**Chapter 18: Social and Emotional Development in Late Adulthood**

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Summary:

There is much debate about the ideal living conditions for seniors aged 65 and older, as sometimes what the elderly person wants is not what they need. As the population of seniors is growing rapidly and will be of great concern in the decades to come, this is an important issue to address and to sort out before it gets critical. In a small-scale case study, the living conditions and perceived life satisfaction of six individuals (two married couples, two widowed) was assessed and compared using a scale questionnaire. The first married couple has been living in a congregate house close to its close friends for 15 years. The second couple is living with the close family and the two widowed live in a house alone. The third and final couple is currently living with their child and her family. The older people asked were from 3 different cultures and difference between cultures usually discernable. A small questionnaire (multiple choices) was given to all of the participants. The answers were not score; instead, their answers, their reactions, and their facial expressions were recorded and interpreted.

Study Notes:

**Erik Erikson’s theory of ego integrity versus despair**:

* Adults who arrive at a sense of integrity feel whole, complete, and satisfied with their achievements.
* Includes upbeat mood, self-acceptance, higher marital satisfaction, and closer relationships with children, greater community involvement and increased ease in accepting help. It is the final stage in Erik Erikson’s theory of ego development.

**Person-Environment Fit**:

* A good match between a person’s abilities and the demands of their living environments, which promotes adaptive behavior and psychological well-being. This is an important phase in development because it can either benefit or deteriorate one’s emotional well-being if the living conditions and social conditions aren’t suited for the specific individual. This is further categorized into three types of housing:
  + Ordinary Homes: lives alone with a spouse or extended family, offers greatest possible control over life, continuity with the past, sustain a sense of identity
  + Residential communities: housing developments that have been modified to suit older adults’ capacities, congregate vs. life-care communities. Congregate housing are apartments in a center that provides a variety of support services (Common dinning room, nurses, etc.). Life-car communities can either be received in a independent or a congregate housing. It is treatments specialized with the person’s needs. It is a life care that guarantees that senior’s changing need will be met within the same facility as they age.
  + Nursing homes: a private institution that provide health care that has been modified to suit the elderly; most restriction of autonomy and social integration, social interaction is low

**Affect Optimization**:

* It is the ability to focus on the positive emotions and aspects of life and lessen the attention on the negative emotions and aspects (maximize on the positive emotions)
* This allows for elders to sustain a sense of optimize regardless of the decline of physical health and a restricted future.