A mini review on emotional socialization practices and emotional development.

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Abstract

Emotional Socialization (ES) refers to the process of understanding and learning to manage emotions, as well as the feelings of others among children. It is a crucial aspect of human development and has been the focus of much research in psychology. However, there are still several research gaps in our understanding of the ways children are socialized to be emotionally competent. Based on the review of existing literature from different databases, including, Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science, some major gaps in the literature emerged, significant for the future researchers to investigate thoroughly. One significant gap is the lack of consensus on defining and measuring emotional socialization.

Another gap is the limited understanding of the long-term effects of different emotional socialization practices on children's emotional development. Along with the longitudinal studies, there is also a lack of research on the cultural and contextual factors influencing emotional socialization practices. In addition, there is a need for more research on the effectiveness of different interventions for promoting parental emotional socialization of children. This article explains the phenomena of emotional socialization with emphasis on the various avenues for future research prospects and elaborates on the culture-specific nuances of emotional socialization practices.

Keywords: Emotional development, Emotional socialization, Parenting behaviors, Child care.

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Introduction

Emotional development is a complex process that refers to the development of emotional capabilities and the ability to regulate emotions effectively. It is a critical aspect of maturation, as it plays a significant role in shaping one's personality, behavior, and relationships with others [1]. The involvement of emotional abilities in identifying and understanding one's feelings, and the emotions of others allows an individual to have healthy and sustainable interpersonal relationships, because of situational appropriate emotional responses [2]. It allows one to develop effective coping strategies to overcome hardships in one's life by enhancing one's ability to manage stress and adversity, which is equally essential for maintaining mental and physical health [3].

It also plays a crucial role in allowing individuals healthily express themselves and understands the emotions and needs of others, building and nurturing solid relationships [4]. Optimal emotional development equally allows individuals to develop psychological resilience, that is, the ability to bounce back from challenges and setbacks [5]. It is a quintessential source for achieving personal goals, maintaining healthy relationships, and overall wellbeing. In nutshell, optimal emotional development is essential for maintaining healthy relationships, achieving personal goals, and overall well-being. It involves understanding emotions, self-regulation, coping skills, communication, and resilience.

Many positive psychologists focus on investigations on the causal associations of various constructs measuring emotional development in individuals at different life stages, for instance, emotional intelligence, emotional competence and alike. For instance, the extant literature in organizational studies is saturate by the ideas that 'emotional intelligence' is a highly appreciated ability of an individual, which has reverential functional outcomes at multiple levels of interpersonal exchanges at workplace, say leader-follower relationship, customer relations, psychological wellbeing, and many alike [6]. On the other hand, various development studies also emphasize on the relevance of assessing emotional competence of children and validating their developmental trajectories with respect to certain age-related milestones and its consequences for their optimal functioning [7].

However, little have the positive scholars shown interest in examining the beliefs, practices, and cultures which allows the individuals to inculcate the emotional competence/intelligence at various life stages? Select few scholars, especially in Indian sub-continent, illuminate the psychological basis of emotional development, and highlight the intricacies of these phenomena [8]. Yet, the emphasis of these studies centers on role of

mothers, and urban cultural context in few western Indian states. Thus, the present study calls the attention of positive psychologists and scholars towards the 'emotional socialization practices' and urges to look beyond the cross-sectional causal study designs to answer the question: "How to develop an individual emotionally?".

Literature Review

Emotional socialization practices

The process by which children learn to recognize, express, and regulate their emotions in response to social and cultural norms, known as 'emotional socialization,' forming the fundamental concept leading to emotional development [9]. This process involves socialization agents, such as parents, peers, and teachers, who teach children to regulate their emotions appropriately based on cultural and social norms. For instance, parents may encourage their children to express positive emotions, such as happiness and excitement, but discourage the expression of negative emotions, such as anger and sadness. Emotional socialization can have long-term effects on children's emotional development, social competence, and mental health outcomes. Children who receive positive emotional socialization, characterized by warm and supportive parenting and the encouragement of emotional expression, tend to have better emotional regulation skills, higher self-esteem, and better social relationships. Overall, emotional socialization plays a crucial role in children's emotional development and has important implications for their well-being and social functioning [10].

Emotional development refers to how individuals learn to recognize, understand, and regulate their emotions. In contrast, emotional socialization refers to how individuals learn to express and respond to emotions in social contexts. There is a strong relationship between emotional development and socialization, as social interactions are crucial for developing emotional competence. There are several different definitions of emotional socialization proposed by various theorists in the field of psychology. Eisenberg, et al. defined emotional socialization as "The process by which individuals acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to recognize, express, and regulate their emotions in response to social and cultural norms." They argue that emotional socialization practices, such as parental modeling of emotional expression and response, shape children's emotional development and regulation [11].

Halberstadt, et al. defined emotional socialization as "The socialization of emotion expression and regulation, encompassing the messages, practices, and values children learn about emotions from significant others in their social environment" [12]. Additionally, Denham, et al. [8] defined emotional socialization as "The process by which parents and other socializers teach children the skills, values, and attitudes needed to manage their own emotions and those of others in socially competent ways". They provided an overview of the socialization of emotional competence, which refers to acquiring skills and knowledge necessary for managing emotions in social interactions. Their argument that in

emotional socialization practices like parental support and emotional coaching is critical for developing emotional competence holds much worth.

Similarly, the article by Kopp [13] discusses the role of socialization in the development of emotional regulation, which involves the ability to manage one's emotions in response to environmental demands. They argue that emotional regulation is learned through social interactions and that parents play a critical role in teaching children how to regulate emotions. Morris, et al. [14] examined the role of family context in the development of emotion regulation, which is essential for emotional development and socialization. They proposed that family processes, such as parental emotion socialization practices and the quality of parent-child relationships, are critical for developing emotion regulation and, consequently, emotional competence.

These definitions highlight the importance of emotional socialization in teaching children how to manage their emotions and interact with others in socially appropriate ways. They also emphasize the role of socialization agents, such as parents and significant others, in shaping children's emotional development and provide evidence that emotional development and socialization are firmly related and that social interactions, particularly those within the family, play a critical role in developing emotionally.

Context and socialization of emotions

Emotional development refers to the growth and maturation of emotional processes and capacities throughout a person's life [14,15]. It encompasses a range of psychological processes, including the experience, expression, regulation, and recognition of emotions [16]. Emotional development is a complex process influenced by various factors, including genetics, brain development, and social and cultural experiences. For example, research has shown that early experiences with caregivers can profoundly impact children's emotional development [2]. Children who receive responsive and sensitive caregiving tend to develop more secure attachment styles and better emotional regulation skills.

In contrast, children who experience neglect or abuse may develop emotional problems and difficulties with self-regulation. In adolescence and adulthood, emotional development continues as individuals develop more complex emotional experiences and establish their own emotional identities [17-20]. Factors such as social relationships, life experiences, and culture can shape emotional development in these later stages of life. Overall, emotional development is a crucial aspect of human development that has important implications for psychological well-being, social relationships, and overall quality of life [21]. However, scarce psychological investigations to unravel the nuances of contextual and cultural impact on the emotional development process, coupled with limited research on measuring such practices, call for attention. It encourages the necessity of exploring and reviewing the extent of existing knowledge concerning cultural and contextual factors contributing to the emotional development

of an individual in a holistic way to provide strategic implications for a nurturing environment for child development [22-25].

Measurement of emotional socialization

Emotional socialization refers to how parents or caregivers teach children to understand, express, and regulate emotions. The measurement of emotional socialization typically involves self-report questionnaires, observational coding of parent-child interactions, and physiological measures of emotional response. Measuring emotional socialization involves multiple methods of assessing parents' and children's emotional expressions, regulations, and responses. Numerous studies have used these measures to examine the impact of emotional socialization on child outcomes [26,27].

One commonly used self-report measure of emotional socialization is the Emotion-related Parenting Styles Scale (EPSS), developed by Fabes and colleagues [11]. The ERPS measures parents' response to their children's emotions and includes subscales for emotion coaching (*i.e.,* helping children understand and regulate their feelings) and emotion dismissing (*i.e.,* minimizing or ignoring children's emotions). The ERPS has been used in numerous studies to investigate the impact of emotional socialization on child outcomes, such as social competence and behavioral problems [9,28].

Observational coding of parent-child interactions can also be used to measure emotional socialization. For example, the coding System for Emotional Expression, Emotional Regulation, and Socialization (SEERS) developed by Lunkenheimer, et al. [20] codes parents' and children's emotional expressions and regulatory strategies during parent-child interactions [29]. SEERS have been used to examine the relationship between emotional socialization and child outcomes such as emotion regulation and behavior problems. Finally, physiological measures such as heart rate variability and cortisol levels can be used to assess children's emotional responses and regulation during parent-child interactions. For example, a study by Suurland, et al. [21] used heart rate variability to examine the relationship between mothers' emotional socialization and children's emotion regulation during a frustrating task [30].

Discussion

Future research prospects

Considering the lifespan developmental approach, emotional development is markedly significant during the childhood. Wherein, the age of two to six years is marked by the learning associated with understanding and labelling one's emotions, and beginning of expressing a broad range of emotions, including happiness, anger, sadness, and fear [31-33]. Children at this age also begin to understand other's emotions and develop empathy. However, the emotional understanding and regulation is achieved significantly during six to 12 years of age, with an understanding of social rules, norms, and appropriate ways of expression to help them navigate in various social situations. However, little empirical evidence exists in the contemporary literature investigating this phenomenon, thus, creating a major lacuna in the field of emotional socialization [34-39]. Additionally, there is limited attention to cultural differences in emotional socialization practices. Most studies have been conducted in Western countries, and little is known about how parents from different cultural backgrounds socialize their children's emotions [40].

Furthermore, most studies on emotional socialization practices have focused on mothers, and there is limited research on the role of fathers and other caregivers [8]. Interestingly, not just the contextual and cultural influences, but the construct of 'emotional socialization' has been disputable and ambiguous. There is a lack of consensus on the definition of emotional socialization practices and how they should be operationalized [41]. Some researchers define emotional socialization practices as parents' explicit teaching of emotion-related knowledge and skills. In contrast, others define it more broadly to include all parental behaviors that influence children's emotional development.

Conclusion

There is also a lack of longitudinal studies that examine the development of emotional socialization practices over time and their effects on children's emotional development. Lastly, there are limited assessment tools for measuring emotional socialization practices. Most studies have relied on self-report measures, which may be subjected to bias, and few studies have used observational measures. Therefore, the author urges the future researchers to undertake research in emotional socialization, specifically from psychological perspective, to allow comprehensive knowledge of this phenomenon, so it becomes easier to appreciate its usefulness for optimal human functioning more effectively.

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