



Abstract

This chapter explores the transactional relationship model as a comprehensive framework for understanding the intricate dynamics between adolescents and their social milieu. Adolescence is a critical period characterized by significant physical, cognitive, psychosocial, and emotional changes. To navigate this complex developmental stage successfully, adolescents engage in dynamic, bidirectional interactions with their family, peers, school, community, and cultural influences. The chapter delves into four essential components: adaptation, integration, growth, and equilibrium, emphasizing the reciprocal nature of these interactions.



**Dynamic
Connections: A
Transactional
Model for
Effective Social
Work with
Adolescents**



It highlights the importance of designing social work interventions based on the transaction model, offering a holistic approach that considers the multifaceted influences on adolescents' lives. By embracing the transactional relationship model, social workers, educators, and policymakers can better support adolescents in their quest for well-being, resilience, and positive development within their social milieu.

Keywords: *transactional model, adolescents, adaptation, integration, growth, equilibrium, milieu.*

INTRODUCTION

The environment has a significant influence on the social functioning of an individual. Social workers often work with individuals to navigate and address the challenges presented by their environments. They help individuals build resilience, access support systems, adapt to their environment, enhance their social well-being, and develop coping strategies. Understanding and addressing the environmental factors influencing individuals are fundamental parts of the social work profession.

Early pioneers in social work like Mary Richmond, Germaine, and Hartman understood the role of the environment and its influence on individuals' social functioning (Pardeck, 1988). Additionally, early charitable collaboration succeeded in integrating and leveraging the internal and immediate resources of the client's family and the external resources of friends, neighbours, citizens, philanthropists, agencies, and institutions. Ada Sheffield explained the role of the 'dynamic field of experience', which speaks of each individual's physical and psychological environment (Ziporin, 1980) and is associated with people interacting with each other in real-life time and space. The exchange of resources and complementary roles leads to an interdependent environment.

During adolescence, the process of developing an identity is heavily influenced by the social environment, particularly the family and peer groups. Adolescents require guidance, support, and understanding from those closest to them during this time. Families and friends must create a safe and trustworthy environment for adolescents to express their feelings and thoughts and to learn how to overcome obstacles healthily. Additionally, establishing structure, boundaries, and expectations is important for adolescents to learn responsible decision-making. Finally, the environment should encourage adolescents to explore their interests and engage in positive activities that can benefit them in the long run.

Social Work Theories and Perspectives on Adolescents in their Environment

Various social work theories and perspectives offer valuable insights into how the environment influences adolescents' development and social functioning. Social workers can draw on these theories to better understand the needs and challenges of adolescents, promote their well-being, and design interventions tailored to the specific environmental contexts in which they live and grow.

Ecological Systems Theory

According to ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), adolescents are in different interconnected ecosystems, and these systems interact and influence each other through five levels of external influences: microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. These levels move from the most intimate to the most expansive. Bronfenbrenner explains that the microsystem is the most immediate environment where teenagers have the most influence. This system usually includes the home, school, and peer group. Positive interactions between these groups and individuals within the group make it supportive and nurturing (Stormshak et al., 2011). Mesosystem and exosystem relate to the relationships between settings that adolescents may not be primarily a part of and indirectly influence the adolescent's life. A macro system is a distant group of people and areas of society but with significant influence. The chronosystem focuses on the influence of change and stability on the adolescent's environment.

Social Systems Theory

Social Systems Theory, associated with Talcott Parsons, offers a broader sociological perspective on understanding the role of the environment on individuals, including adolescents. It highlights the interconnectedness of various social systems and their impact on individuals within these systems. Social systems theory emphasizes that individuals are part of various interconnected systems, such as family, education, and culture. These systems are interdependent and influence each other. Adolescents have roles within these systems, each with distinct expectations and responsibilities. For example, they fulfil roles as students, family members, and peers, each with associated expectations. Systems must adapt to changes in their environment. Adolescents experience changes in their roles and responsibilities as they grow, and they adapt by learning new skills and behaviours (Parsons, 1951; Batur, 2018). Social workers use systems theory to understand problems such as individual and family problems and community problems. Dysfunction at all these levels must be understood as an interplay of systems rather than focusing on a single system.

Person in Environment Perspective

The Person in Environment (PIE) Perspective is a fundamental framework for social work practice (Hepworth et al., 2017). It is grounded on the basic understanding that an individual can only be holistically seen in the context of their environment. Therefore, social work professionals must consider the individuals and various aspects of their environment when planning

case assessment and intervention. This dual focus on the individual and the environment is a distinctive feature of social work that sets it apart from many other disciplines. The PIE perspective is understood as a transactional one referring to many interconnected transactional networks. So, the focus is on various interacting elements surrounding the individual.

Person-Environment Transactional Relationship

When using the ecological approach to practice, the practitioner understands that the client's social functioning issues are not solely due to a disturbed client. Rather, they see the client as a disturbing client who is confronting a breakdown in the transaction between themselves and the larger social ecology (Pardeck, 1987). With the emergence of the concept of transaction, the ecological approach has shifted dramatically from the traditional person-in-environment orientation. The concept of transaction implies that a bidirectional and cyclical relationship exists between the person and the environment (Pardeck, 1988). Therefore, the transactional relationship model of a person and his environment is a conceptual framework that underscores the dynamic and reciprocal interaction between an individual and their surroundings. This model acknowledges that individuals are not passive recipients of their environment but active participants in shaping and being shaped by it. The relationship between a person and their environment is characterized by ongoing exchanges, adaptation, and mutual influence.

At the core of this model is the notion of interaction between a person and their environment. This interaction encompasses all aspects of the environment, including the physical, social, cultural, and natural elements. Individuals constantly engage with their surroundings through various actions and behaviours. Adaptation is a key feature of this relationship. Individuals adapt to their environment by modifying their behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs in response to changing circumstances. Simultaneously, the environment adapts and evolves in response to the actions of individuals, creating a continuous feedback loop.

Reciprocity exists in the form of a two-way relationship between the person and the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Individuals influence their environment through their actions, but the environment also exerts influence on the individual. This reciprocity implies that changes in one's environment can have a significant impact on the individual's well-being, behaviour, and development. Feedback mechanisms are essential for understanding how the person-environment relationship evolves. These mechanisms involve the exchange of information and experiences between the individual and their environment. The feedback loop helps individuals make adjustments and

improvements based on their experiences. Moreover, the transactional relationship model recognizes the significance of contextual factors in shaping the relationship (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These factors include cultural norms, socioeconomic conditions, physical surroundings, and the availability of resources. Contextual factors influence how the individual interacts with and adapts to their environment.

The period of young adulthood is a crucial time for the development of one's personality (Wille et al., 2012). This period of development is characterized by significant changes in social, emotional, and cognitive domains. The transactional relationship model, which highlights the dynamic and reciprocal interactions between individuals and their environments, plays a fundamental role in understanding how adolescents navigate this transformative stage. Therefore, the authors proposed a conceptual transaction relationship model of the adolescent milieu.

PAGIES Transactional Relationship Model of Adolescent Milieu

The influence of the environment on the individual and the interaction between the individual and the environment found in the theories described can be used to formulate a framework to explain the transactions between adolescents and their environments in shaping their personalities. The adolescent milieu, often referred to as the adolescent environment or context, encompasses the various social, psychological, and physical factors that shape the experiences, development, and daily life of individuals during their adolescent years, which typically span from roughly ages 10 to 19. Understanding the adolescent milieu is crucial for comprehending the challenges, opportunities, and influences that adolescents encounter during this critical stage of development.

Transactional relationship

Adolescents' dynamic interactions and exchanges with their social environment—which includes their peers, families, schools, and communities—are referred to as their transactional relationships in the social milieu. A range of interactions, influences, and transactions that impact adolescents' social integration and growth define this relationship.

Peer Relationships

Adolescents frequently form intimate bonds with their classmates. Social influence, shared experiences, and emotional support are all exchanged in these partnerships. Adolescents participate in transactions that assist in defining their

social roles and creating a sense of belonging because they are searching for identification, validation, and belonging within their peer groups (Veenstra & Laninga-Wijnen, 2023)

Family dynamics

Although family interactions may grow more complex throughout this stage of life, adolescents still engage with their families. Transactions of independence, negotiation, and autonomy exist. Power struggles, emotional support seeking, and household chores participation are all common behaviours among teenagers and are all components of their developing relationships with their parents and siblings (Skinner & Wellborn, 2019).

School Environment

A great deal of an adolescent's time is spent in educational environments. Academic exchanges, interpersonal interactions with students and professors, and personal growth are all aspects of the transactional relationship with the school environment. In this environment, adolescents develop their identities and interests, create and accomplish goals, and deal with educational problems (Kiuru et al., 2020)

Community and Societal Influences

Adolescents are impacted by both community and societal norms and expectations, as well as cultural values and the larger social milieu. They interact with social media, neighbourhood associations, and other outside forces that mould their goals, values, and worldviews (Walker & Bobola, 2017).

Developmental Milestones

The adolescent stage is marked by substantial changes in cognitive, emotional, and physical development. The challenges and support they face in their social surroundings have an impact on these interactions with their evolving selves. Their development may be aided or hindered by their social surroundings (Smetana, 2010).

Peer Pressure and Risk-Taking Behaviors

Teenagers may experience social pressure to partake in risky activities, like substance experimentation, unsafe sexual activity, or delinquent pursuits. The social environment has a significant impact on how these transactions are

shaped, either by introducing risky habits or by introducing positive effects that encourage healthy choices (Chein et al., 2011)

Identity Formation

The transactional process of forming an identity is something that adolescents actively participate in. Their social interactions, which involve exploring personal interests, values, and beliefs, play a significant role in moulding their self-concept and self-identity (Pfeifer & Berkman, 2018).

The transactional relationship of adolescents in the social milieu is a complex and multifaceted interplay between teenagers and their immediate social environment. These relationships are dynamic and varied processes that take place in the social milieu. During this crucial time of life, these connections and exchanges have a significant role. Teenagers and their immediate social environment engage in a complex and multifaceted interplay known as the transactional connection in the social milieu.

Transaction Process

With the reciprocal complementarity, resource exchange and adaptive fit between Person (adolescent) and Social Systems (milieu) happens through four specific processes

Adaptation

Adaptation in the transaction process highlights the idea that adolescents and their social milieu have a bidirectional influence on each other. Adolescents adapt to the expectations, norms, and structures of their environment, while their environment also adapts in response to the behaviours, needs, and characteristics of the adolescents. Adaptation involves mutual change, where both adolescents and their milieu undergo modifications. Adolescents may alter their behaviours, attitudes, and coping strategies to fit in or respond to the demands of their social environment. Simultaneously, the social milieu may adjust its expectations, support systems, or structures to accommodate the adolescents' development.

In the context of family, adolescents may adapt by seeking more autonomy and independence. Parents, in turn, may adapt their parenting strategies to allow for greater responsibility and decision-making on the part of the adolescents. Similarly, Adolescents may adapt their behaviours and social interactions to align with peer group norms and expectations. Peer groups may

adjust their dynamics and values based on the interests and contributions of individual adolescents.

The adaptation process is characterized by reciprocity, as both adolescents and their milieu make changes in response to each other's actions. For example, if adolescents demonstrate improved self-regulation and responsibility, their social environment may respond with increased trust and responsibility. It is often a balancing act where adolescents strive to maintain a sense of identity and autonomy while also fitting into their social milieu. The social milieu aims to provide structure and guidance while respecting the growing independence of adolescents.

Integration

Integration in the transaction process between adolescents and their milieu refers to the harmonious blending or coordination of the various components of an adolescent's life, including family, peers, school, community, and cultural influences. It signifies the ability to combine different aspects of their social environment in a balanced and effective way, resulting in positive development and well-being. Integration is a key concept in understanding how adolescents navigate the complex interactions and relationships within their milieu.

Adolescents are often juggling multiple roles and responsibilities, such as those within their family, school, and peer groups. Integration involves managing these roles without significant conflict or negative consequences. For example, an integrated adolescent can successfully balance schoolwork, family commitments, and social activities. Integration is facilitated by open and effective communication between adolescents and the different components of their social milieu. Adolescents who can express their needs and feelings to their family, teachers, and peers are more likely to achieve integration.

Growth

Growth in the transaction process between adolescents and their milieu refers to the developmental changes and progress that adolescents experience as they interact with and adapt to their social environment. This concept encompasses various aspects of growth, including physical, cognitive, psychosocial, and emotional development. Understanding the role of growth in the transaction process is crucial for comprehending how adolescents evolve and mature within their social milieu.

Growth involves continuous adjustments and development as adolescents navigate the various components of their social environment. Adolescents' growth includes their ability to adapt to changing circumstances, such as family transitions, shifts in social relationships, and educational challenges. Their ability to adapt and learn from these experiences contributes to their overall growth and development. This growth is crucial for the successful transition from childhood to adulthood and shapes the individual's identity, competencies, and overall well-being during the adolescent years.

Equilibrium

In the transaction process between adolescents and their milieu, equilibrium refers to a state of balance or stability achieved when adolescents effectively manage and adapt to the various social and environmental influences in their lives. It signifies that adolescents have found a harmonious point of interaction between themselves and their social milieu, resulting in a sense of well-being, satisfaction, and successful development. Adolescents achieve equilibrium by effectively adapting to the demands and expectations of their social environment while maintaining their sense of identity and individuality. It's about finding a balance between conforming to social norms and expressing one's unique qualities.

Equilibrium involves emotional stability. Adolescents experience and manage their emotions healthily and constructively. They can navigate the emotional challenges presented by their family, peers, school, and community without significant distress or emotional turmoil. Moreover, equilibrium supports academic and personal growth. Adolescents can engage in their educational pursuits, acquire new skills, and pursue personal interests without being overwhelmed by the demands of their milieu. They balance their academic responsibilities with personal development and self-discovery. Finally, equilibrium signifies a harmonious coexistence between the adolescents and their social milieu. It reflects the successful navigation of the various relationships, expectations, and influences present in their lives.

However, it's important to note that achieving and maintaining equilibrium is an ongoing process. Adolescents may experience periods of imbalance or disruption as they continue to grow and adapt to changing circumstances. The goal is to continually work towards reestablishing equilibrium when these imbalances occur and developing the skills and self-awareness necessary to achieve stability in their interactions with their milieu.

Figure 5.1 shows the transaction process between the **Person** (adolescent) and their **Social systems** (milieu) which involves **Adaptation**, **Integration**, **Growth**, and **Equilibrium**.

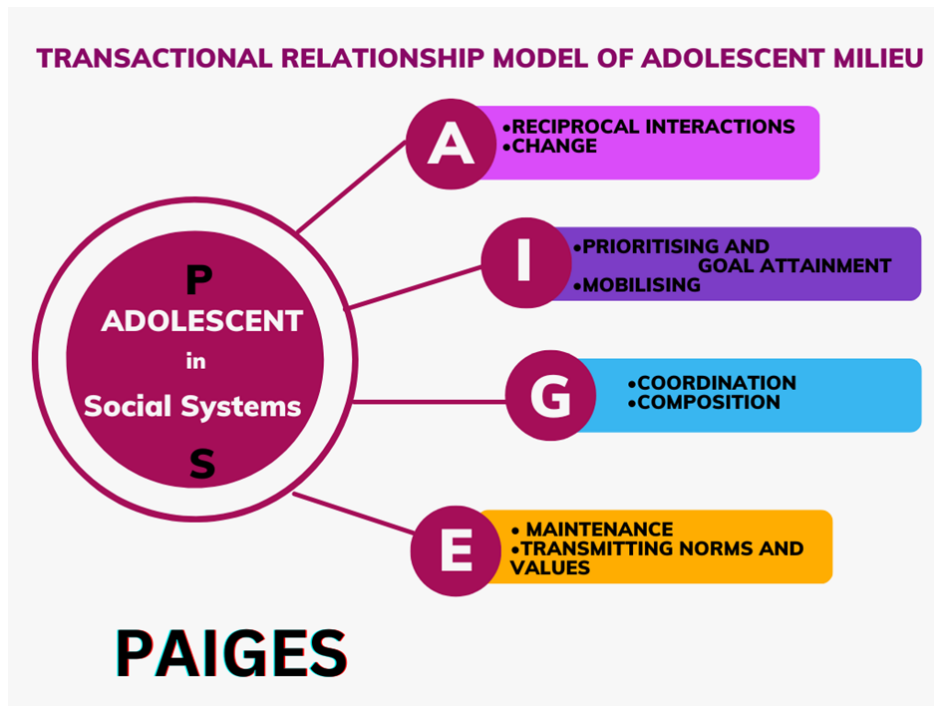


Figure 5.1: *PAIGES Transactional Relationship Model of Adolescent Milieu*

Discussion

PAIGES model of transaction emphasizes the relationship between adolescents and their environment rather than viewing them as victims of their surroundings. This model describes a cyclic and bidirectional relationship between adolescents and their environment, where both entities adapt and fit. The response of each adolescent is unique and changes the environment, thereby altering its effect on the individual. This transactional model assumes that any change in one (adolescent or milieu) will affect the other, paving the way for a breakthrough in social intervention for adolescents. It broadens the social functioning perspective from a client to the systems as well.

A system and the individuals within it function best when there is a sense of mutual support and socially acceptable behaviour. This leads to a state of balance in which positive interactions and mutually beneficial relationships occur. This balance, or homeostasis, is crucial for a well-functioning system and can be seen in the positive state of well-being of adolescents. The PAIGES Transactional Relationship Model of the Adolescent Milieu emphasises the

importance of constant feedback and evaluation of outcomes to maintain this balance.

The transaction model, which emphasizes the dynamic and reciprocal interactions between adolescents and their social milieu, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities of adolescent development. This model encourages a holistic understanding of adolescents by considering their interactions with family, peers, school, community, and cultural influences. Social workers can gain a more comprehensive view of the factors shaping an adolescent's life and tailor interventions accordingly. Recognizing the reciprocal nature of relationships within the transaction model, social workers can target interventions that address both the adolescent's needs and the dynamics of the social environment. By working with families, schools, and communities, interventions can aim to create a supportive and nurturing milieu.

The PAIGES model provides a framework for enhancing adolescents' resilience by identifying and harnessing their strengths and assets. Interventions can focus on building coping skills, self-regulation, and adaptability to help adolescents thrive within their milieu. By understanding the transaction process, social workers can identify potential challenges and sources of stress for adolescents before they become more severe. This allows for the implementation of preventive measures and early interventions that can avert or mitigate problems. The transaction model encourages collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders, including families, schools, mental health professionals, and community resources. Social workers can act as facilitators, helping these entities work together to create a supportive environment for adolescents.

CONCLUSION

The PAIGES transactional relationship model of the adolescent milieu provides a comprehensive and systemic framework for understanding and addressing the needs of adolescents within their social environment. Social work interventions informed by this model can be better equipped to support the healthy development, well-being, and resilience of adolescents, fostering positive interactions within their milieu and promoting lasting positive outcomes.

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