

Curvilinear Development Theory Of Life (Ctl) And Its Relevance To Practical Human Life

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Abstract: This theory is premised on Biblical belief that man “will live no longer than a hundred and twenty years (Gen. 6:3)”; life cycle theories that the charting of life course from birth to death occurs in successive, clearly defined stages, of which each stage is characterized by events or crises that must be satisfactorily resolved in order for development to proceed smoothly; and sociological concepts of reflexivity and relativism that hold that sociology frequently and critically analyses social arrangements rather than taking them as given and retaining them simply because they are traditional, and constantly monitors social life in order to improve it (reflexivity), and that, it does not accept one set of ideas as revealing the whole truth, and it is prepared to accept that there is merit in the viewpoints of different groups and so denies the existence of absolute “truth”. Therefore it is assumed that the life span of man is from birth to 120 years. It is further assumed that this course of life is composed of three major eras, namely Early life (growth phase), Middle life (maturity phase) and Late life (decline phase), better expressed along a curve, curvilinear in nature and herein called Curvilinear Curve (CC). The growth phase is sub-categorized into curvilinear childhood, curvilinear adolescence and curvilinear youth. Curvilinear Curve is a mathematical concept used here to model the natural life course of a man from birth to death. This theory also views normal development to be in process as well as obeying variability principle. The era which a man is assumed to be most efficient in the overall conduct of his life affairs is between the ages of 40-80 (maturity phase). This window is herein called Curvilinear Efficiency Window of life. The theory described here, therefore represents only a selection from the range of extant development theories. It is propounded in the spirit of reflexivity and relativism. In an attempt to avoid the insinuations of hyper-factualism, references are made to relationship with extant theories. Its direct relevance to practical life has also been formulated. The paper is expected to generate intellectual questions leading to rigorous research efforts and critical academic discourse.

I. INTRODUCTION

Theory can be defined as a body of knowledge fashioned in such a way that it draws together facts about reality and imparts to them meaning and significance not otherwise apparent. In other words, it identifies and describes the relationship among facts discovered through observations (Varma, 1996). Theory is a contemplative and rational type of abstract or generalized thinking, or the results of such thinking. Depending on the context, the results might for example include generalized explanations of how nature works (Wikipedia). Easton in Varma (1996) opined that, theory without facts may be a well-piloted ship with an

unsound keel. But this position was criticised by Varma when he said “but where pre-occupation with fact-gathering siphons away energy from seeing the facts in their theoretical significance, then the ultimate value of factual research itself may well be lost”. Research untutored by theory may prove trivial (Varma, 1996). Theory is also defined as a systematic conception or statement of the principles of something; abstract knowledge or the formulation of it often used as implying more or less unsupported hypothesis; distinguished or opposed to practice (Okwori & Ede, 2012).

It is scriptural, that the life span of man is from birth to 120 years. People that live beyond 120years are assumed to

have enjoyed the grace of God, herein termed *Curvilinear Grace or age of Grace*.

Curvilinear Curve is a mathematical concept used to model the natural life course of a man from birth to death. It has three sections, of which each corresponds to a phase of early life (growth phase), middle life (maturity phase) and late life (decline phase).

There is an agreement with earlier theorists that age should be categorized, however, the ages allocated to some of the categories have been contended. It is elected that the categorization should be into early life, (birth to 40), middle life (40-80) and late life (80 and above), and represented on the curve as growth phase, maturity phase and decline phase respectively. People that live within any phase are assumed to belong to a social cohort herein referred to as Curvilinear Cohort.

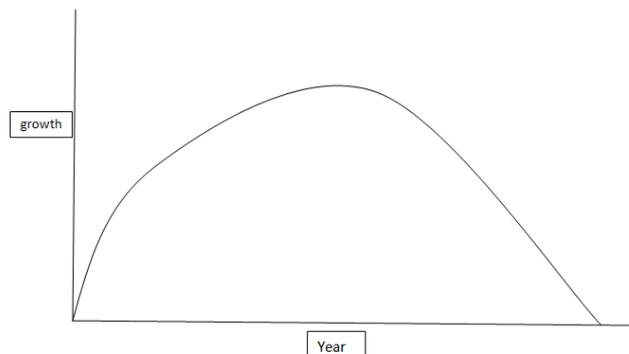


Figure 1: The Curvilinear Curve is represented as shown

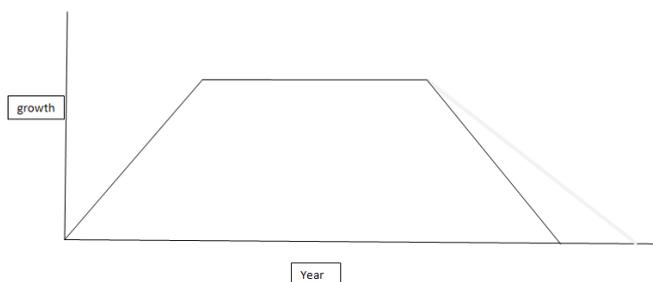


Figure 2: The diagram below shows a much simpler form of curvilinear curve which can at the same time, pass for a quadrilateral

Curvilinear Theory assumes that early life (the growth phase) starts from infancy to early adulthood (birth to 40 years); and that middle life (maturity phase) starts from middle adulthood (40 years) to end at 80 years and not 40 – 65 years as asserted by other theories (this is a point of contention); and the late life (decline phase) corresponds with late adulthood which starts from 80 years and above (another point of contention). The growth phase is sub-categorized into curvilinear childhood (birth-11 years), curvilinear adolescence (11-20 years), and curvilinear youth (20-40 years).

This theory also views normal development to be in process as well as obeying variability principle. Normal development as process perspective conforms to Erik Erikson's conceptualization of epigenesis and the eight (8) developmental stages. The variability perspective assumes the mathematics principle of the bell-shaped curve which conceives a middle range as normal and of both extremes to be deviants. The normative approach describes each individual in

terms of general assessment and the variability is described only within the context of total groups, not within the context of an individual. The behavioral dynamics of a man are viewed along the curve and they tend to reflect his age at any given era, since the behaviour of a person in the society is structured by biology and rules as well as values and roles, measured by acceptable social behavioural standards.

The era which a man is assumed to be most efficient in the overall conduct of his life affairs is between the ages of 40-80. This window is herein called Curvilinear Efficiency Window of life.

Curvilinear theory of life deals with aspects of human biology and sociology. Sociology of people as described by Haralambos and Holborn, (2008) is quite dynamic and involves frequent changes in social order. It frequently and critically analyses social arrangements rather than taking them as given and retaining them simply because they are traditional. It involves the constant monitoring of social life in order to improve it. People become increasingly willing to change their beliefs, practices and institutions in the light of new knowledge and experience. This is called reflexivity.

Another aspect of sociology is that, it does not accept one set of ideas as revealing the whole truth, and it is prepared to accept that there is merit in the viewpoints of different groups. This is called relativism. Relativism denies the existence of absolute truth and argues that the 'truth' depends simply on who you listen to, which discourse is accepted. This is because signifiers are defined in terms of other signifiers, they cannot represent absolute reality (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008).

II. EARLY LIFE (GROWTH PHASE)

Early life, the first phase of curvilinear life begins at birth and ends at age 40. It is the growth phase, composed of childhood (0-11), adolescence (11-20) and youth (20-40) respectively termed curvilinear childhood, curvilinear adolescence and curvilinear youth. Erik Erickson, Freud, Piaget and other earlier theorists have staged human development based on chronological order and observed behaviours. These theorists tactically categorized these stages into, Infancy and Childhood (birth to 11 years), Adolescence (11-20 years), Early and middle adulthood (20-65 years), and Late adulthood and old age (over 65 years). The categorizations of early and middle adulthood as well as late adulthood and old age are clumsy and confusing. Besides, the categorization is not based on any empirical study, rather, a social construction. Curvilinear theory therefore offers simpler alternative categorizations of curvilinear youth (20-40), curvilinear maturity (40-80) and curvilinear decline (80 and above). These alternatives are also social constructions but offer greater benefits in policy formulation.

According to Kaplan & Sadock (1998), adolescence (11-20) is a period of variable onset and duration that marks the end of childhood and lays the foundation for maturity. More often, the adolescent exists in a world that the parents are unfamiliar with and do not share. The adolescent culture is in the peer group which is a vital agency for social growth and change. The peer group represents challenge and opportunity to a powerful degree. At this stage the adolescent's thinking

becomes more abstract, conceptual, logical, and future-oriented. With the ability for formal thought and abstract reasoning, the adolescent discovers new facts, experiences, and feelings and may show remarkable creativity. By late adolescent, the neural structure of the adolescent is complete, and the adolescent becomes concerned with humanitarian issues, morals, ethics, religion, judgment, and world issues. The potentials for formal operational thought are limitless in terms of a person's ability to understand the world and one's place in it. This stage of development internalizes ethical principles and the control of conduct.

The youth (20-40) is the third category in the early life. The concept of youth, like that of childhood is a way of understanding the "growing up" stages in the life course (Jane Pilcher in Haralambos and Holborn, 2008). Youth are seen both in terms of their past-they are no longer children- and their future- they have not yet become adults. Therefore, youth is best understood as a stage of transition between childhood and adulthood.

Youth is the time of life when a person is young, especially the time before a child becomes an adult (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary). Definition of Youth as a concept varies from culture to culture and from society to society. National Youth Policy of Nigeria (2009) defines youth as males and females aged between 18-35 years. The United Nations choose age range of 15-24 years. There is no universal definition of youth, rather the age ranges are chosen by societies and institutions for statistical and operational purposes.

Curvilinear Theory again offers a simpler definition of the youth as males and females between 20-40 years, referred to as curvilinear youth. This is recommended to be adopted universally to end the confusion of differential definitions and to ensure consistency for global policy formulations by governments, institutions and United Nations.

The quality of growth of an individual during this phase is dependent on how well he is able to negotiate the epigenetic sequence. This in turn will determine the integrity of the maturity phase.

III. MIDDLE LIFE (MATURITY PHASE)

Middle life (maturity phase) starts from middle adulthood (40 years) to end at 80 years. Carl Jung referred to the age 40 as the noon of life (Kaplan & Sadock, 1988).

Maturity age is the age of restitution; errors of the youth age can still be corrected. Losses of the youth age can still be regained given sufficient efforts. At this stage, an individual consolidates on the gains of the growth phase; that is, biological, psychological, sociological, economic, political, and other experiential gains.

He becomes more efficient in handling issues/matters of life. That is, he is no longer driven by androgen impulse. He now takes actions with sufficient caution. This is the real age of seasoning; the age of rationality. In practice, this is the right age to entrust sensitive matters onto the hands of a man; such matters like the leadership of a big organization, governance of any tier of government, headship of Supreme

Court and other such sensitive positions where a mistake can be catastrophic.

Curvilinear Theory views this phase to be the most efficient period in a man's life. The phase is therefore called the Curvilinear Efficiency Window of life or the Efficiency Window of life. It is assumed that individuals on both sides of the window are on the average less efficient. People that live fulfilled lives at this phase tend to have happy old age because they had attained what Erik Erikson termed intimacy and generativity. Without generativity, there is no peace or commitment in old age, and also no sense of purpose and no conviction that one's life has been purposeful.

Behaviours of youth age that persist into late adulthood are assumed deviant because society would naturally frown at them. Such a situation may arise as a result of some unresolved epigenetic crisis thereby causing a fixation of personality at the growth phase.

An individual may suffer what curvilinear theory refers to as Precipitate Aging whence he begins to lose some vital functions of daily living within the age spectrum of maturity phase as occurs in about 5% of people aged 65 years. This could be due to combined effects of epigenetic carryover, disease states of metabolic nature and other elemental factors. Human beings that manifest symptoms and signs of Senile dementia earlier than age 80 years fall within this category.

IV. LATE LIFE (DECLINE PHASE)

Agedness is a crisis in slow motion. Most changes are gradual and progressive. The body dies a little every day. Old age is a developmental phase in the sense that it is not static (Kaplan & Sadock).

Pythagoras (7th century Physician and Mathematicians) in his model of life span considered a period of mental and physical decay where the mortal existence closes after a length of time. Only very few fortunate human species live till this age; where, the mind is reduced to the imbecility of the first epoch of infancy.

Because of the so many interconnecting constrains people have to go through in life, the process of ageing for individuals is not uniform and very unpredictable, as capped by Hockeys and James that 'you should see the passage of a lifetime less as the mechanical turning of a wheel and more as the unpredictable flow of a river'.

Old age is often linked to childhood. Hockey and James (in Haralambos & Holborn 2008) point out that very old people may jokingly be described as entering their "second childhood. So childhood and old age are linked through the process of infantilization. The elderly are often compared to children and treated as if they were children.

Jane Pilcher notes that commentators distinguish between the 'young old' or 'young elderly', aged 65-74, and the 'old old' or 'old elderly', aged 75-84, with those who are 85 or older seen as the 'oldest old' or 'very elderly'.

Again application of Curvilinear Theory would offer a simple term to avoid the use of confusing terms and arbitrary chronological cut-off points as a definition of old age. It offers a clear cut distinction that helps in clearing policy issues for the elderly with varying degrees of decline. An old person

above the age of 80 years can simply be said to be in his curvilinear late life. This is also recommended for universal use for its simplicity and easy -to -apply in policy formulation.

V. RELEVANCE TO PRACTICAL HUMAN LIFE

The relevance of this curvilinear theory of life to practical human life.

- ✓ Increasing life span using Imagery technique: As one constantly bring to consciousness the prescribed age, by way of imagery, and keep placing ourselves in space the image of very old men, one stands to gain a great deal psychologically, and even physiologically. Imagery is a phenomenon that affects behaviour. According to Paul Schilder who worked extensively on this technique, visualizing oneself running activates subliminally the same muscles used in running, which can be measured with electromyography (Kaplan & Sadock, 1988). Based on this, the phenomenon has been used in sports training, in which athletes visualize every conceivable event in a performance and develop a muscle memory for the activity. This technique has been used in medicine to master anxiety, treat impulsive and obsessive behaviour, and even management of obesity. This goes to prove that there is a huge possibility of attaining the age of 120 years, all things being equal if one embarks on regular practice of imagery.
- ✓ Broad description of age: Curvilinear theory provides for simple broad universalistic description of age. An old person above the age of 80 years can simply be said to be in his curvilinear late life, and the person between 40-80 years is described as been in his curvilinear middle life, so also a person between 20- 40 years is a curvilinear youth, 11-20 years is a curvilinear adolescent and birth to 11 years is a curvilinear child. Curvilinear concept makes for simple age stratification and formulating policy for different age cohorts becomes easier.
- ✓ Marriage Counseling and Management: Most Americans marry in their mid-twenties; however, an increasing number of those marriages end in divorce (Kaplan & Sadock, 1998). Failed marriage has grave implications on child development, and by extension on the larger society with serious security consequences.
The Curvilinear assumption that the lateral cohorts are less efficient than the median (efficiency window) raises the issue of pessimistic marriage handling ability with particular reference to curvilinear early life. Because of these observed difficulties in marriage management at the early life, counseling should be intensified at this phase of life, buying time for the couple(s) to approach the middle life when they will be better in handling marriage crises.
- ✓ Legal restriction on divorce: Considering the perceived ineffectiveness in handling marriage crises at the curvilinear early life, legal restrictions can be advised in cases of young people opting for divorce. The marriage can be placed on probation until the couples attain the curvilinear maturity. By the age of 40 years which is the beginning of the curvilinear maturity, divorce can be

determined by the court if all measures to resolve the conflict failed. At this time, if the marriage cannot be salvaged, the product (s) of the marriage may have grown, big enough, to avert the dangers of unprotected childhood.

- ✓ Establishment of Old Peoples' Home: Since at old age, people now become like children who are irrational, helpless and dependent, with a decline in health and can no longer perform both civic and work roles, it is humane to establish a home for special care for them in each region of Nigeria to cater for their needs.
- ✓ Critical leadership positions and Curvilinear Efficiency Window: *"Many factors that come into play in leadership are intangible. That is why leaders require so much seasoning to be effective. That is why only now at fifty-one, do I feel that I am truly beginning to understand the many aspects of leadership with clarity"* (JOHN C. MAXIWELL, 1998). A good leader necessarily has a combination of natural ability and learned skills because the two create an informed intuition that make leadership issues jump out at leaders (John C. Maxiwell).

The reality is that at age 40 years the society views a person as a fully grown adult. He becomes more efficient in handling issues/matters of life, that is, he is no longer driven by androgen impulse. This is the real age of seasoning; the age of rationality. In practice, this is the right age to entrust sensitive matters onto the hands of a man; such matters like the leadership of a big organization, governance of any tier of government, headship of Supreme Court and other such sensitive positions where a mistake can be catastrophic, for a country is in trouble when its king is a youth and its leaders feast all night long (Ecclesiastes 10:16).

Between the ages of 40-80 years, a man has sufficient energy to cope with workloads and does most things with great commitment and caution. He is tactical and expressive in handling delicate organizational matters. His experience becomes very valuable. People within this curvilinear cohort have incomparable level of efficiency in relation to the other two. It is therefore advisable to entrust critical management positions only to people within this efficiency window, because it is in this cohort that you can be sure to get true leaders. True leaders have the ability to step back from what is happening at the moment and see not only where they and their people have gone, but also where they are headed in the future. Why because effective navigators start with experience. If the leader can't navigate the people through rough waters, he is liable to sink the ship (John C. Maxwell). It is also instructive to know that, who you are dictates what you see, and how you see the world around you is determined by who you are.

- ✓ Curriculum planning and development to stem social vices in schools: The adolescent culture is in the peer group which is a vital agency for social growth and change, and from this informal institution which is different for each adolescent, emerges defined subcultures such as gangs, cult groups, social clubs, athletic teams. Because of this there is a need to introduce military training in secondary school, thereafter, a mandatory two-year full military recruitment of all children after

secondary education is enforced, after which people can be allowed to take to other professions. With this the 'tempting years' are all spent in more structured and disciplined environments devoid of cultism and other social vices.

- ✓ Social encouragement of Late Life marriage: Longitudinal Studies have demonstrated that sex drive does not decrease as man and woman get older; in fact, some report an increase in sex drive. Healthy older persons usually maintain a level of social activity that is only slightly changed from that of earlier years. There is growing evidence that maintaining social activities are of value for physical and emotional wellbeing. Having contact with younger persons is also important because the older person maintains a sense of usefulness that contributes to self esteem. This helps to increase life span and calculated life expectancy.
- ✓ Extension of Retirement Age: The norms and roles that society allocates to age groups create barriers and opportunities, which in turn affect the status, power, wealth and income enjoyed by different age groups in each society. This has led to issues of inequality, exploitation, conflict and discrimination (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008). The norms and roles that society allocates to age groups create barriers and opportunities, which in turn affect the status, power, wealth and income enjoyed by different age groups in each society, for example in Britain, those over 65 years have much less opportunity to participate in the labour market than adults under this age. This has led to issues of inequality, exploitation, conflict and discrimination (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008). In Britain, the current pension age is 65 for men and women, but the Pension Act 2007 stipulates that the state pension age will rise from 65 to 68 between 2024 and 2046.

A lot of people are prevented from continuing to make contribution by obstacles placed in their ways by society, such as compulsory retirement or ageism. In Nigeria a lot of adults have been destroyed due to early and compulsory retirement; they develop high blood pressure with consequent stroke due the stresses of the environment. These facts support the need to increase retirement age and extend it to 80 years.

- ✓ Business Management: According to Piaget, at formal operational stage, the adolescent's thinking becomes more

abstract, conceptual, logical, and future-oriented. With the ability for formal thought and abstract reasoning, the adolescent discovers new facts, and may show remarkable creativity. The potentials for formal operational thought are limitless in terms of a person's ability to understand the world and one's place in it (Kaplan & Sadok 1988).

Because of the potentials for remarkable creativity and limitless abstract thoughts, catching brilliant and intelligent young people while in early years in secondary school and placing them on conditional scholarship may brighten the fortune of the company. This should be the time business managers go for talent hunt just like it is done in sports. Children in this category can be brought into the company during vacation, then given some orientation and allowed to contribute their ideas which may be tested in the Research & Development department of the company.

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