

Social and Emotional Development of Children

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Emotional development takes place at various stages of a child. The first two years are particularly important. Observed the various emotional expressions of a child at various stages like the first four months, twelve months, eighteen months, and so on. Here, I shall highlight the different types of emotions the developmental psychologists have observed in children. I shall also highlight how the infants react to a stranger and the impact of separation of the child from his/ her mother.

Social development starts at infancy. You will learn in this article how social skills are developed in infancy and preschool stage and how friendship and relationships are developed.

At the end part of this article, I have discussed Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. You will be learning how developmental changes occur throughout people's lives in different stages.

Keyword: Social, Emotional, Development, Erikson, Separation

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I. INTRODUCTION

Human beings experience spontaneous emotions. Emotional reactions differs from one situation to another, from one person to another. How do these differences in emotion develop? How is this emotional development related to social development? In the last four decades Psychologists and Development lists have studied emotional development in children and have developed different theories about the causes of emotional development and offered different accounts of its chronology. Whatever, the following land marks one passed at roughly the following ages (Giles, 2002).

The development of emotion in infancy and childhood is one of the key aspects of individuality. Emotions contain biological and physiological components. When the infant is angry or experiences fear his/her heart rate and blood pressure increase, behavioral pattern changes. While playing with a toy, if an infant hears a bizarre and loud sound he/she drops the toy immediately and starts crying, because he/she is frightened.

Researchers have studied the nature of emotional development with the help of 'observation' as a technique. They observed facial expressions of the infants following their exposure to some sort of stimulation that is known to arouse specific emotions in adults (Giles, 2002).

Emotional Development in Different Stages

Birth to four months:

After birth only method of communication of a baby is crying. Generally, three different types of emotions are noted. Whenever the baby feels hungry, she/he cries. The babies are cries due to pain and anger too. If parents respond the cry of the baby immediately during this stage it fosters the development of a strong sense of trust. Social smiling begins during this period, and also anger and surprise.

Four to eight months:

During this period, the infant begins to express a wider range of emotions. The infant learns to express pleasure, fear and frustration through physical movement as smiling, arm waving, rocking and kicking. Emotions of fear, joy, surprise etc. are called primary emotions. The reasons for these emotions are difficult to understand all the times. An infant cries due to various reasons, e.g., hunger or pain. Infant can't say why he/she is crying. By observing facial expressions it is not easy to find out why he is crying.

Eighteen months:

During this stage, the infants develop complex emotion known as **secondary or social emotions**. Around this age, the infant starts to develop a sense of self, he/she can recognize his/her image in a mirror as himself/ herself. He/she begins to become independent of parents. The baby at this age has a broad range of emotional states. The emotional reactions fluctuate significantly. One minute the baby may be playing happily, the next moment lying on the floor crying. Emotions in this stage include shame, guilt and embarrassment.

Two year onwards:

From two years onwards most children become able to communicate their feelings in words. However, he do not always express the actual feelings. Sometimes they may say something, what they really think or feel, but sometimes they may say something what others may want to listen to. Again, the words they use convey their true meaning accurately as the baby has very limited number of words in his/her stock.

In the early childhood, children learn to control their emotions. They learn this through social interaction with other people, especially parents, siblings and peers. Parent is differing in the extent to which they love their children, and the degree to which they try to control behaviours. Parenting styles have important to implication for the children's development.

Fear of Strangers

Around the twelve to eighteen months, the infants react to stranger with fear manifested by crying. During the four to six months of infancy the infants often smile seeing the strangers. Slowly they develop fear and anxiety seeing a stranger. This stage may last up to middle of the second year. However, infant's responses to strangers depend on the stranger and on the context. Infants do not show fear seeing other children, probably due to the small size of the children. If the infant is faces a stranger in his own home along with mother, he shows less anxiety. But, the infant faces a stranger in an unfamiliar place, he may show more anxiety.

Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety appears in around twelve months. If take the infant for an outing leaving the mother at home, the infant will cry. This anxiety may be continue for eight to twelve months i.e. almost second year of life. But the anxiety reduces slowly. If the mother makes an arrangement to take the child in day-care centre, or leave the child with the caregiver daily since morning to evening, the infant becomes acquainted with the substitute caregivers. The separation becomes predictable to the child. But, if there is any unpredictable situation, with which the child is not familiar with, he may be anxious and frightened.

What is the psychological impact of separation? You may observe various kinds of reaction, if you study attentively any child during separation with his/her mother.

At the initial stage, the child may protest by crying loudly or not allowing any other person to take care of him/her.

In the next stage, the child may become apathetic to play and other activities. If the separation continues the child may develop a feeling of detachment and may slowly develop various emotional disturbances, which may affect his social, emotional and cognitive development.

Controlling Emotion

Once the child starts experiencing emotions, he/she needs to control them. How the children regulate emotion is one of the keys to understanding the emotional as well as social development in infancy and childhood. If emotions are well regulated, the children can enjoy social interactions with others. Through interactions the children learn new and important skills.

When the children start attending schools, they are able to self-control most of the emotions, although they continue to need some help.

They get help from their parents, teachers or members of their peer groups.

You may recall that, even in adult age, you need to speak or consult with parents, siblings, or friends when a particular situation makes you angry or sad. The interaction with others helps you regain control of those emotional reactions easily.

Generally, two situations commonly contribute to fear and anxiety in infants. They are - (i) fear of strangers and (ii) anxiety of separation.

Functions of Emotion

Can you think of your life without emotions? Our emotions play important functions in our life. Emotions are necessary due to the following functions they play.

(i) Emotions communicate information to others

Your emotions communicate to others how you feel in a particular time, particular place and after particular incident. Infants communicate their emotions to adults through non-verbal language (facial expressions, movement of feet, hands and body etc.). Adults communicate emotions to others with verbal and non-verbal language.

When you go to the classroom you may see a student's face looking sad. After inquiry you may come to know that he is feeling sad for the last two days or so, as his father is ill. Similarly, you may observe other emotions like joy, anger, surprise, fear and so on expressed through bodily gestures or through verbal language.

(ii) Emotions provide information about our environment and motivate us to take action

When you experience or feel fear, you are given information that there is some danger in the environment, so you must leave the place. As soon as you sense danger, you may start running to a safer place or environment. Again, you may see that a child is walking through the middle of the road and a speedy vehicle is coming towards him. You will be prompted to take immediate action.

(iii) Emotions help to become psychologically more mature

You must agree that human life without any emotion will be extremely boring. If there is no expression of joy, sadness, anger, surprise and so on, how do you come to know about others' feelings about you, other persons and objects? Similarly, how do we communicate our emotions to others?

Social Development

Social Development is the way in which Individual's interactions and relationships with others grow, change, and remain stable over the course of life (Feldman, 2010). A specialist in social development might examine the effects of poverty, divorce or racism on human development.

To address social development, we should highlight personality development also, as they are interlinked. We should focus on how children form a sense of *self* during the pre-school years, how they develop their self concepts including their concept of gender; how in the preschool they play in a group; how parents and others help children to maintain discipline and behavioural norms; how the children develop the notion of right and wrong etc. These are some important topics for our understanding and discussion.

Infant's Social Skills

In a study T. Berry Brazelton and his colleagues observed a mother and an infant in natural, face-to-face interactions. They reported that long before the infants are able to speak, they are capable of taking turns in their interactions with their mothers. The face-to-face interaction between mother and infant involving smiles, surprises, lip movements and different sounds like cooing has a conversational quality. As the infants grow, they become much more skilled at give-and-take interactions. The researchers opined that this quality of interaction is a central part of the infant's developing social skills (Giles, 2002). Around the end of the first year of life, mother and infant are able to include objects, people, loud noise etc. into their conversation. You have observed that while playing with the baby, mother looks at the infant, smiles, picks up a toy, makes sound by shaking the toy and asks the baby 'is it not nice?' the infant becomes attentive to the sound of the toy, looks at it, smiles and try to grasp it.

When the infants grow further, they develop ability to act on the other objects and individuals and learn the social rules of communication.

Infants develop expectations about social behaviour of other people surrounding them. If their expectations are not fulfilled, they may show sign of frustration or anger.

If you sit face-to-face with a baby and interact with him/her by making eye contact, talking, smiling and cooing, the baby will make eye contact, smile and make pleasing sounds. If you change your facial expression, or there is no expression at all, you will observe immediate change in the baby's facial expression. He/she may show a sign of frustration or anger and also may start crying. The baby will understand that the expected social behaviour has been broken.

The baby will not be interested in your changed behaviour and look will away. If you establish the initial interaction once again by smiling, talking and making pleasant sound, the baby will resume face-to-face interaction.

Developmental theorists believe that social smiling is essential to the formation of a strong and secure attachment relationship (Giles, 2002). The baby enjoys interacting with parents and others through smiling.

Pre-school Stage

In the first part of the pre-school years, children enter the initiative-versus-guilt stage. Children face conflicts between the desire to act independently of their parents and the guilt that comes, if they do not succeed. They start to see themselves as individuals in their own right and also make decisions on their own (Feldman, 2010). Children in the preschool period start thinking about their self. They develop a self concept, a separate identify or a set of beliefs about what they are like as individuals. If you ask a child at this age in what way he is different from his friends or brothers, he may respond by saying he can throw a ball more forcefully than his friends or brothers or he can run faster than them and so on. These answers reflect his self concept-the way he thinks about himself.

Development of self concept is related to the culture of the children. In Indian culture, the children tend to regard themselves as parts of a larger social network which are interconnected with and responsible to others. In Western culture they perceive themselves as self-contained and autonomous.

Children's awareness of their ethnic identity is influenced by the attitudes of the people, schools and other cultural organizations with which they come into contact.

Gender Identity: Social Learning Approaches

Children learn gender-related behaviour by observing parents, teachers, siblings, relatives and others. A boy child may like to be a cricket or football player and becomes interested in that sport.

A girl child may like her teacher and may want to be a teacher herself.

Media play an important role in perpetuating the traditional views of gender-related behaviour. Media, television in particular, generally presents male and female in their traditional gender roles.

Sometimes training received from parents or other family members help shaping a particular behaviour. For example, parents may teach a girl to behave politely and the boy to become tough and strong.

Development of Friendship

The social contact of an infant starts from his/her family. During preschool age the children begin to develop friendships with other children. These friendships are based on the desire for companionship, play and fun. During this stage the focus of friendship is the playing jointly and getting pleasure of doing things together with the friends. Play serves a very important role in friendships.

In the previous unit, we have discussed the various types of play the children remain engaged in. You will find the children at the age of 3 engaged in *simple, repetitive play* such as skipping, jumping or pushing a toy again and again. Within another year the children would engage themselves in *constructive play*, for example, building house using wooden blocks. Through constructive play children learn to cooperate with others, which in turn helps to develop friendship. Slowly, they become engaged in another type of play called *associative play*, in which two or more children interact with one another by sharing toys. In *cooperative play*, children play with one another. In *pretend games* children use their knowledge of themselves and others. For example, children act as 'mother' or 'father' and play with their dolls.

Building Relationships

The birth of a baby in a family brings a significant change in attitude, behaviour and perception of parents. Parents should start building a relationship with their baby from the beginning. If there is any older children they must be taught to adjust with the newborn baby.

The process of social development during infancy is crucial. The bonds that grow between infants and their parents, siblings and others, provide the foundation for a lifetime's worth of social relationship (Feldman, 2010).

Psychologists believe that the most important aspect of social development that takes place during infancy is the formation of *attachment* or a positive emotional bond that develops between a child and a particular individuals e.g., mother. If a child is attached to his/her mother, he/she feels satisfied when mother is with him/her. According to Freud the attachment of a baby grew with his/her mother as mother is able to satisfy a child's oral needs. Bowlby suggested that attachment is based primarily on infant's needs for safety and security. The infant learns that mother can provide the best safety and security.

Mother understands the child's needs, feelings and emotions. Mother is responsive and always provides feeding whenever the child feels hungry. In infancy, the role of father is secondary. However, his warmth, affection and concern are important for the children's emotional and social development.

How do you know whether the infant is sociable to other children or not? An infant can express sociability in various ways: smile, vocalization, eye movements etc. Infants show more interest in other infants than any inanimate objects. After one year of age, infants start playing social games including other infants, parents and others.

Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

Psychosocial development encompasses changes in individual's understanding of themselves and of others' behaviours.

Erikson (1963) developed a theory to explain how individuals come to understand themselves and the meaning of others' and their own behaviour. His theory suggests that developmental change occurs throughout people's lives in eight distinct stages, the first of which occurs in infancy (Feldman, 2010).

Trust-versus-mistrust stage

According to Erikson, during the first 18 months of life, the infant passes through this stage. Infant develops a sense of trust or mistrust, mainly on the basis of their needs fulfillment. If the mother and others fulfill his/her needs successfully, the infant develops trust and sense of hope and in later stage can form close bond with others.

Feeling of mistrust, on the other hand, leads the infant to perceive the world as unfriendly. The infant may face difficulties in later stages in forming close bond with others.

Autonomy- versus-shame-and-doubt stage

According to Erikson's theory, at the end of infancy, children enter a new stage called **autonomy- versus-shame-and-doubt stage**. This stage lasts from around 18 months to 3 years. If parents encourage freedom and provide scope for exploration, children may develop independence and become autonomous. On the other hand, if children are over protected and restricted from doing things independently, they may develop self-doubt, unhappiness and shame.

Initiative-versus-guilt stage

Around the age of 3 the children enter into another stage called **initiative-versus-guilt stage**. This stage lasts upto 6 years. Erikson believes that children face conflicts between the desire to act independently and the guilt that develops if they don't succeed doing so. During the last part on this stage, the children learn to see themselves as persons in their own right and begin to make decisions on their own. At this stage parents should allow the children to act independently and at the same time should give them guidance and direction when necessary.

Industry-versus-inferiority stage

The industry-versus-inferiority stage starts around 6 years of age and lasts upto 12 years. This stage is characterized by efforts to meet the challenges presented by parents, teachers, peers and others.

During this stage children may direct their energies to mastering huge information presented in school and making a place for themselves in their social environment. If the children are successful in doing so, they develop a feeling of mastery and a sense of competence. On the other hand, if the children face difficulties in mastering information, they may develop a feeling of failure and inadequacy. They may show less interest in academic activities at home and in school, and may stop interactions with peers and others.

Researchers have found that the children who were most industrious and hardworking as children were most successful as adults, both professionally and personally (Valliant 2 Vaillant, 1981).

II. CONCLUSION

The development of emotion in infancy and childhood is one of the key aspects of individuality. Emotions contain biological and physiological components. After birth the only method of communication a baby uses is crying. During this period, the infant begins to express a wider range of emotions. Around this age, the infant starts to develop a sense of self, he/ she can recognize his/her image in a mirror as himself/ herself. From two years onwards most children become able to communicate their feelings in words. In early childhood children learn to control their emotions. When the children start attending schools, they are able to self-control most of the emotions, although they continue to need some help. Around twelve to eighteen months, the infants react to stranger with fear manifested by crying. Separation anxiety appears in around twelve months. If you take the infant for an outing leaving mother home, the infant will cry. This anxiety may continue for eight to twelve months i.e. almost second year of life. Social Development is the way in which Individual's interactions and relationships with others grow, change, and remain stable over the course of life. Long before the infants are able to speak, they are capable of taking turns in their interactions with their mothers. As the infants grow, they become much more skilled at give-and-take interactions. Around the end of the first year of life, mother and infant are able to include objects, people, loud noise etc. into their conversation. When the infants grow further, they develop an ability to act on the other objects and individuals and learn the social rules of communication. Developmental theorists believe that social smiling is essential to the formation of a strong and secure attachment relationship. In the first part of preschool years, children enter the initiative-versus-guilt stage. Development of self concept is related to the culture of the children. In Indian culture the children tend to regard themselves as parts of a larger social network which are interconnected with and responsible to others. Children learn gender-related behaviour by observing parents, teachers, siblings, relatives and others. The social contact of an infant starts from his/her family. During the preschool age the children begin to develop friendships with other children. The process of social development during infancy is crucial. The bonds that grow between infants and their parents, siblings and others, provide the foundation for a lifetime's worth of social relationship. Psychologists believe that the most important aspect of social development that takes place during infancy is the formation of *attachment* or a positive emotional bond that develops between a child and a particular individuals e.g., mother. An infant can express sociability in various ways: smile, Vocalization, eye movements etc. Infant develops a sense of trust or mistrust, mainly on the basis of their needs fulfillment. If the mother and others fulfill his/her needs successfully, the infant develops trust and sense of hope and in later stages can form close bond with others. If parents encourage freedom and provide scope for exploration, children may develop independence and become autonomous. Around the age of 3 the children enter into another stage called

initiative-versus-guilt stage. The industry-versus-inferiority stage starts around 6 years of age of the child and lasts up to 12 years. This stage is characterized by efforts to meet the challenges presented by parents, teachers, peers and others.

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