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## MUFFLED VOICES AND BROKEN BRIDGES: SOCIAL BARRIERS AND COMMUNICATION ACROSS ALL AGES

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Sindh, Pakistan.Email: [mahrukhk@ssuet.edu.pk](mailto:mahrukhk@ssuet.edu.pk)**ABSTRACT**

*This article examines facts beyond physical and psychological changes and explains the role social barriers play in affecting how people connect throughout their life journey. Beginning from the stage of an infant, which is all about dependency, to the stage of old age, humans come across limitations imposed by societal expectations (poverty, fear, conflict), unfair practices (prejudice, stereotyping, racism), power differences (imbalance in statuses), and prescribed roles. This analysis not only covers social barriers but also all types of communication barriers that arise throughout the seven stages of human life, which emerge from language, understanding, and social context. With the help of a close reading approach, this paper explores the language and imagery used by Shakespeare to represent these communication barriers. Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory is utilized to create a foundation for understanding how emotional challenges in each stage further disrupt communication. The findings in this research paper highlight the struggle to build trust in infancy, the hardships of identity formation in adolescence, and the challenges faced in adulthood to build intimacy, with the fact that social and emotional barriers also block these.*

**KEYWORDS**

*Poverty, fear, conflict, discrimination, prejudice, stereotyping, and racism.*

**INTRODUCTION**

This study brings the readers to the various social issues that act as barriers to communication. The research includes a discussion of limits imposed by conditions such as poverty, fear, conflict, and discrimination irrespective of which stage of life one is in, including one's growth as a human being or even intellectually and socially. Such factors as bias, stereotypes, and racism do not only hinder communication but rather create a perpetual silence. Furthermore, the existing class system in society leads to the social alienation of individuals and facilitates the marginalization of the

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less powerful. By looking at these boundaries in Shakespeare's work, one gains insight into the problems of relating to other people and the inevitability of such relations in the dynamic nature of being human.

Erikson's developmental theory aids in understanding how emotional upheavals make communication hard for individuals in every stage of human life. By analyzing how these barriers occur in human life, the researcher finds a clear insight into the continuous effort to eliminate the gaps and achieve real communication throughout the stages of life. For a better idea, take the instance of an infant struggling to communicate basic needs since they are unaware of the language and the faces. It is the first psychosocial challenge a human faces, where he struggles with trust versus mistrust. The same struggle can be seen with a teenager who is confused between identity and roles and finds it hard to convey it to authority figures due to barriers like social pressures and emotional stress.

This analysis will examine the language and imagery in Shakespeare's "The Seven Ages of Man" closely to identify instances where social and emotional challenges become barriers to effective communication. It will also pay close attention to the interaction between characters and other social dynamics throughout life. The analysis will focus on social barriers like poverty, fear, conflict, discrimination, stereotypes, racism, and status differences explained in the text and how they affect how characters communicate.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Social Barriers to Communication**

Social barriers can make communication difficult by associating humans with specific group norms, values, and behaviors. Other factors such as age, gender, marital status, and income level play an influential role in the way people communicate in different circumstances. These barriers are related to the social factors that have a clear on a person's health, including the conditions they are born into, grow up in, work, and live throughout their life (CDC, 2022).

Community and culture play an important role in overcoming social barriers. The people living in such a culture and community have the potential to influence these barriers. Social barriers are often a result of unrealistic expectations and other factors like arrogance, rudeness, and disrespect. The impacts of social barriers can be explained by how they influence the lifestyle of various groups of people in the community (Fischer, et al., 2016). Social barriers have a potential impact on humans' position in society and their self-perceptions. These impacts can restrain humans from achieving lifelong goals (Kapur, 2018). The root that strengthens social barriers is when a group of people regard them as superior to others based on elements such as

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education, wealth, family background, and importance. This group distances itself from people they see as inferior. Due to this reason, we see friction in society and the formation of social barriers (Kapur, 2018).

Societal norms passed on from generation to generation are also responsible for creating barriers that restrain people from achieving their desired goals. The opinions and actions of people in society can influence our behavior and result in external barriers to achieving lifelong goals (Sanecka, 2014). To combat these social barriers, it is vital to prioritize a transparent approach and strategic governance that encourages people to participate in decision-making processes.

### **Poverty**

When social barriers are discussed, poverty tops the list as it significantly impacts the way people include and participate in society. Children belonging to low-income or poor families often don't find a chance to interact with children coming from rich families. This happens due to differences in attitude and belief and the fact that rich people consider themselves superior. Other factors that result in discrimination include gender differences, ethnicity, religion, race, and social status. These factors also exclude people from social interactions and trap them in lifelong poverty (WDR, 2001).

### **Fear**

Fear is another social barrier that keeps people from interacting with those they find different from themselves. This discomfort of being around people who are different from them can restrain humans from interacting and create social barriers instead of working on them to overcome and promote justice.

### **Conflict**

Conflicts are another core cause of social barriers in communities. Differences that result in conflicts include opinions, cultures, attitudes, beliefs, and philosophies. Disagreements between individuals on professional, political, and personal matters can also make organizational communication difficult (Uppal, 2021).

### **Stereotyping and Discrimination**

Bias and discrimination are common social barriers restricting humans from receiving equal opportunities and treatment. In various industries, gender inequality can be seen where women get lower wages than men with the same qualifications and skills. Also, pregnant women often go through rough treatment at workplaces and are usually provoked to resign. This factor makes it difficult for people who have been unemployed for longer to find a job. The elimination of gender biases and discrimination differs among societies and is often influenced by kinship rules.

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Marriage rules and inheritance significantly impact women's autonomy and explain the ownership of resources like property and money. In societies where these rules incline towards men, extreme gender inequality is seen. At the same time, societies with balanced rules offer greater gender equality (WDR, 2001). Stereotyping is another critical factor that creates social barriers. It is about differentiating people based on their race, religion, gender, and nationality. Using these characteristics, people make judgments and assumptions about people, their behavior, and their ability to live a life. Stereotyping is a common cause of social barriers that build negative attitudes and prejudices for certain groups of people. This leads to exclusion, discrimination, and unequal treatment between people. Stereotypes kill potential and opportunities by developing a bubble of unrealistic expectations and assumptions about people and their abilities. To overcome stereotypes, one is required to realize them and challenge them. This will help promote a diverse and inclusive environment for everyone where everyone is valued despite their differences (Erven & Berard,).

### **Racism**

Racism is another type of social barrier that is developed from discrimination and prejudice for people based on their race and ethnicity. Racism is a societal issue that has deep roots and can have a significant impact on the lives of those it affects. Racism can take different forms, including bias in education, housing, employment opportunities, and access to quality healthcare. For instance, someone with a fair complexion will have access to better job opportunities or will be prioritized during the hiring process over people with a darker complexion.

This can further result in other critical issues that occur in these racial groups, such as disparities in income and social and economic inequality. The signs of racism are evident in the criminal justice system as well. To address racial issues, a strong commitment from all individuals is required to remove it from its roots with the help of education, awareness, and change of policy.

### **The Status Differences**

While considering social and psychological barriers that make communication difficult, differences in status also appear on the list. To make it clear, take an example of an organization where employees and their superiors lack effective communication due to factors like consciousness of junior position or fear of being let down. Also, superiors distance themselves from subordinates because they believe they are senior and superior to them.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

1. The study explored social barriers to communication in Shakespeare's Seven Ages

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of Man.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study applied Erikson's psychosocial development theory and qualitative content analysis to examine social communication barriers in Shakespeare's Seven Ages of Man.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Erikson's Theory and Social Barriers in Shakespeare's 'Seven Ages of Man Birthmark – Stage 1**

#### **Poverty**

Poverty or a lack of resources can make it difficult for parents and caregivers to offer necessities such as shelter, food, and quality medical care. This can develop a feeling of mistrust and insecurity in the infant. Moreover, poverty is the core element that makes it difficult for caregivers to offer responsive care to the infant and results in no secure attachment between the caregiver and the infant (Eckstein-Madry et al., 2021).

To be precise, the goal of this stage is to build a relationship of trust towards the world and the caregivers. In other words, the development process based on emotional trust and social ties can be impeded by many challenging factors. One such factor is poverty, which can hinder infants from this developmental goal and necessitate some form of external sustenance to exist. External assistance entails several things, including funds, basic needs, and parenting tips to ensure that caregivers provide quality and reliable care to infants.

#### **Fear**

In Erikson's attachment theory, fear is conceived as a fixation that would inhibit any infant from mastering the task of trust. For example, an infant who lives under abuse or constant neglect will certainly grow up insecure as well as distrustful (Erikson, 1963). In addition, fear may prevent attachment among infants and make them timid when interacting with and trusting a caregiver.

In order to deal with this constraint, it is possible to take measures to enhance the feelings and the environment of safety and unconditional love for infants. This setting is more appropriate when there are attentive, caring, and more importantly consistent caregivers who care for the infants. This action may help in generating trust in the infant and assisting in his or her emotional and social development.

#### **Conflict**

Another factor that diminishes the infant's ability to cultivate trust and security is

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conflict. It can occur in a range of forms, from domestic violence to simple tensions among married couples. Caregivers in conflict will, in most cases, result in the child struggling with social interactions in the future. Conflict is a core contributor to caregiving that is erratic and uncoordinated. This makes the process of nurturing an infant's trust in the environment hard (Davies & Cummings, 1994).

To maintain the infant's social well-being, adjustments should be made in their environment by providing stability and consistency. Most importantly, in this type of care, there is a need for caregivers who are warm and provide attentive care as well. To achieve this, it is necessary to find and eliminate the source of the conflict and provide other forms of assistance i.e. stress management resources or therapies or counseling aimed at resolving conflicts between the caregivers. It should also be noted that tension between caregivers has the potential to affect the social and emotional growth of infants for an extended period.

### **Stereotyping and Discrimination**

Discrimination is one more barrier that children perceive as threatening and unwelcoming. This, in turn, creates anxiety and distrust in them. For example, when a caregiver discriminates against an infant and treats him or her differently, the effects that accompany the infant are long-lasting (Aboud, 2008).

Stereotypes, in a general way, can be defined as irrational thoughts infants, in the eyes of caregivers, may be treated differently with stereotypical beliefs depending on the race or gender of the infant. This discrimination develops a feeling of anxiety and mistrust in the infants. This behavior of the caregiver will also discourage emotional expression and make healthy emotional development difficult.

### **Racism**

Racism is another form of discrimination if an infant is living in a racist environment, it can have a negative impact on their sense of safety and security. In general, infants are dependent on caregivers to provide for their needs and keep them safe. If they come across a caregiver with a racist attitude and beliefs, the quality of care they will receive will become highly doubted (Williams-Morris, 1996).

Racism makes healthy living impossible for the infant. It can impact on the sense of belonging and trust in the infant and make them feel excluded and marginalized due to their ethnicity and race. Racism can have a long-lasting impact on the well-being and mental health of an infant.

### **The Difference in Status**

If an infant belongs to a low social and economic status family, they may experience

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issues like less or improper nutrition, lower healthcare facilities, and poor early childhood education. These infants can also face stressors that can impact their social and emotional health, like parents' unemployment, improper living conditions, and other similar issues. The differences in statuses can result in negative ways, such as delay in development, weak health conditions, and a high chance of facing social and emotional issues throughout life. Therefore, this social barrier can result in a tough start for the infants and restrain them from developing in their early years of life. To combat social barriers such as differences in status, we need to develop programs and policies that support families in need and provide the necessary resources for proper development.

## **World of Discipline - Stage 2**

### **Poverty**

It has been observed that children who come from families that have low incomes are likely to be malnourished, suffer from health cases, and have very few, if any, educational materials, which in turn cuts down their chances of having good grades and securing employment in the future. In addition, poverty has the potential to interfere with a child's emotional and social growth, leading to shame, loneliness, and low regard for oneself, factors that affect one's ability to have constructive relations with other children and adults (Engle & Black, 2008). In addition, schools situated within these regions may lack adequate facilities and support, which in turn prevents the academic and social development of children from such regions. Hence, poverty poses a huge burden on the social development of children in their adolescent years, especially by restricting opportunities and engaging in their productive capacities.

### **Fear**

At this stage, children acquire the ability to adapt to different oncoming experiences, which may trigger a form of fear and anxiety associated with school, peers, and even examinations. Such an emotion has the capacity to aggravate the children's participation in new experiences and may lead to either avoidance behaviors or a withdrawal from either social or academic activities. In addition, a fear of making mistakes may also discourage the children from being adventurous and going to their fullest capabilities. Hence, it is better for those in charge of taking care of children and teachers to create an understanding atmosphere that will motivate the children to confront their fears instead of helping them avoid challenging situations.

### **Conflict**

At this stage, there is a strong emphasis placed on the acquisition of certain skills and the advancement of one's abilities. For fear of not keeping up with academic success or pressures reaching them from their peers, classmates, and parents, among other adults, children in this stage also encounter some irresolvable conflicts. Such conflicts

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present social barriers to a child's growth and development, as well as their self-worth and desire to learn (Waters et. al., 2015). For example, in the context of the social school environment, curtailing and antagonizing academic pressure predicated on the desire to excel in studies may, in fact, give rise to the corresponding 'stressed-out' elite children. Alternatively, the need to engage in 'acceptable' behaviors as per the dictates of age mates in those stages has made some children outwardly engaging, yet internally, depressed or feeling quite 'non-conformist'. Differences in the socio-cultural and economic status of individuals or groups may also give rise to conflict and, in extreme cases, result in exclusion and discrimination in certain aspects. In this regard, dealing with such conflicts and maintaining a constructive climate where all students feel valued and included should be able to reduce social barriers during the stage of being a schoolboy.

### **Discrimination & Stereotyping**

Discrimination and stereotyping can affect children, especially if they are in any way different from the other children around them. They may, for example, relate to age, race, gender, religion, and economic status, among many other factors. Stereotyping may also be beneficial because children who are different may, at times, be bullied or ostracized simply because of how individuals perceive them (McArdle & Acevedo-Garcia, 2018). These social confines may even lead to withdrawal, diminished self-esteem, and, in some cases, anxiety and depression. This is why it is very important at this stage for teachers and parents to encourage acceptance and diversity instead of allowing any form of discrimination and stereotyping.

### **Racism**

Racism can lead to social rejection, harassment, and low self-regard or self-doubt. Furthermore, it may also impede learning and hinder the availability of educational resources. Moreover, racism can promote the internalized degradation of one's culture, leading to low self-acceptance and a low sense of self-worth (Pachter & Coll, 2009).

### **The Differences in Statuses**

At this age, children begin to regard others and become conscious of their social standing. They may feel inferior or superior to others with respect to one's family system, financial or economic background, or academic level. This can make it difficult for children belonging to the lower stratum of society because they might be excluded or victimized by their classmates or teachers because of their low social standing (Baker et al., 2012). It can also create a problem for those children who are achievers because they will have to be at a constant level or higher, resulting in pressure and stress. In conclusion, the disparity in status may bring about a social stratification during the schoolboy stage that adversely impacts a child's self-worth,

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relationship with his or her peers, and endeavors in the educational field.

### **Teenagers: Icon of Romance - Stage 3**

#### **Poverty**

An individual's ability to engage in intimate relationships and maintain such relationships may be adversely affected by poverty, as this condition imposes certain limits on financial resources, which in turn affects one's social, travel, and living activities. Moreover, poverty may result in the development of stress and stress-related emotions, which in turn will affect one's capability to form and sustain relationships (Engle & Black 2008). When one is financially challenged, one's self-esteem, self-worth, and identity are affected, which might be an impediment to being able to build close boundaries with other people. Poverty can be a great impediment in the social aspect during the lover stage.

#### **Fear**

In this phase, fear can serve as a hindrance in social interaction since it can make an individual shy away from any close relationships because of concern about being vulnerable or someone turning them down. Individuals may also be festered by a softer kind of fear, which is the fear of heavy attachments where individuals shy away from serious relationships altogether. Such fears may result in people becoming reclusive and unable to connect with society in a healthy way, and this may affect one's psychological and emotional health. Therefore, it is advisable that people work on these fears along with learning the right ways to get close to someone with a willingness to participate in an intimate relationship.

#### **Conflict**

Interpersonal conflict may emerge when individuals are compelled to adhere to the social pressures or norms pertaining to relationships or when the classification threatens their individuality within a relationship. Besides, negative prior relationship experiences or the absence of positive ones can evoke disconnection or aversion to closeness. Such social barriers can even be worsened by discrimination, social inequalities, poverty, and other issues that create barriers to interacting with other people.

#### **Discrimination and Stereotyping**

Discrimination and stereotypes may constitute social barriers in creating such relationships whereby biases are created, and individuals are cut off from others who belong to different groups. Many consider stereotypes and prejudice to be negative perceptions of individuals based on their race, ethnic background, gender, sexual preference, and religion, among other social classifications. Such biases may result in unfair practices in a number of spheres, such as employment and housing, and others,

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which also lead to social exclusion and negative aggression toward people considered as different. These barriers can interfere with an individual's ability to develop normal and satisfying relationships, which can, in turn, influence their general development and well-being.

### **Racism**

One's race or ethnicity may tend to a person to limit the number of potential partners. Such situations can cause feelings of emptiness and rejection, which can lower the self-worth of the individual. Prejudice and discrimination from outside sources further contribute to an unwelcoming atmosphere and, instead, segregate the person from relationships. (Pachter & Coll, 2009). Furthermore, racism can create barriers to obtaining supporting materials and tools, enabling the individual to create a base with a partner, for example, acquiring decent housing, getting employment, and even education. To summarize, racism has detrimental ramifications that influence how one progresses in the lover stage and can connect with others.

### **The difference in Status**

The variations in social ranks could serve as the most effective hindrance to the establishment of such bonds. Members of different social classes may have varied experiences and sets of values, making it easy to have a conflict. Contenders of the lower social class may also have a psychological effect characterized by an inferiority complex, which makes it difficult for them to be attached to women from the upper class (Baker et al., 2012). Other people's cultures and expectations from individuals may also encourage people to look for partners of the same standing, and this creates another barrier.

### **Unwarranted Rebellion - Stage 4**

#### **Poverty**

People from economically disadvantaged backgrounds may experience challenges in availing the resources required for education and training vital for career progression. Also, the unavailability of appropriate feeding, healthcare, and housing may likewise impair their health, both physical and mental, thereby making it hard for them to be productive at work or even perform the assigned tasks effectively.

Further, poverty can lead to having no participation in any of the community-building activities as they tend to be excluded, which affects their ability to build relations with others. In general, poverty poses challenges to the establishment of a satisfying and stable career and even psychosocial growth and development as well.

#### **Fear**

This stage notes the development of an individual's quest for meaning and a place in

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the world. The fear can be of many things, like fear of falling short, fear of being an outsider, fear of being unloved, and things not known to oneself. Such fears can hinder a person from taking chances, experimenting, and reaching their full potential. So, too, can such fears lead to anxiety and stress, with the possibility of affecting a person's Psychology and Physiology. One of the most vital virtues needed in the soldier stage is the ability to conquer fear. It motivates people to grow and helps them shape who they will be and the life that awaits them.

### **Conflict**

At this stage, people concentrate on asserting their identity and identifying their role in the social structure. Conflict may occur when people perceive a danger to their identity or when they feel that their contributions to society are not being recognized. This may further cause resentment, disappointment, and unappreciated feelings, which are major barriers to social cohesion. In any society, there are many potential causes of conflict, which include but are not limited to cognitive beliefs, value systems, opinions, and competition for scarce resources or power. It is necessary to acknowledge such differences and, if possible, to eliminate this social disorder to encourage the coexistence of people.

### **Discrimination and Stereotyping**

At times, people may also face different forms of discrimination during their society, which can create obstacles in reaching the targeted goals or even moving up in a hierarchy. While gender discrimination and racism in the workplace can lead to issues, stereotyping can hinder one's ability to build relationships. These, for example, would include advantages such as looking for a house, going to the doctor, or any other services without the fear of being stereotyped or prejudiced. Negative stereotypes associated with groups can also affect people's relationships or social life.

Discrimination, as well as stereotyping, affects not only the people who are targeted but also their mental wellness. Suffering from discrimination can lead a person to social isolation, low self-worth levels, and clinical depression. Prejudice against certain social groups also creates pressure or self-exclusion from those individuals in those groups who do not subscribe to such expectations.

### **Racism**

At this stage, there exists the possibility that racism could act as a social barrier. This is because racism may breed a sense of alienation, unfairness, and frustration. Racism may also facilitate a feeling of separation, which will prevent individuals from actively developing a social attachment, which is crucial in ascribing meaning and direction to their lives. In addition, on account of discrimination or racism barriers, there are also challenges in accessing resources and activities, which cripples one's growth of a

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sense of self or vision in life. The impact of racism on individuals and societies in general is alarming, and the audience is motivated in this stage to facilitate inclusivity and diversity. This will help them develop a productive role in a society in which they are meant to fulfill their social roles.

### **The difference in Status**

Social barriers, such as those based on class, education, or type of work, may prevent some people from attaining their aspirations and reaching their full potential. For instance, a person that comes from an economically disadvantaged family is quite likely to experience difficulties entering educational institutions and careers on equal footing with a more affluent counterpart. Such emotions may induce anger, envy, and hopelessness that may hinder an individual's development either in their personal life or in their work.

Apart from this, there can be hierarchies in relationships, especially where power dynamics are concerned, which have a negative impact and cause distortions in the social functioning of people. For example, an employee occupying a lower-status job may consider themselves not as worthy as an individual in a higher-status job. This can give rise to feelings of inferiority complex where an individual sees themselves as less than what they are, which can greatly deteriorate relationships both personally and at work. In general, the status divide is a prevalent sociocultural obstacle, which disallows people from realizing their objectives and living meaningful lives.

### **Wisdom (Sense of Peaceful Acceptance) - Stage 5**

#### **Poverty**

Typically, by this period, people have attained their Middle Ages and are worried more about what they can give back to society and their perceived impact on the world. However, there are circumstances, such as poverty, that may hinder their efforts to achieve these aspirations and even stifle their ambitions. This social vice may affect the capacity for learning, getting employment, or any other activity that needs intervention in society. This further alienates the person from society since it affects their mental health and physical appearance, whereby it leads to anxiety, stress, and even sickness. Hence, dealing with these economic inequalities is important in letting people realize their potential and be able to actively participate in society.

#### **Fear**

This phase occurs mostly in midlife, and during this period, fear can act as a social barrier in the sense that it discourages people from trying out new things. Fear of failing at something, of being shunned, and of what lies ahead all can give rise to insecurities, which, if combined, can dampen a person's efforts at attaining his or her aspirations in life (Cherry, 2023). Also, the norms of society or cultures may frighten

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people, resulting in them following the rules instead of nonconformity and seeking novelty. In the end, this is the stage in life where all limitations imposed by fear are felt the most.

**Conflict**

At this point in life, people try to influence the environment around them positively while looking for their own identity and values. Yet, due to the differences in people's beliefs and values, contradictions and even aggressive interactions may occur. Such variations may prove unproductive in achieving an individual's aspirations and aspirations towards the broader society, making it hard for them to achieve happiness and contentment in life (Crain, 2015). This stage requires an individual to know how to resolve conflicts in a constructive manner and to understand the importance of making an argument without engaging in a personal attack.

**Discrimination and Stereotyping**

This phase usually takes place in middle adulthood when individuals engage in work-related, family-related, and social activities while striving to establish these connections. Unfortunately, in these very areas, there prevail challenges in the form of discrimination and stereotyping, which restrict the chances of growth and achievements.

To set an example, ageism restricts an individual's job-seeking options and escalates their spending career. Gender or ethnicity-based stereotypes could create discrimination and inequity between recruitment and promotion. Such limitations cause annoyances, outrage, and investigations that may hinder one's advancement at such a stage.

**Racism**

These objectives can be impeded significantly by reasons like racism that restrict opportunities based on race rather than one's capabilities or worth. This often creates a situation of helplessness and disappointment whereby, for instance, people are not able to contribute to society in ways that they would wish to (Dadabhoy & Mehdizadeh, 2023). It may also create a sense of separation and exclusion that can hamper a person's ability to effect positive changes in society. In a nutshell, racism works to thwart the efforts and ambitions of people at the levels when there is justice in the most effective manner.

**The difference in Status**

This stage is characterized by the prominence of social hierarchy; disparities in the cultural, social, or economic status may result in emotional hindrances as some individuals perceive others above them as being more valuable. Such sentiments can

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result in difficulties in maintaining a consistent self-worth and self-image which may persist and affect future relationships, friendships or employment. Nevertheless, it is important to note that not everyone subject to this barrier will feel the same effects or that other factors may help in the development of a healthy self-image as well.

### **Lucky to be Alive - Stage 6**

#### **Poverty**

The Pantaloon indicates the period of old age and retirement in the life cycle. In such a stage, poverty is seen as a major social challenge as most retirees do not have jobs, and their income is very minimal, if any. This brings about a reduced standard of living, a lack of healthcare provision, and, most importantly, loneliness (Engle & Black, 2008). Furthermore, earlier poverty within this timeframe can worsen certain health illnesses and block one from getting vital health services. This can be more so for individuals who have not made any adequate prior arrangements, especially financial ones. In psychosocial development theory elaborated by Erikson, this stage creates a sense of regret and loss as well as a feeling of incompleteness of one's life achievements when people do not feel secure either economically or with their life ambitions.

#### **Fear**

At this point in development, people might experience some fear concerning the idea of growing elderly and the eventuality of death. This fear can transform into fears, low moods, and a refusal to try new things or take risks. It may also result in a tendency to withdraw from society, as the person may feel they are no longer capable of doing the former activities that were once available to them (The Seven Ages of Man, 2014). This is not limited to mental distress, as the fear can lead to other health risks like hypertension and heart-related conditions limiting the social activities of the individual.

#### **Conflict**

This stage occurs in late adulthood, typically after the age of 65; it is marked by a period of retrospection and acknowledgment of the life lived and the different challenges experienced therein. Conflict can be brought about during this stage by several factors, including loss of autonomy, poor health, and restriction of movement, all of which can make one's sense of self and daily functionality difficult. Conflict can also be found in relations with other individuals, such as family members or caregivers, where older adults are usually unwilling to give up their so-called autonomy and want to be in control of their lives. When conflict emerges in this stage, it may be because the individual is required to engage more with recent loved ones and even search for new ones while coming to terms with the changes.

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**Discrimination and Stereotyping**

With aging and retirement, individuals tend to suffer more from age-related stereotyping and discrimination, which in turn limits their chances and reduces their self-worth. Ageism is common in the workplace among the older generation, where an employer treats older workers as less competent or less flexible than the younger workforce. Such ageism leads to the effects of either difficulty in seeking new employment or holding onto the existing one. Moreover, common stereotypes about older people in society regard them as frail, dependent, or out of touch with technology and culture, resulting in such individuals becoming estranged from society.

**Racism**

At this point, people may undergo the effects of growing old and, in addition, may be subject to ageism or discrimination based on one's age. Nonetheless, if these individuals happen to belong to a racial or ethnic minority, then there is the possibility that racism plays a role at this stage as well. Others may face inequalities, bias, and inequities related to their nationality or ethnic group, which can restrict their access to resources, chances, and quality of health. Moreover, there is PTSD, including anxiety and other stress-related health issues, because of racism in individuals at this stage.

**The difference in Status**

People in this stage of life might be retirees or nearing this stage in their lives and may have changed depending on this status. Those who are well off financially are likely to have a better reach for resources and opportunities, and those who are not may have difficulties sustaining their standard of living. This may cause social limitations, especially in accessibility to services such as health care, leisure services, and other services that assist in overall well-being (Shakespeare's Seven Ages of Man, 2016).

This is referred to as an alleged gap in income levels, educational levels, occupational levels, and wealth in people. Those who are at the top of the ladder may have problems understanding or even associating with those who are lower within the same hierarchy, and this is a barrier to establishing social relations. On the other hand, some individuals do not achieve high status, and this is a cause of their feeling inferior or alienated, which blocks their social enhancement. In conclusion, this divergence of social standing gives rise to social divisions and social barriers, reinforcing and creating social inequities as well as antagonizing social development.

**Physical frailty and Incapacity - Stage 7****Poverty**

In the chronological sequence of Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory, this stage refers to an 'integrity vs. despair' crisis that takes place toward the end of one's life. In this stage, people have a feeling of looking back on their life and achievements,

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which is usually accompanied by either contentment or disappointment.

In this phase, poverty can present a challenge as it can limit an individual's ability to utilize health care, means of movement, and other resources that are critical to their well-being. It can also impede their social networks and avenues to participate in activities that offer satisfaction and a sense of purposeful living. Besides, extreme poverty can cause strain and worry about finances, which affects the mental well-being of an individual.

**Fear**

People suffer anxiety because they know that the time for their death is drawing near, and they may feel concerned about the mistakes they made in their lives. Such fear, in turn, induces social disengagement and reinforces withdrawal, making it hard for such people to keep in touch or interact with anybody. The situation may also degenerate into a loss of freedom and movement owing to fear, which renders most activities that they previously enjoyed performing impossible.

**Conflict**

The elderly might experience conflicts with their family or caregivers owing to matters surrounding their care and residences. There is also the aspect around the health deterioration that comes with old age that may require dependence on individuals (Grossmann et al., 2010). Lastly, there may be generational conflicts due to unresolved issues of purpose and meaning as older adults think about what they will leave behind and the difference that they have made. Such conflicts or issues could considerably impede the well-being and quality of life of older adults.

**Discrimination and Stereotyping**

Those of advanced age may encounter adverse stereotypes and prejudices, which restrict their social, economic, or political engagement. As a result, they might feel lonely, depressed, and helpless with respect to their lives. Such attitudes and stereotypical images can also give rise to ageism, defined as prejudicing an individual due to their age. It is essential to understand and dismantle ageism to promote the participation of all ages in society (Shiovitz-Ezra et al., 2018). If we are to go by Erikson's theory of psychosocial development at this stage, which mandates a retrospective evaluation of a person's existence, leading either to a sense of completeness or hopelessness, discrimination and stereotyping become barriers to that process. Such interference makes it hard, if not impossible, for older adults to seek and identify meaning and purpose in existence.

**Racism**

Older individuals may be subjected to detrimental stereotypes accompanied by

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unfavorable attitudes that restrict their possibilities for social, economic, and political engagement. The use of racism can cause social withdrawal, exclusion, and limited opportunities, which are likely to affect one's physical and mental health with time. In addition, ageism can also serve to fuel intergenerational trauma and discrimination, not only within the elderly but also within their families and communities. In the context of Erikson's psychosocial development, it can be argued that coming to terms with ageism in malevolent old age would mean embracing oneself and others without barriers within one's society.

### **The difference in Status**

As individuals grow older, the chances of physical and mental deterioration are high. This situation hinders an individual from engaging in or performing certain functions or activities. For instance, in many countries around the globe, when one gets older, it is often hard to accept the limitations that come with aging. Such societal perceptions and beliefs can lead to a loss of status or a feeling of worthlessness in society. Ageist views, which expect older persons to be less active and productive, may worsen the situation (Grundy & Holt, 2001). Such practices may give rise to ageism and discrimination for the elderly, which makes them limited in many aspects of life and diminishes their dignity and respect for themselves. Moreover, old age can be correlated with feelings of social exclusion or lack of connections, which can add to the experienced undervalue or unimportance.

### **DISCUSSION**

William Shakespeare's "Seven Ages of Man" presents a depiction of the life cycle that remains relevant to all ages, but the process of attaining those years is not easy. The preceding analysis relies upon Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, which highlights that social and emotional barriers throughout the life span affect one's ability to communicate. These barriers range from the challenge of developing trust in infancy to its consequent isolation in old age, and they promote difficulties in forming attachments as well as in managing emotional health.

The first part of the life described by Shakespeare's 'Seven Ages of Man' falls under an extremely sensitive age bracket. It is understood from a psychological perspective based on Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory that social barriers particularly impair an infant's capacity to build trust, which is an element critical for the healthy growth of an individual. The space around an infant and that includes the family may also be characterized by poverty, fear, and violence. Such variables create an atmosphere of threat that undermines the overall relationship between the infant and the primary caregiver. All of the above, coupled with external factors such as racism and lack of facilities, tend to make the situation even worse, thus preventing effective communication and emotional fulfillment from being attained.

Tackling these social barriers should be done at the very early developmental stages since they have pernicious effects. Support structures and strategies that fulfill the needs of infants, and their caregivers should be implemented as this will create a conducive setting for the establishment of trust and proper emotional growth. The benefit of this approach in the earliest years is likely to spread further, allowing for a society where interactions are easily encouraged and where the human instinct of socializing is advocated from the early stages.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Researchers should empirically study each stage of *Seven Ages of Man* in light of Erikson's theory, while also exploring communication barriers and interventions for those with social communication challenges.

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