

Long-term Impact on Early Childhood Development and Education

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ABSTRACT

Children are a gift of nature and precious human resources for any nation. The worldwide fact is that childhood constitutes the most crucial period in the life because, during the period, foundations are laid for motor, sensory, cognitive, language, social and personality development means all round development. Development means changes in a forward direction and holistic development. Child development is not just child becoming bigger; it involves development in many areas physical, mental, emotional, and psychological and so on. We may define child development as a progressive series of changes of an orderly and coherent type toward the goal of maturity. It can be observed, appraised and measured. As normally believed, development doesn't start with birth. Birth is only a point, a stage, when the fetus emerges out to be independent of the mother. As a result of then the newly born or neonatal will have developed considerably physically and in sensory motor areas even a fetus shows complex behavior. Development begins with conception. Prenatal development covers development from conception to birth, while postnatal covers development after birth. In this connection, development is a continuous process, although rate of development varies within a child for different bodily parts and for different types of behavior and from child to child. Although continuous, development proceeds stage by stage. All type of behavior do not appear in a child at the same time, each becomes manifest at a certain stage. In general, for each typical behavior there appears to be a stage, although there are individual differences on the rate of development. So, early childhood years should be full of experiences and interactions with peers, parents, family members and other adult care givers for the holistic development (all-round development) of the children.

Keywords: *Child Development, Lifespan Development, Psychosocial Perspective, Child Psychology, Stimulation.*

The First 1000 Days: Shaping Children's Future

For expediency, child psychologists have measured development in terms of chronological age. For instance, fetus development is described in terms of 9 months or 37 weeks (270 days). Infancy, babyhood, early childhood and late childhood are stages measured in years. Schooling periods offer another convenient mode of fixing stages like preschool, primary and so on or grade wise, classification. Yet, it should be remembered that

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age or grade are only convenient points for reference and are not absolute thresholds within which development happen.

In the other words, the first 1000 days of life (from pregnancy to child's second birthday) is a unique period of opportunity when the foundations for optimum health and development across the lifespan are established. The right nutrition and care during the 1000 days window influences not only whether the child will survive.

The first 1000 days of life (from conception to 2 years of age)

First 1000 Days Concept: The Critical Window to Ensure that Children Survive and Thrive			
	Period	Month	Days
1	Pregnancy Period	9 Month	270 Days
2	Exclusive breastfeeding	6 Month	180 Days
3	Breastfeeding along with complementary feeding	18 Month	550 Days
Total = 1000 Days			

Play Activities for Lifespan Development

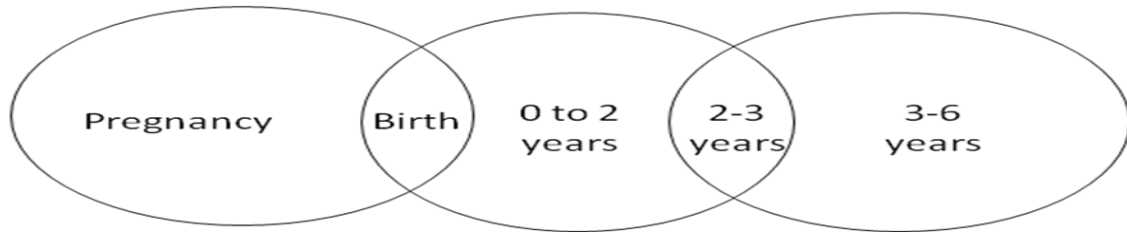
Play is an important and integral part of the life of any child. Play is a non-serious and self-contained activity engaged for the sheer satisfaction it brings to children. Development in each domain can be promoted by giving each child a chance to participate in a wide variety of play based activities. These activities allow the child to engage actively in the process, to learn, practice and master skills at each level, to test and evaluate, and to develop self confidence and motivation to achieve. Though several activities have been suggested for each domain, it must be emphasized that every activity addresses several domains. For expediency, each activity has been shown only once, but would have an impact in other domains too. Such as, jealousy in most children is noticed between 18 to 24 months. A group of four to five year olds may place some leaves and flowers in a row and act as though it were a feast. All these are instances of play. Almost all self initiated activities of children are instances of play in their natural context. Finally, play is a natural path for children and they actively participate in constructing their environment. A learning environment, which allows the maximum opportunities for play, is therefore best suited for children's growth and development.

Early childhood refers to the early stage of development. Early childhood indicates the period of a child from the prenatal stage to the age of 8 years. The whole period of early childhood that comprises of four distinct sub stages are considered to be the most critical period in the lifespan of a human being. The four sub stages are as follows –

1. Pregnancy to perinatal {fetus development of 9 months or 37 weeks (270 days)}.
2. 0-3 years
3. 3-6 years
4. 6-8 years

The National Policy on Education (NPE) considers early years to be the period from 0-6 years, and its guidelines on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) also considers early years to be from 0-6 years. The earliest years of a child's life is said to be a crucial stage, as the survival rate of a child gets determined at this stage. The foundation for his/her learning gets laid by developing physical, social, cognitive and emotional skills needed for successful living. Early childhood period has spanning the age group of 0-6 years. In fact, 0-6 years as a foundation period is fundamental values and social skills.

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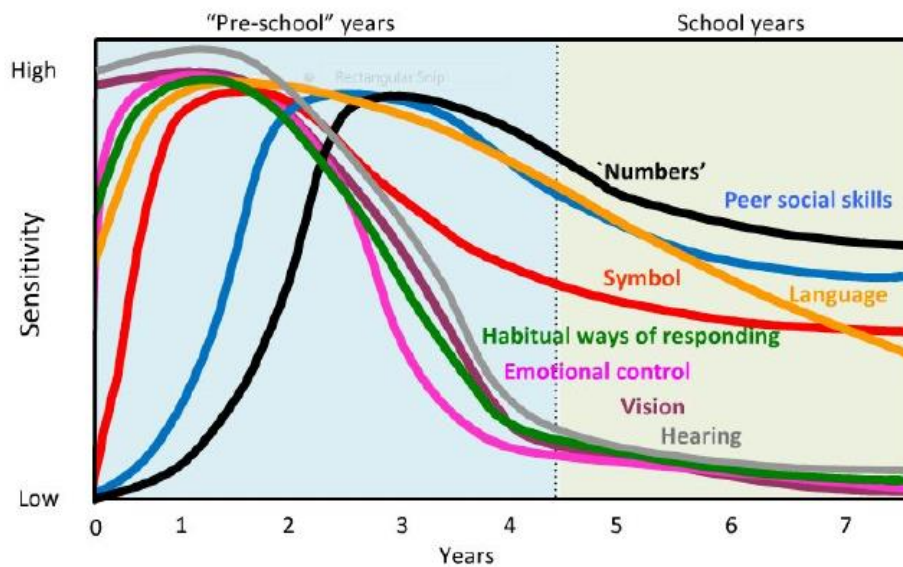


Intervention periods in lifecycle

Different Domains of Child Development with Stimulation

The term development refers to the modern collection of orderly and coherent acquisition of more than a few abilities. It is the gradual manner of trade and differentiation from an easy to a greater superior stage of complexity. Thereby development leads to maturity. The term progressive signifies that the adjustments are directional that lead ahead as a substitute than backward. The term orderly and coherent suggest that there is a clear relationship between the changes taking place and that follow. The physical development is found to be rapid at one stage of life than in the other, wherein the other domain's pattern of changes is just the opposite but do influence the overall development. Developmental milestones are the skills that a child should acquire within a period. Stimulation is any specific event that causes someone to do something.

'Sensitive periods' in early brain development



Adapted from Nash, 1997; *Early Years Study*, 1999; Shonkoff, 2000.

Child development, a part of human development, focuses on the developmental change and constancy of human beings from conception through adolescence. The child's development can be thought of in different domains or aspects. These are all intimately interrelated and interdependent and interact with each other, so it may be often difficult to separate them. So far, it is important to do so, lest any domain is neglected and curriculum can be planned to attend to all domains and achieve holistic development. Holistic development of a child consists of catering to the development of the entire characteristics of growth in the child. Overall, eight types of domains for child development such as fine motor, sensory, cognitive, language, emotional, social, personal, gross motor and alternative six i.e. affective, psycho motor, cognitive, social-personal, aesthetic, motor. In other words, to address the five major goals of the field of child development and to make the vast

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interdisciplinary field into smaller bytes for convenience and comprehensive understanding, the field of child development is categorized into three major domains namely physical, psycho-social (emotions, inter-personal relationship and moral development), and cognitive domains.

A holistic and integrated approach (Integrated Child Development) based on the continuum of growth, development and early learning for the child under 8 years through convergence and synergies in order to provide health, nutrition, care and early education (in local language) opportunities for holistic development of young children.



Socio-emotional + Cognitive + Physical = Child Development.

Cognition refers to the inner processes and products of the mind that lead to 'knowing'. It includes all mental activity – attending, remembering, symbolising, categorising, planning, reasoning, problem solving, creating and fantasising (Berk, 2008).

Four processes are involved in the process of cognition as proposed by Jean Piaget. They are Schemas, Assimilation and accommodation, Equilibrium and disequilibrium, Organisation. It involves memory, attention, language, reasoning and creativity.

The significance of the first eight years of a child's life is globally recognized to be the most critical years for life-long development. The pace of development of a child during this period is extremely rapid. In fact, early Childhood refers to the formative stage of first six years of life, with well-marked sub-stages [{"conception to birth i.e. fetus development of 37 weeks or 9 months (270 days)}]; birth to three years (0-3 years) and three years to six years (3-6 years)] having age-specific needs, following the life cycle approach. It is the period of most rapid growth and development and is critical for survival. Growing scientific evidence confirms that there are critical stages in the development of the brain during this period which influence the pathways of physical and mental health, and behavior throughout the life cycle. Deficits during this stage of life have substantive and cumulative adverse impacts on human development.

India is known for its deep-rooted custom of esteeming its child and a rich inheritance of social practices to invigorate their improvement, instill esteem framework and cultivate social aptitudes. Beyond any doubt Indians had understood the significance of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) early. Be that as it may, this acknowledgment was principally drilled through customary kid care techniques inside the setting of joint families. In contemporary India, with a significant change in the financial and social setting, the need to rethink the methodology towards youth care and instruction was required, as both, the guardians are working in the present situation. Guardians bringing their youngsters up in this

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changed family structure are profoundly reliant on kid care focuses; network based early learning habitats and preschools for giving the required incitement and sustained learning condition. With this change in the circumstance, these focuses assume a vital job in raising dependable residents.

Role of Play

Touch, talk and play are the three key messages around which activities are built. Parents and caregivers have a critical role to play in the development of their children. The family becomes the key site for parent-child interactions. Knowledge, attitude, skills of parents and caregivers on child development is crucial. In fact, play is an important vehicle for children's development, and a reflection of their development. On the other hand, play is practical, true and a regularly suggested instructional activity for children. Some of the advantages of play consisting of social, emotional, cognitive and physical development can be achieved only through play. Children examine how to have interaction with friends when engaged in play things to do whilst additionally constructing on necessary schemas about the actual world. Play is a fun journey for all children. Children of all a while will spend many hours collaborating in play things to do due to the fact play helps their perception of their social surroundings and enables their efforts to construct a practical experience of self. Play has a splendid cost in that it assists youth in exploring and grasps a number of roles and social interaction techniques. Finally, play is an instinct, need, joyful, interesting, fun, brain building and must do activity for children.

Play Method

Through play children gain a lot in all the areas of improvement which affords them blissful experiences and indicates them the route to the world in a child's life. Children are very a lot keen about play which purposefully fulfills the child's wish which helps to beautify improvement in children and leads them to learning. It's an unforgettable reality that play is the best items which assist in pursuing activity and exploring all the minute matters viewed or unseen over the surroundings and treasures it in their hearts for the future. Play is one of these unavoidable sources which can be renewed as per the child's pastime and growth. Play has by no means been secure in a child's life; play receives started out when the baby takes initiative and ends when the infant decides to do something special or any individual interrupts the child's play time. Play is one of the sensible sources recommended to the educators for children on the grounds that play is a proper approach the place children acquire expertise about their surrounding through their senses. Young children are very much dependent on sensory learning and physical contact with the environment (Catron and Allen, 2007). Learning will become a whole lot less difficult when the toddler broadly speaking makes use of his/her senses for playing. Children get encouragement in play when they get worried in lively and applicable or significant kinds of play which is without difficulty fascinating for children and helps in learning.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

India was found to be successful in developing a supportive policy framework by launching the major initiative ICDS in 1975. This programme targets the all-round development of a child by adopting lifecycle perspective. It involves pregnant and lactating mothers, adolescent girls and children of 0-6 years. ECCE is a major component of ICDS. NPE, 1986, recognised the importance of ECCE and emphasised joyful learning by discouraging the formal instruction of 3 R's (reading, writing and arithmetic). "Focus on health, nutrition and early psycho-social stimulation through free play and a lot of adult child interaction" (ECCE Policy, 2013).

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The terms 'Care' and 'Education' in ECCE are inseparable as both are essential and reinforce each other to create a strong foundation for a child's subsequent (continuous) learning and well-being.

- Care includes health, nutrition and hygiene in the secure nurturing environment.
- Education provides stimulation, socialisation, guidance, participation, learning and developmental activities.

ECCE programme is organised in a variety of forms in formal, non-formal and informal settings such as Home-based child care programmes, Community – based programmes combining health nutrition and early stimulation, Formal preschool and school readiness programme facilitating a smooth transition to primary school. Realising the need to meet the demands ECCE, public, private and non-governmental organisations had come up with the above mentioned four forms of ECCE programmes.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (M/o WCD) plays a pivotal role in ECCE activities in India. Through ICDS initiated in the year 1975, India has been providing free of charge service in areas of health, nutrition and education to children in rural areas, slums and underdeveloped areas through Anganwadis – The Courtyard Shelter.

NGO's are established and run by individuals, trusts, religious organisation and corporates. They also had initiated ECCE programmes as part of their social responsibility.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) refer to the widely used term 'ECCE as a range of processes and mechanisms that sustain and support development during the early years of life'. It encompasses education, physical, social and emotional care, intellectual stimulation, health care and nutrition. It also includes the support a family and community need to promote children's healthy development.

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has pointed out that investing in early childhood development is the best investment as

- Its proven that children who receive proper care, nutrition and stimulation in the first five years do much better in school and life
- It could see children earn 25 percent more as adults
- It could help the child's brain grow strong and healthy

UNICEF also adds that the brain of a child, who's nourished and nurtured, read to and played with, protected from factors like stress and conflict, has the best chance of developing its potential.

Learning Techniques in ECCE

- Songs and rhymes
- Story telling
- Nature walk
- Role Play
- Practical = learning by doing
- Conversation/dialogue – free and guided
- Play – free, guided and with materials

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Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) in ECCE with more inputs in understanding the guiding principles for educators in delivering it in an effective manner. Understanding young children, their strengths and weaknesses and fostering self-regulation as the key strategic planning for DAP would have provided you with an insight into how understanding the simple facts about children through scientific views make a difference in early learning.

Understanding Child Psychology

Play is a mode of psycho-physical recreation of a child. Psycho-physical recreation involves relaxation of brain, nerve, neuro, fine and large muscles of body. Effective eye-hand and two-hand coordination is an important part of child's developmental milestone. Eye-hand and two-hand coordination involves activities related to sorting (seeds/different, small/big), classification (size, shape, colour), grouping and balancing. Activities like walking, climbing stairs, playing musical instruments, stirring food in a bowl, sorting seeds, marbles, grains, stones using tools require efficiency in eye-hand coordination skills. It involves child handling objects together, attempting to grab the things consist of a series of trials, with the child looking at the objects. By and large, eye-hand and two-hand coordination brings development in the muscular and cognitive functioning in the children.

A variety of activities which can enhance the better eye-hand coordination may involve: Letting children form a circle then decide the name of a class e.g. fruits, colour objects, foods items, animals and so on. Telling the children what you have chosen. Such as colour objects asking each child in turn to call out the name of a colour object. After some practices, children should not repeat the name of a colour objects called out. Another activity: asking the children to sit in a circle. Singing a song in mother tongue (local language) and asking then children to sing with your actions

Let us not briefly examine with prominent psychologist representing different schools of thought have to say regarding developmental stages. Sigmund Freud is one of the most famous thinkers in psychology history. Father of modern psychology Sigmund Freud theorized that development consists of series of fixed stages through which a child has to pass in sequential order. If basic drives characteristic of a given stage are not gratified. Fixation results and ability of the child to adapt and adjust is impaired. A child unable to adjust at a given stages may go back to the previous or earlier stages where it was successful, a phenomenon he called "Regression". He describes four stages i.e. oral, anal, genital and phallic stages.

Gessel believes that all development occurs in definite, patterned and internally controlled sequences. Maturation plays a dominant role in development but environment and culture can modify it. The credit for developing carefully studied and prepared development schedules goes to Gessel. We are able to predict what behavior to expect of a child at a given stage with the help of such norms.

Piaget views development as a succession of definite stages for a given behavior, emerging in an unchanging and constant order, each incorporating the structure of the preceding stage and each characterized by an initial period of preparation and a final period of achievement.

Burrhus Frederic Skinner was an American psychologist, behaviorist, author, inventor, and social philosopher. Skinner represents the Behaviouristic School that emphasizes the role of environment in child development. Behavior is described in terms of a series of stimuli and

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responses. The behaviourists don't accept any particular study of stages is based on events occurring in the environment, malnutrition changes and behavior manifestations.

Sullivan emphasized Inter-Personal Relationships (IPR). How the child adapts, the methods used for adaptation, his ways of perceiving the world, how he relates his self with others in the environment are important factors that determines his development. His behavior is primarily oriented towards meeting his biological and security needs. His psychological problems stem from insecurity. His developmental stages from infancy to childhood are characterized by new interpersonal needs and IPR.

No one view can be accepted as sole explanation of developmental stages. Each may be right and every view has its own limitations. The current trend is towards formulation of an integrated approach to development. Whatever be the description of the stages, it is generally agreed, that development follows certain trends. Based on a number of studies of children from different age groups, certain principles of development have been evolved.

The study of child development at various stages is important for a number of reasons. Human development is complex phenomena. Almost one third of human life is involved in development during childhood. Humans have the longest period of infancy compared to other species. Childhood is a very important phase of life – it lays the foundation for adulthood. Childhood covers up to 12 years; of this lifespan the development is very rapid in first eight years.

Behavior during childhood is less complex as compared to other stages; it is possible to control the environment of a child so as to modify his behavior. A child has unparalleled potentiality for development and proper care and guidance can harness these potentialities. So, a study of stages of child development can help to predict whether development can help to predict whether development is normal or not, to take corrective measures for example speech and to plan child care, child training and child guidance programmes.

Finally, children are a gift of nature. They provide joy and happiness, hopes and a new beginning. Caring and nurturing of children entails commitment, concentration and efforts in order that they grow into healthy citizens. To conclude, the period of early childhood is the most significant in the lifespan of an individual. The period of early childhood is marked with rapid physical, psycho-social and mental development when the child gains confidence about the bodily postures, strives for independence by doing things on its own and experiments with objects in the environment. Children display curiosity, enjoy the company of their peers and seek to imitate adult behaviour. So, early childhood years should be full of experiences and interactions with peers, parents, family members and other adult care givers for the holistic development of the children.

CONCLUSION

The impact of the first eight years of a child's life is worldwide known to be the most critical years for lifelong optimum growth and development. The pace of development of a childhood in this period is extremely rapid progress. In this connection, early childhood refers to the formative stage of first six years of life, with well-marked three sub-stages [{conception to birth i.e. fetus development of 9 months or 37 weeks (270 days)}; birth to three years (0-3 years) and three years to six years (3-6 years)] having age-specific needs, following the life cycle approach means index of lifespan. It is the period of most rapid growth and development and is critical for survival. Growing scientific evidence confirms

that there are critical stages in the development of the brain during this period which influence the pathways of physical as well as mental health and behavior throughout the life cycle. Deficits during this stage of life have substantive and cumulative adverse impacts on human development. Overall, natural phenomena and science evidence have provided convincing evidence of critical periods located within these early years for forming of synaptic connections in brain and for the full development of its potential. In recent, many researchers have also indicated that if these early years are not supported by, or embedded in, a stimulating and enriching physical and psychological environment, the chances of child's brain developing into its full potential are considerably and often irreversibly reduced. This is also important as a foundation for inculcation of socio-cultural and personal values in children. It is well established fact that the period of early childhood years lays a strong foundation for personality development.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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