The earlier chapter elucidated the socio-cultural, psychological and commercial factors affecting pester power growth amongst children. While these factors are important, it is true that theoretical understanding of various child development theories offer the much needed conceptual clarity about major issues related with child behaviour. Such theories deal with the basic frameworks of child development and hence provide a backbone to the current study. This chapter deals with various theories related to child development originating from different school of thought.

3.1 Relative influence of Nature and Nurture

In addition to describing the course of development, each theory takes a major question about its underlying causes: whether personality is more influenced by genetic framework or the environment context. Many researchers have described this phenomenon as the Nature versus Nurture controversy. Nature means inborn biological characteristics which children often receive at their time of genesis from their biological parents. Nurture means the complex forces of the physical and social world that influence the biological makeup and psychological experiences (Berk, 2007).

3.2 Stages of Child Development

It is advisable to study the child development process prior to understanding child as a consumer (Cowell, 2001) and the pester power phenomenon. The study uses ‘Child Development’ by Laura Berk as a starter’s book to unfold various developmental stages of a child. Researchers usually segment child development into the following five
periods, wherein each brings new capacities and social expectations that explains the major transitions in the growth process.

\textit{a) Infancy and Toddlerhood (from birth to two years)}

This period brings dramatic changes in the body and brain that support the emergence of a wide array of motor, perceptual, and intellectual capacities, the beginning of understanding language and first intimate ties to others. Infancy spans the first year; toddlerhood spans the second, during which children take their first independent steps, marking a shift to greater autonomy.

\textit{b) Early childhood (from two to six years)}

There is some physical development and motor skill development during this stage. Children become more self-controlled. They develop make-believe plays as they develop their psychological skills. Children develop ties with peers and develop language and thoughts.

\textit{c) Middle Childhood (from six to eleven years)}

Children learn about the wider world and master new responsibilities that increasingly resemble those they perform as adults. Improved athletic abilities, participation in organized games with rules, more logical thought processes, and mastery of basic literary skills and advances in self-understanding, morality and friendship are key transitional outcomes of this period.

\textit{d) Adolescence (from eleven to eighteen years)}

This period initiates the transition to adulthood with sexual maturity. Young people begin to establish autonomy from the family and define personal values and goals. Thoughts become more idealistic and abstract. Children also seek to develop extended personalities.
3.3 Child Development Theories

3.3.1 Psychoanalytic Perspective towards Child Development Studies

According to the Psychoanalytic Perspective, children move through a series of stages in which they confront conflicts between biological drives and social expectations. Their recourse to such conflicts determines the person’s ability to learn, to get along with the others, and to cope with anxiety. This stream has got noteworthy contributions from Sigmund Freud, founder of Psychoanalytic movement and Erik Erikson (Berk, 2006).

Based on his patients’ early memories of childhood, Freud emphasized that the ways in which parents manage their child’s sexual and aggressive drives in the first few years determines her healthy personality development. Freud describes about the Psychosexual stages wherein children move through five stages, during which three parts of their personality—id, ego and super-ego become integrated. These stages being Oral (Birth – 1 year), Anal (1-3 years), Phallic (3-6 years), Latency (6-11 years) and Genital (Adolescence).

Erik Erikson, based on Freud’s basic framework, propounded his Psychosocial theory by emphasizing the ego as a positive force in development which should be understood in the light of a person’s cultural environment. Erik Erikson’s (1950, 1987) psychosocial model considers the social and cultural context of child development (as cited by Bartholomew and O'Donohoe, 2003). He described the "epigenesis" or ground plan of human psychological growth in terms of eight potential conflicts: trust versus mistrust (birth to one year), autonomy versus shame and doubt (1 to 3 years), initiative versus guilt (4 to 5 years), industry versus inferiority (6 to 11 years), identity versus identity confusion (12 to 18 years), intimacy versus isolation (early adulthood), generativity versus self-absorption (middle adulthood), and integrity versus despair (old age). Resolution of each conflict creates a newly emergent part of our total personality.
Table 3.1 shows various stages as depicted by Erik Erikson’s Psychosocial theory and Freud’s Psychoanalytic theory.

**Table 3.1: Erik Erikson’s Psychosocial Theory and Freud’s Psychoanalytic theory: Comparison of Stages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Psychosocial Stage- Erik Erikson</th>
<th>Freud’s Psychoanalytic Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth - 1 year</td>
<td>Basic trust versus Mistrust</td>
<td>Oral stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt</td>
<td>Anal stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 years</td>
<td>Initiative versus Guilt</td>
<td>Phallic stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-11 years</td>
<td>Industry versus Inferiority</td>
<td>Latency stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescence</td>
<td>Identity versus Identity Confusion</td>
<td>Genital stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging adulthood</td>
<td>Intimacy versus Isolation</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adulthood</td>
<td>Generativity versus Stagnation</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Compiled based on secondary sources)

### 3.3.2 Cognitive Development Theory by Jean Piaget

Child Development has been often studied based on different models of consumer learning. A majority of the literary sources referred to for this study unfailingly quote about Piaget’s theory of Child Development (Cowell, 2001; Kennedy, 1995; Mohankumar, Sinha and Krishna, 2003; Moses and Baldwin, 2005; Panwar and Agnihotri, 2006; Resnik and Stern, 1977; Stutts and Hunnicutt, 1987). Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, is regarded as one of the most influential researchers in the area of cognitive development. Piaget divides the cognitive development into four levels: Sensory-motor, Preoperational, Concrete Operational and Formal Operational; each differing based on information processing, understanding capacities and the response to the stimuli. According to Piaget, an individual passes through these stages in sequence, though not at the same rate in every child.

1. **Sensory-motor Intelligence- (from birth to two years)** – In this stage, the infant reacts to the external input through simple perceptual and motor adjustments. In this age (0-2 years), the child does not think ‘conceptually’ i.e. it is not capable of generating mental representations of anything other than what is perceptually available in a given moment.

2. **Pre-operational stage (from two to seven years)** – Here the child begins relatively unorganized attempts to manipulate symbols rather than just reacting to objects. Since the language skills are limited, its thinking is based largely on nonverbal cues and mental images rather than words. The pre-operational stage, which would encompass ages applicable to pre-schoolers, can be divided into two phases. During the first phase, child’s behaviour comes under the control of words, images, and other symbolic processes. The ability to categorize or classify is absent. In the second phase generally after four years of age, a child develops intuitive thought and is able to categorize and classify based on the perception of similarity.

3. **Concrete operations (from seven to eleven years)** – During these years, the child develops the ability to apply logical thought to concrete problems. Piaget states that intelligence becomes operational at this level. Children of this age group can only work with concepts related to concrete objects (Roedder, 1999).

4. **Formal Operations (from eleven to fifteen years)** – Here the development reaches the largest level as the child is able to apply logic to all classes of problems. Also the child combines information into the complex representations required for storage and retrieval of value system. It is the period when the child can think abstractly, and consider many possibilities, both present and imagined (Siegler, 1991).
However Piaget (1926) strongly recommends that the ages are meant as guidelines and are not deterministic (as cited by Kennedy, 1995). And that each stage is thought to build on the previous one. The Piagetian approach was increasingly challenged during the 1970s and 1980s who felt that Piaget’s results could not be generalized due to several flaws in the theory. Firstly, his results were obtained from observing his three children, a middle class Swiss family (though it has got similar findings in other cultures too.) According to Moses and Baldwin (2005), this theory lacks coherence as it is often difficult to identify and categorize children into specific stages as some overlapping is always found. They also felt that the approach offered little guidance in determining more precisely how and when children come to understand the different kinds of intentions. Researchers like Gelman and Baillargeon (1983) felt that this theory underestimated young children’s cognitive abilities (as cited by Moses and Baldwin, 2005).

Another caution area in this theory is the universalization of ages (in years) as stages of cognitive development. Nairn and Fine (2008, p. 448) observe that today no ‘magic age’ or ‘developmental milestone’ at which children can resist persuasion should be expected as there is no universal relation between understanding and age; and also because persuasion occurs in one way or another across the range. Piaget’s ‘age and stage approach’ of child development has been criticized by Vygotsky for whom child-development is more of an outside-in process than an inside-out phenomenon.

In spite of these limitations, the concept of age-related cognitive development pervades the literature concerning the studies related to children including information processing, and impact of television commercials (Stutts and Hunnicutt, 1987).

3.3.3 Vygotsky’s Sociocultural theory

The contributions of Vygotsky and Neo-Vygotskians have been ignored by researchers though they give good understanding about analyzing child as a consumer (Cowell, 2001). Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky has played an instrumental role in realizing the
importance of cultural specific practices in child development. According to him, social interaction i.e. co-operative dialogues between children and their parents or peers help children master social skills and hence he considered cognitive development as a socially mediated process unlike Piaget. However, his emphasis on culture and social experience led him to neglect the biological side of child development.

3.3.4 Behavioural and Social Learning Theory

Behavioural studies based on stimuli and responses started becoming the foci of the study of children development with contributions from several researchers. B.F.Skinner, a noted American psychologist gave the ‘Operant conditioning theory’ and established that children’s behavior is the function of the consequences attached to the behavior. According to Skinner, the frequency of a child’s behavior can be increased by following it with a wide variety of reinforcers, such as food, drink, praise, or a gift. Similarly, negative behaviours or tantrums of a child can be decreased by punishment such as withdrawal of privileges, parental disapproval or rebukes.

The most popular of the several social learning theories was devised by psychologist Albert Bandura, who emphasized observational learning or modeling as a powerful source of development. Another seminal work on this subject is the Social Power theory, initially introduced by Lewin (1951) and later developed by French and Raven (1959) (as cited by Williams and Burns, 2000). It examines power bases in social interactions. Past studies in family decision making used social power theory as a conceptual framework to study the children’s influence attempts. Following this, children’s influence may be divided into two categories – direct (i.e. active) and indirect (i.e. passive) (Rossister, 1979). Rossister explained a direct influence attempt as the one which is explicitly exerted and explicitly perceived as a goal-directed action towards influencing a purchase decision. This power base serves as the backbone to the study of ‘Pester Power’.
3.4 Child Development and Information Processing Skills

Two contrasting views on child’s mental abilities have been observed in the literature review. The first view as reported by Goswami (2008, pp. 1-2) to the U.K.’s Byron Review is that children think and reason in the same ways as adults but they have less efficient reasoning skill and are more misled by illogic and irrelevant information (as cited by Livingstone, 2009). The second view holds that children think and behave differently from adults as there are different emotional, social and developmental needs at different stages (Soni and Upadhyaya, 2007).

Calder, Robertson and Rossister (1975) point out that children have limited information processing capabilities than those of adults (as cited by Smith, 1995). Smith (1995) further cites Rubin who in 1974, specifically chose seventy two children in the first, third, and sixth grades to show the different extents of cognitive development as postulated by Piaget. His findings revealed that younger children may not be able to assimilate as much information or understand the purpose of commercial as well as older children. Additionally, the study proposed that even children of the same age group responded to advertising stimuli differently based on level of their cognitive development.

John and Lakshmi-Ratan (1992) reviewed children’s cognitive abilities and the delineation of stages based on Piaget’s work. Past studies have found that in most cases young children can focus on only one attribute at a time. Siegler (1991) argued that multiple environmental stimuli confuse young children. Wackman and Wartella (1977) showed that because young children have difficulty comparing or ranking products, for them to know a product is almost synonymous to liking it (as cited by Smith, 1995). Lang’s (2000) Limited capacity model (LCM) presents a theoretical framework from which researchers can understand how multiple information objects are processed.
inside a mediated environment (as cited by Eastin, Yang, and Nathanson, 2006).

Building on Piaget’s theory, Roedder (1999) constructed a three-tiered model of consumer socialization - the Perceptual stage (age 3-7 years), the Analytical stage (age 7-11 years), and the Reflective stage (age 11-16 years.) Each stage has its own characteristics different from others as depicted below:

a. **Perceptual stage** – The child can distinguish ads from programs based on perceptual features, believes the ads are funny, truthful and holds positive attitudes towards the ad.

b. **Analytical stage** – The child distinguishes ads from programs based on persuasive intent, understands that the ad may have biased content and can hold negative attitudes towards the ads.

c. **Reflective stage** – The child understands the persuasive intent of ads along with specific ad tactics and appeals. She is skeptical towards the claim made in the ad as can spot deceptive claims in the advertisement.

There are information processing theories of child development that go beyond Piaget’s theory and provide explanation about the type of cognitive and information processing abilities demonstrated by children as they mature (Roedder, 1999). These characterizes children into three segments – strategic processors, cued processors and limited processors – based on the information skills they posses (Roedder, 1981). Integrating a variety of different theoretical perspectives, Patti Valkenburg and Joanne Cantor developed an advanced model of how children become consumers (Kim and Lee, 1997).

a) **0-2 years** – In this first stage, toddlers and infants have desires and preferences, but are not true consumers as they are not goal-oriented in product choices.
b) **2-5 years** - During the second stage, pre-schoolers nag and negotiate, asking for and even demanding certain products. They are oblivious to the persuasive intent of commercials and are wooed by the attributes depicted. By the end of this stage, they replace chiding and throwing tantrums in public with more effective negotiation.

c) **5-8 years** – In this age, children tend to make their first purchases (sometimes also independently). Here, they can slowly distinguish between what is real and imaginary and can better understand advertising intentions.

d) **8-12 years** – In this final stage, children are socialized by their peers and many of their beliefs about extended personalities stem here and are reinforced later on.

Ward’s study showed that as a child becomes older, her understanding of advertising intentions also increases. The youngest group had no clue that advertisers seek profit. Children later on understood that advertising has a persuasive intent but it was only the oldest group that realized that commercials pay for programming. Also the youngest in the group were not able to identify between a commercial and a program (as cited by Resnik and Stern, 1977). Table 3.2 shows various developmental changes in children based on different age groups as depicted by different models.

### Table 3.2: Developmental Stages as shown in different theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>Sensory-motor Stage</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-7</td>
<td>Pre-operational Stage</td>
<td>Perceptual Stage</td>
<td>Limited processors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-11</td>
<td>Concrete operational Stage</td>
<td>Analytical Stage</td>
<td>Cued processors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-16</td>
<td>Formal operational Stage</td>
<td>Reflective Stage</td>
<td>Strategic processors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Compiled based on Secondary data sources)
SUMMARY

The study of Child Development is central to understanding ‘child consumer psychology’. The two schools of thought in this study include the most famous and largely referred work on Cognitive Development Model by Jean Piaget. His theory divides cognitive development into four levels- sensorimotor (0-2 years), pre-operational (2-7 years), concrete operational (7-11 years) and formal operational stages (11 years and above). The basic theoretical idea is that knowledge depends on the development of internal cognitive structures, though different children may develop these at varied ages. Also, the other study on Social Power developed by French and Raven is also largely the base for Pester Power as it stems from the direct and the indirect powers that children enjoy in the family. Other seminal works linking child development stages and information processing abilities are those of Deborah John’s Three-Tiered model of Consumer socialization dividing the stages into Perceptual, Analytical and Reflective stages and that of Roedder’s Information Processing theory categorizing children as strategic processors, cued processors and limited processors. These theories provide the basic framework to understand the cognitive skills of the children at various age groups though the ages specified are not deterministic and just guiding. The next chapter shows the review of literature related to the current study of interest.

REFERENCES


