

Changes and Risk Factors Involved in Adolescence during Social and Emotional Development

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ABSTRACT

Major social and emotional development takes place during adolescence which shapes the life of an individual. Social and emotional developments both intertwined and the adolescence is the base age for these developments. In adolescence, individuals undergo changes during these developments such as, how to interact with family, friends and peers. They learn and understand the concept of emotional regulation and emotional expressions which help them to tackle critical situations. Due to social and emotional development they learn to form and maintain a healthy interpersonal relationship and self-esteem. At the time of these developments some individuals may develop problems which may lead to the mental health issues. There are various risk factors involved such as, conflictual family environment, low socio-economic status and parental separation etc. which may lead to the mental health issues or problems like, depression, eating disorder and substance abuse and other psychological problems. Various psychological interventions have been reported which can be provided during social and emotional developmental process which would be helpful for individuals to deal with the issues and risks. Moreover, the author has attempted to figure out the changes which take place during social and emotional development in adolescence and what are the relevant risk factors involved in the developmental process. Author has also explored about the mental health issues and their intervention in adolescence during these developments.

Keywords: *Adolescence, social and emotional development, mental disorders, and intervention.*

Adolescence is a transitional period between late childhood and beginning of adulthood. It involves sexual maturity and is also characterized by an increase in the complexity of group interactions and thus social behavior (Lerner and Steinberg, 2004). Adolescence involves consolidation of the social self, of one's identity and understanding of the self in relation to the social world (Coleman and Hendry, 1990).

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The psychosocial context of the adolescents is quite different from children and adults. Distinct changes are found during this developmental period in context of relationship with family members, peers and society. Adolescents begin to develop more control over their decisions, emotions and actions. They gradually start disengaging from their parental control. At the same time, the school context involves an intense socialization process during which adolescents become increasingly aware of the perspectives of classmates, teachers and other societal influences (Berzonsky and Adams, 2003).

Adolescence goes through a lot of behavioral and emotional changes and every child goes through these changes. The developmental process at this age is crucial. Major development at this age involves social and emotional development. Adequate developments of these factors lead to a healthy personality of an individual. There are various risk factors involved which affect the developmental process and causes mental health issues in adolescents.

Social Development

In adolescence, it is noticeable that there are changes in adolescents' way of interacting with family members, peers and society during social development. These social changes show that adolescents are forming an independent identity and learning to be an adult. During social development adolescents search for their identity; who they are and where they belong in the world. They seek more independence in the process of decision making and judgment. They seek more responsibility at home and at school also.

Adolescents search for new experiences and think more about right and wrong. At this age they are more influenced by the peer group and friends. At this age they develop self esteem and sexual identity also. However they are more into the development of social behavior and it brings social changes in their life and it affects their mental health also.

Emotional Development

In adolescents, it has been seen that they go through a lot of emotional changes along with social changes. During emotional development adolescents may show strong feelings and intense emotions at different times. Their mood might seem unpredictable in certain situations. At this stage adolescents learn how to control and express emotions in a grown-up way. They are more sensitive to other's emotions as they may have difficulty in judging the facial expressions and they tend to misinterpret the emotional expressions.

At this age of emotional development adolescents seem to be more self-conscious, especially about physical appearance and changes. They may compare their physical appearance with others and it affects their emotions and its development. Adolescents go through an invincible stage of thinking and acting as if nothing bad could happen to them. Their judgment and decision making ability keep developing at this stage.

During the emotional development adolescents experiences various changes in their relationships. They may shift their preference from family to friends. They like spending time

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with friends and peers instead of family. Since they go through a lot of changes in emotions they seem to engage in arguments and disagree at certain topics with elders. Their perception of events may differ from the others' perception which causes more conflict and disturbances in their emotional development.

Risk Factors Involved During Social and Emotional Development

Social and emotional developmental itself and its process bring a lot of changes in adolescence. These changes manifest in both positive and negative behaviors. Some problematic behaviors can lead to the development of mental health issue. Hence, in the process of social and emotional development there are some common risk factors whose presence is found to be a major contribution in the occurrence of mental illness. Major risk factors are dysfunctional family or conflicts in family; lower socio-economic status; parental separation; geographical living area; school environment; identity crisis; unrealistic expectations; lack of independence and so on.

When we talk about dysfunctional family it means the family is not functioning well according to the social norms and there are conflicts among family members. If the child is grown up in a dysfunctional family then his/her concepts are not formed properly. Milestones may also not be achieved properly. It affects adolescents' social and emotional development both. There are chances that they would not learn how to behave in society and emotional expressions might get affected. Usually adolescents belonging to lower socio-economic status have difficulty in adequate social development because they are generally rejected by the society in every social situation. These rejections are a major cause which develops feeling against the society and societal norms within them.

Parental separation is considered to be very sensitive in case of adolescents and younger children. Adolescence is the age of social and emotional development and during this if gets negatively affected by any incidence then there are high chances that it will be dysfunctional and would lead to mental health issues. Parental separation affects their emotional development deeply. They can develop feeling against marriage or love or they can hate couples too. It affects their trust on relationship and emotional connections. They can learn various unacceptable behaviors such as playing with others' emotion etc. Geographical area or living area of adolescents also plays an important role in the development of social and emotional development. In rural areas exposure is limited which can limit the social development of the adolescents.

Adolescents are more towards the development of their own decision making and problem solving ability. Very often they get confused that for some activity they can make their own decision but for some they are not allowed by the parents. These kinds of confusions create confusion in them and they feel lack of independence which affects their social and emotional development. They are very much likely to experience identity crisis also at this stage. This negatively affects their developments. Hence these risk factors should be kept in mind and dealt properly when child reaches to the stage of adolescence to avoid unnecessary mental health issues.

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Mental Health Issues

On the basis of changes occurring during adolescence presence of certain mental health issues can be expected if the developments were problematic. Adolescents who have experienced parental separation or rejection from the society due to lower socio-economic status are more prone to develop anxiety and depression disorder. Inadequate school environment and lack of exposure can cause disturbance in the proper development and due to that they develop inappropriate coping skills. Faulty coping skills may lead them to the development of substance abuse, binge eating and asocial behaviors. There are high chances that adolescents may develop personality disorders later in life due to the presence of these problems at this stage. Inappropriate emotional development might induce development of borderline personality disorder. Parental separation, lack of independence and inadequate school environment may develop a social or antisocial personality disorder in adulthood. Therefore negative changes during social and emotional development are major source of development of mental health issues. So it is necessary to have proper precaution before these changes take place in adolescents.

Intervention Programs to Deal with These Issues

Social and emotional issues in adolescents are very commonly found and these issues start taking place at the beginning of adolescence. Hence if one plans to take care of these issues then detailed plan should be ready to use the techniques or strategies to prevent adolescent from these issues.

Parents play an important role in adolescents' social and emotional development. Most of their issues are precipitated and maintained by the parents also. Since parents are primary care giver and spends great amount of time with the child since birth they are the best ones to take precautions for these issues. There are many parents who are not even aware about the developmental stages a child goes through. So the mental health professionals first need to spread awareness among parents about the developmental stages and the expected changes to be found in adolescents at these stages. If the parents are aware about the changes then it would help them to identify the maladaptive behavior or negative changes at the beginning only. These issues are easy to deal with if they are identified early. Psycho-education is a kind of psychotherapy which is suggested to be given to the parents of adolescents having social and emotional developmental issues. In psycho-education they are explained in detail about the whole developmental process of a normal child and then the developmental process and issues of their child is explained. They are told about the techniques or strategies to be used with the child. They are also told to have realistic expectation from the child.

Along with the psycho-education child can be targeted for behavioral modification techniques if it is needed. In behavior modification the maladaptive behaviors are identified and worked upon each at a time. All the maladaptive behaviors are decreased or removed and adaptive behaviors are reinforced and encouraged. For any kind of emotional issues other standard psychotherapy techniques such as Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), supportive therapy, solution-focused brief therapy and so on can be used with the adolescents.

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Apart from these psychotherapy techniques adolescents can be provided life skills training to deal with social and emotional developmental issues. Personal skills and interpersonal skills training would be greatly effective if it is provided to the adolescents at the right time. Personal skills help them to adjust in the personal life and with the society and helps to take proper care of self. Interpersonal skills help them to maintain good relationship with the people. It again helps them to adjust with the society. Problem solving and decision making skills are also important skills for adolescents to deal with social developmental issues. They can use effective techniques of problem solving and decision making to resolve their own personal conflicts and social conflicts as well.

There are other two life skills, coping with stress and coping with emotion, which are essential for adolescents. During adolescence various emotional issues occur in the individuals and many a times they are not able to handle or deal with it alone properly. Very often they may adopt some faulty coping strategies to deal with these issues and later on it can lead to the problems. At the adolescence stage individuals may experience stress because of various changes in external and internal environment so it is necessary to provide them effective coping skills to deal with stress and emotions.

CONCLUSION

Adolescence is the age at which many individuals experience social and emotional developmental issues. Some adolescents can resolve their issues at their own level by using effective coping strategies but in some it is difficult to identify issues and then to work upon them. In adolescents it is found that their personal life is severely affected due to these issues. In social and emotional developmental issues adolescents may experience poor interpersonal relationship, feeling of lack of independence, emotional instability, poor coping skills and so on. Because of these symptoms they might experience various psychological disorders due to persistent issues. Among psychological disorders few are more common which are generally found in adolescents and those are depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, adjustment disorder, substance abuse and personality disorder at adulthood. In this research paper author has attempted to focus upon the risk factors involved in adolescence during social and emotional development and how these risk factors can cause mental health issues in them. Author has also discussed about the possible psychological intervention techniques to be used with adolescents to treat these issues. Further empirical study with large number of population can be carried out in future to establish the findings.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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