
Nature Vs. Nurture Of Childhood Attachment

Introduction

This report highlights the results of several studies carried out on the topic of the nature vs nurture effect of childhood attachment in the first subsection and ADHD in the second subsection.

It covers a critical review of generalities as well as the limitations of the studies and recommendations for further inquiry to achieve prevention, effective interventions, including coping, and strategies to improve treatment.

Childhood attachment

Childhood attachment is the relationship between the child and primary caregiver, which will develop in various strengths and forms. Every child is born with an innate need for safety, protection, and comfort (Cortazar & Herreros, 2010). This need is driven by neurobiological processes; as brain development requires activation by experiences to stimulate the cells (Sullivan, Sullivan-Wilson, & Rainecki, 2017).

ATTACHMENT THEORY

There is a direct relationship between an adult's social and emotional result and the attachment with their parent/ primary caregiver in and throughout childhood. This where childhood attachment is formed. The child-parent attachment styles are:

- Secure
- Insecure-avoidant
- Insecure-resistant
- Insecure-disorganized

Nurture

Studies have shown the experiences of a child with the parent / primary caregiver determine the type of attachment signified by a predisposition of affection when together or distress when separated. This is the environmental influence of the outcome of the attachment style; the interpersonal relationship represents the nurturing aspect of the attachment.

From a nurture perspective, empathy and emotional mirroring are factors that influence the psychological functioning of the child. Influences by the primary caregiver, this is learned from the emotional display congealed in the early years.

Nature

Genetics is the transference of characteristics by genes from biological parents to their children.

The DNA from parents determines physical and psychological development.

A study demonstrated the vulnerability of a child and that there is a congenital drive to attach to the primary caregiver through the oxytocin hormone (Sullivan, 2017).

The nature argument is scientifically proven via biological phenomena such as the affect regulation which proves the functioning of the limbic system and prefrontal cortex (Perry, 2002).

Nature vs Nurture

There is a wide debate about nature versus nurture on attachment theory, both factors influence the outcome in adulthood established from early years engineered by interactions with the caregiver.

This can be described as neurobiological processes influenced by interactional factors and the environment.

Human and animal studies have shown if emotional needs are not met and there is an unstable emotional attachment between primary caregiver and child, there are long-term consequences for brain functioning.

The childhood environment interacts with neurodevelopmental processes evidence shows synaptic pathways are affected and where connections are dysfunctional or non-existent, therefore, brain development is damaged/interrupted w.r.t. empathy and cognitive function (Newman, Sivaratnam, & Komiti, 2015).

The consequences are long-term and severe impacting every aspect of relations in adulthood.

Later outcomes in life - Social and emotional development

Mother or primary caregiver in our early life, this relationship/experience affects how we build future relationships which is the attachment theory – John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth.

Adult relationships and other patterns are a reflection of relationships in early life.

Studies have shown:

- In early years, securely attached children make friends at school and are optimistic whereas, the opposite occurs in insecurely attached mother-child relationships.
- Attachment styles are assessable by 12 months through mother-child exercises and predictions (77% accuracy) can be made at age three as to whether they would end up as high-school dropouts.
- With broken relationships with mother, up to 91% had health issues in adulthood, in comparison, children with a warm relationship with mother revealed just 41% with poor health diagnosis.

Biological

Studies postulate attachment forms before a child communicates, in a case where there are high levels of stress due to the inability to express, the child is affected biologically.

For example, the adrenal glands above the kidney produce stress hormones adrenalin and cortisol which increase the heart rate leading to high blood pressure. If this occurs regularly, it leads to toxic stress. In a child, toxic stress impairs brain development and the immune system is weakened.

Studies have shown that there is a switch in gene expression with long-term damaging effects and brain development is impaired (Bakermans-Kranenburg & Ijzendoorn, 2007).

A study revealed gene-to-gene interactions impacting the psychological health of a child in the early years (Lakatos et al., 2000).

Twin studies

A study on twin adults (mono and dizygotic), showed genetic effects accounted for three of the four attachment styles, whereas shared environment effects were accounted for just one, the dismissive style (Brussoni, Jang, Livesley, & Macbeth, 2000).

Several families and twin studies have indicated genetic/heritable influence; however, certain studies of parent-child attachments were inexplicable; therefore, it could be assumed other factors contribute to the outcome.

Twin studies (MZ and DZ), using the DAPP-BQ, MZ show stronger similarities. A 45% variance was observed of insecure attachment; therefore suggesting the heritability of attachment (Picardi, Fagnani, Nisticò, & Stazi, 2011).

Considerations are whether there is a balance in the gender ratio and numbers, i.e. male and female twins used in the study which hampered their ability to identify gender effects.

Gender-related susceptibility must be further studied using wider numbers of participants and wider geographies and environments. A global view may give better insight.

Also, methods of gathering data for assessment particularly with self-reporting which may be less reliable than using interview techniques. Therefore, this and other methods should be explored. Give further examples.

Recommendations – consideration and further study.

Conclusion

- Nature and nurture are intertwined, childhood attachment is both gender-driven and environment driven with a higher percentage being the latter. (CITE) It is input from the primary caregiver that determines the effects on the neurobiological processes. Stress triggers INSERT
- Caregivers, childcare providers, teachers (particularly in the early years), and social workers should understand the principles of attachment theory to be effective in their

roles of nurturing children into well-rounded adults.

- Exploring/examining childhood attachment is a tool for psychoeducation and psychological interventions.