, strong desires, interests, and opinions make one learn something on a different level. According to Eklabya Karki (a pseudo name), an interviewee mentions that innate power is one that also influences one’s personality development. He says, “Every person has their innate power. They have brought different skills, different capacities by birth. When a person is grown up, he learns some things. That means he does not learn totally new things; he develops whatever he has developed in his mind or whatever he has got by birth.” In the same way, Napoleon Hills (1994) claims:

The mechanism which opens that gate is desire or motive. There is no other way to open the gate. It is opened by degree, which is dependent on the intensity of those same motives and desires. Only a burning desire will open the gate to its fullest.  A burning desire is accompanied by deep emotional feelings. Sheerly logical motives do not open the gate as widely as those which spring from the heart. (p. 49)

Thus, innate capacity or inborn skill has also a great role in forming one’s personality traits. One’s original thought, skill, and emotions matter in one’s behavior development apart from the culture and environment. Therefore, inherent factor is also one that affects the growth of personality because according to it, a man behaves later which is almost impossible to be changed.

Some thinkers claim that characteristics of people are developed on the basis of self-actualization and self-competence. Self-esteem is in a greater ratio in early ages rather than adult lives. As age passes, learning capacity is lost progressively so childhood experiences have much more efficiency to build personality. Maslow claims as:

People with self-esteem feel better about themselves, work harder at tasks, and see them as more intelligent, agreeable, and moral than people with lower self-esteem. Self-esteem levels are reported to be high in childhood and low in adolescence, rising in adulthood and falling in middle age and old age. A contemporary outgrowth of Maslow’s work is self-determination theory, which posits three needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. (*Theories of Personality*, p. 347)

According to Maslow, self-esteem man has a positive vibe because of which he can experience a lot in his life rather than others, and so does personality. So, adults and children learn many things very much and more efficiently as compared to adulthood and the old.

On the other hand, early age children’s minds are like a blank sheet of paper that is open for anything to acquire efficiently. His mind is not full enough with several thoughts and feelings. Another interviewee namely Eklabya Karki (a pseudo name) also expresses about it in his own words as: “In my childhood, I was gentle, now also I am gentle. In my childhood, I used to study. I was simple minded person. Nowadays, I am not clever. I am a simple-minded person. I am a photocopy of my childhood.” Sigmund Freud claims that personality is shaped at an early age. Similarly, Freud believed that “personality was shaped and fixed by the age of 5 and that it was difficult thereafter to alter any aspect of it. We accept that the childhood years are crucial to personality formation, but it is also clear that personality continues to develop well beyond childhood, perhaps throughout the entire life span” (*Theories of Personality*, p. 490).

According to Fraud, personality is different as per one’s age. He claims that one shapes his behavior from the age of five. And the same behavior remains throughout his life span. Nelson also claims that younger children learn better and faster than elderly ones as Freud says. This is because children can memorize any event and information sharply:

Young children’s memory is so closely tied to recurring events because this memory has the adaptive value of permitting children to predict the likelihood of events in the future. Although there is not such a payoff for novel events and variations in routine events, children eventually also manage to remember specific event information rather than exhibiting just generalized event memory. (*Memory Development*, p. 91)

Therefore, child age is the best for learning and acquiring any experience and behavior for someone as this time his mind is in the process of development. Not only mentally, but this phase is also very sensitive for socially and physically as well.

Some scholars claim that personality is developed by exploration and experiment options. They state that people get refreshment from their past stories. As time passes, children come to do different activities. They are involved in various works in different contexts from where they inevitably learn new experiences. Personality is constructed via life experiences. In the same way, all the participants in my interview agreed that personality is formed with the previous experiences and learning. Moreover, John Benjamins B.V. (2013) states as:

Some theorists argue that narrative enables us to impose coherence and orderliness on our otherwise chaotic life experiences and helps us create integrative life stories (McAdams, 1985; Sarbin, 1986). Others emphasize that narrative, through its “exploratory and experimental options,” “endows the human condition with its particular openness and plasticity” (Brockmeier & Harré, 2001, p. 56). In other words, we can also refashion ourselves through stories. This identity formation in and through storytelling comes under closer scrutiny in research following the tradition of discursive psychologists, where attention is paid not to narratives as cognitive constructs or products but to “narratives-in-interaction” (Bamberg, 2005). (*Rethinking Narratives*, p.110)

Thus, personality development is influenced by experiences of life so does man show his behavior and way of lifestyle.

People learn lots of things from their everyday duties, experiences and interests because they develop their habits after doing their jobs for a long time. When a man works for a long time as a doctor, he unconsciously takes hygienic food in his life unconsciously rather than junk stuffs. Similarly, if a person spends a long time as an army profession, he eventually does regular physical exercises even after his retirement. Hence, work, experience and interests get people to develop their personality development. Similarly, Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (2015) also supports the statement of Jack Scarborough that a work or profession also plays a significant role in shaping one’s personality. Interest and ability are integral parts for this purpose as well. Arnett says:

In emerging adulthood, work experiences become more focused on laying the groundwork for an adult occupation. In exploring various work options, and in exploring the educational paths that will prepare them for work, emerging adults explore identity issues as well: “What kind of work am I good at? What kind of work would I find satisfying for the long term? What are my chances of getting a job in the field that seems to suit me best?” As they try out different jobs or college majors, emerging adults learn more about themselves. They learn about their abilities and interests. (*Emerging Adulthood*, p.29)

Therefore, there is no doubt that childhood narratives really influence adult personality development since childhood is one of the best stages of life to acquire and set a personality for the coming future. In reality, personality is shaped from the beginning of childhood stage and it will be fullest in adult age. However, learning takes place from any events and experiences throughout life. Mental determination, interest, repetition of work, heredity, culture, position of job, society and community are the fundamental factors in order to build one’s personality. Story and narratives are the means of learning new things that will advocate forming a personality gradually.

**6. CONCLUSION**

Indeed, this article has significant value for all types of readers and learners who wish to know more about the influence of childhood narratives on adult personality development. This study clarifies how childhood narratives influence adult personality development. In addition, it apparently discloses that childhood narratives influence significantly on adult personality development. From this knowledge, parents can provide an apt environment for their children from the beginning so that they can develop a positive personality in the future for their good life. Next, as morning shows the day, people can identify any children in advance, and they can be treated in a better way for their successful and positive actions in the days to come.

This research explores whether childhood narratives affect future life, and how they influence adult personality development. The study clarifies to what extent early experiences affect personality building. It further states what types of experiences influence personality in a significant way and what experiences advocate negative behavior development of a man. Different writers have mentioned their different views that include early experiences, and the environment obviously influences the latter’s life psychologically, emotionally and socially.

From the different scholars’ point of view, what I can conclude is that childhood is extremely sensitive and crucial in terms of learning new things. So, whatever children experience during this time, it will remain forever. They need to have a positive environment for their better and successful career. Their mindset must be positive and supportive for their better lives. Stressful, annoying, and measurable environments can lead them to an unsuccessful and depressed life in the days to come. In addition, hereditary traits, which are not possible to change, also play about fifty percent of the roles in shaping one’s personality. However, behavior, characteristics, responses to any incident, emotion, creativity, knowledge, wisdom, discipline, ethics, and habits can be developed by providing a supportive and apt exposure from the early ages.

**7. LIMITATIN OF THE STUDY**

         This research writing is not far from its certain limitations like other articles. Regarding the survey, firstly, I have done a survey visiting six English teachers who have been working till date. They include male and female equally in numbers. Their age bar begins from 26 to 53. Secondly, they are included from the capital city of Nepal that is only Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts because of my convenience. As regards my study scope, I have done research on ten books online that are relevant to my thesis topic. All the books and articles are written in English by western writers. Thus, I have analyzed their views to claim my thesis statement. In addition to this, I explore mainly one thing in this writing that is how childhood narratives influence adult personality development. I am pretty sure that the research study quenches the thirst of readers who wish to understand the things relevant to the topic.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

**COMPETING INTERESTS**

The author has no competing interests at all.

**HUMAN PARTICIPATION**

This research includes human participation and the participants gave their consent.

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