

JOHN BOWLBY THEORY AND THE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES OF CHILDREN

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Annotation:

John Bowlby's attachment theory emphasizes the necessity for children to establish a secure and consistent bond with their parents or caregivers. According to his theory, it is crucial for children to form a strong attachment with their primary caregiver to feel secure, develop self-confidence, and successfully navigate the social world. The socio-psychological aspects of this theory influence a child's mental health, as the formation of secure attachment fosters self-confidence, emotional stability, and successful integration into society. This scientific analysis focuses on exploring the significance of Bowlby's attachment theory in relation to children's mental health.

Keywords: John Bowlby, attachment theory, child mental health, socio-psychological aspects, secure attachment, emotional stability, psychological security, mental illness, attachment, fear, anxiety, trust, stress, neurosis.

Introduction

In modern society, the influence of family, social, and environmental factors on the psyche of children is increasing. Psychological environment and social influences play a decisive role in the development of consciousness, especially in children under three years of age. Early psychological health disorders can lead to neurosis, stress, and other psychological problems in the future. Therefore, a deep scientific study and analysis of this issue is of great importance. John Boulby's book "Attachment and Loss" serves as an important theoretical basis for understanding mental health and its formation. This work consists of three parts and examines the psychological processes that occur as a result of attachment, separation, and loss[1]. John Bowlby (1907-1990) was a British psychiatrist, psychologist and psychoanalyst who developed the theory of connection. This developed attachment theory (Attachment Theory) is a concept that studies the impact of relationships between children and caregivers on child development. This theory explains how the child's close emotional and physical connection with the mother or primary caregiver affects their psychological and social relationships in their future life.

In his research, Boulby emphasizes that a person's mental health is closely linked to early childhood experiences. According to his theory, the main source of psychological stability for children under three years of age is their connection with the mother or primary caregiver. She notes the importance of trusting and loving relationships at an early age for the stability of children's psyche and the prevention of future psychological problems.

In Bowlby's research, the concepts of mental health and psychological health are illuminated within the framework of the theory of connections. According to him, the relationship between the child and the mother directly affects the child's future mental well-being and psychological stability. If a child is separated from a close caregiver at an early age or emotionally neglected, this can lead to mental health disorders in the future, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and difficulty in social adaptation.

John Bowlby's work "Attachment" (1969) put forward fundamental theories about human mental health, especially the system of emotional attachments formed during childhood. This theory examines the impact of the process of attachment between children and their primary caregivers on the child's psyche, the consequences of separation and loss, and the long-term consequences of childhood trauma. Her research shows that early-age experiences play an important role in the stability of mental health and the formation of psychological state in later life stages[2].

His research is based on the creation of a scientific model of the relationship between a child and a mother. Bowlby's main idea is that children, as an innate trait, tend to look for key attachment figures (usually a mother) for themselves, as this ensures their survival.

The basic premise of the theory is that connection is evolutionarily necessary - it asserts that babies are programmed to establish a biologically close connection. Such a connection will help the child survive. Bowlby emphasizes that the period of a child's development up to 2-3 years of age is very important for attachment. If during this period the child is not connected with the main caregiver, then later this connection may not be formed. He later extended this period to 5 years.

Boulby was also inspired by research in ethology (the study of animal behavior). For example, Conrad Lorenz's 1935 research (imprinting studies with geese) showed that the connection was innate. Bowlby argues that a similar process exists in humans.

From birth, the child exhibits special behavioral patterns to maintain close contact with the mother or primary caregiver:

Eye contact

Pleasant laughter

Crying

Extending and catching hands

Following and following mother

These behavioral patterns contribute to the child's survival, as they encourage adult care. According to Bowlby's theory, if a child is permanently deprived of maternal care, the following consequences can occur:

Delayed cognitive development

Low social skills

Emotional instability and depression

Antisocial behavior (e.g., criminality)

Difficulties in establishing close relationships with others

Research developed by Mary Ainsworth further expanded Bowlby's theory and identified the following types of connections:

Secure Attachment - A child is calm when their mother is present, but becomes anxious when she is gone. When his mother returned, he rejoiced and restored contact with her.

Avoidant Attachment - The child doesn't get too close to their mother when she's around, and hardly responds when she's gone.

Anxious-ambivalent attachment (Anxious-ambivalent attachment) - A child becomes very anxious when their mother leaves and doesn't remain calm even after returning.

Disorganized attachment - the child has an unclear and conflicting relationship with the mother[3].

John Bowlby's evolutionary attachment theory emphasizes that a child's attachment to a mother or primary caregiver plays an important role in shaping their social relationships throughout their life. Separation from the mother or lack of care can have a significant impact on the child's future psychological and social well-being. This theory is widely used in child-rearing and psychological therapy.

Development of the attachment system: According to Bowlby's theory, the attachment system is one of the main psychological mechanisms ensuring a child's mental stability. From the moment of birth, the infant needs biological protection and care, striving to maintain close contact with the mother or primary caregiver to continue their life.

Bowlby identified three main aspects of the connection between the infant and the caregiver:

Secure attachment: When a child feels constantly cared for by their mother, they feel secure. When children of this type are in a state of stress, they find solace by contacting their mothers. Children who are safely connected easily establish social relationships in the future and have stable mental health.

Anxious attachment: If a child does not receive enough affection from the mother or caregiver, or if the care is inconsistent, they become anxious and insecure. Such children may develop feelings of excessive attachment or anxiety in their relationships in the future.

Avoidant attachment: If a child is repeatedly rejected or neglected, they become distrustful of others and avoid emotional intimacy. These children may face more mental health problems in the future.

Bowlby's research shows that forms of attachment play an important role in a child's future psychological development. Stable emotional connection in infancy and childhood creates a foundation for a child's mental health and has a great influence on their stress resistance, social adaptation, and psychological stability in later life. **Separation and Loss:** Bowlby detailed in his research that separation and loss processes can have a profound impact on a child's mental health. A child who has developed a constant intimacy and trusting relationship with their mother or primary caregiver experiences significant stress and emotional distress during the separation.

Bowlby classified the separation process in three stages:

Discontent (Protest stage): At the initial stage of divorce, the child calls their mother, cries, and tries to find her again. At this stage, the child tries to attract attention.

Disappointment stage: Although the child tries to adapt to the mother's absence, they may experience depression, not cry, may be depressed and indifferent.

Adaptation to separation (Detachment): If a child is separated from a caregiver for a long time and receives insufficient attention, they may lose the ability to show closeness and affection. These stages can negatively affect the child's psyche and lead to the development of depression, anxiety, difficulties in social adaptation, and other mental disorders in the future. Bowlby's research shows that prolonged separation or loss has a profound impact on a child's mental health. They found that children who have lost their mothers or are deprived of care are more likely to face psychological problems in the future.

Family relationships - the child's main form of attachment is directly related to their emotional environment in the family. Children raised in a loving and stable environment are more successful in social interactions.

Mental health - children who lack normal contact with their mother and other family members may develop anxiety, depression, and other mental illnesses.

Adaptation to society - children who are reliably connected feel free in a social environment, while children who are not successfully connected with their loved ones may face problems of loneliness or social isolation.

John Bowlby's theory is important in the fields of psychology, education, and child-rearing, and serves to develop practical recommendations for improving the emotional development of children.

Conclusion

John Bowlby's theory of attachment plays an important role in child psychology and is closely related to a child's mental health. According to him, children feel safe and achieve emotional stability by establishing a safe and reliable connection with their primary caregiver. This, in turn, helps children to be successful in their future social life, to build self-confidence and correct relationships. According to Bowlby's theory, the social experiences children learn with their parents or caregivers during their first years of life affect their psychological well-being and successful living in society. If the child's parents or caregivers have the opportunity to establish a safe connection, children will grow up to be confident, emotionally stable, and socially adaptable individuals. On the contrary, the absence of a secure connection can cause psychological problems for the child, which negatively affects their future life and relationships with society. Therefore, in ensuring a child's mental health, it is very important to establish a strong and reliable connection with their parents or caregivers. This ensures not only the child's mental health, but also their proper adaptation to society, self-esteem, and successful building of relationships.

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