

Development during infancy and early childhood essay examples

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



The Role Played By Families

Psychological and cognitive development can be considered significantly crucial during a person's earliest years: Infancy through early childhood. From zero (0) to six (6) years of age—the ages of infancy through early childhood (Kagan 1999), a person's cognition is largely dependent on his/her first experiences and his/her immediate environment. As Jean Piaget theorized, a child has an innate curiosity to know more about his/her environment through interaction (Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, 2010). But aside from early experiences and interactions with the environment, the first people to whom a child is exposed greatly play a role on his/her ability to learn and master his/her natural capacities—and in this sense, we are generally referring to a child's family. Typically, the first persons a child gets to know and recognize are the members of his/her family, particularly his/her parents. Addressing the families, especially parents, as a critical factor to the growth and cognitive development of a child, in what way do they contribute to a child's cognitive development—or a lack thereof?

It is concluded that parents, as the first teachers, mainly influence their children's cognition by setting examples through (1) direct interactions, (2) emotional identification, and (3) stories about family background and eminence (Kagan, 1999). Direct interactions are the daily events that occur between parents and children which result to a transfer of knowledge from the former to the latter (Kagan, 1999). One of the main examples of a direct interaction between a parent and a child that can be observed daily is the reward-punishment system implemented by parents in order to commend

their children for doing something pleasant and encourage them to maintain excellence or punishing them if they misbehave or do something displeasing (Kagan, 1999). The simple scenarios of rewarding children small tokens for doing something exemplary or scolding them a little for disobeying rules are actually influential to their perception of discipline and obedience which will reflect and have a cumulative effect as they mature (Kagan, 1999). Direct interactions between parents and their children serve as the latter's earliest exposures to learning through teaching. Generally, during the earliest years of childhood, the constructive actions done by parents to influence their children are solely focused on establishing their sense of discipline and obedience. The ability of parents to execute constructive interactions with their children significantly, but not solely, affect the development of the latter's sense of discipline, responsibility, and ability to establish healthy and functioning social relations (Kagan, 1999).

Aside from direct interactions, children also learn from their parents through emotional identification (Kagan, 1999). Parents, aside from being the earliest teachers, are also children's earliest role models: People whom they identify themselves with. According to Kagan (1999), the traits and characteristics a child sees in his/her parents are the same qualities that he/she acquires as his/her own. Additionally, "the more distinctive the features shared between child and parent, the stronger the identification of the former with the latter" (Kagan, 1999, p. 165). Children's natural tendency to identify themselves with their parents is eventually translated to their tendency to also identify themselves with other people who share same traits with them within the society (Kagan, 1999).

Relaying family stories that feature a certain relative also serves as another mechanism for a child to develop cognitively (Kagan, 1999). Like identification with parents, passing on stories about one relative who has done something remarkable provides another personality for children to identify themselves with. Kagan (1999) explains further that this mechanism of family influence in childhood cognitive development eventually affects an individual's outlook on his capabilities and skills, believing that being biologically related to the remarkable person in the family also qualifies him/her remarkable just as well.

Studying the three (3) mechanisms through which parents and other members of the family influence the cognitive development of a child helps us see how events involving a child's interaction with the members of his/her family later contribute to the development of his/her personality traits. With the points emphasized above, the role played by families—especially parents—in the cognitive development of children is much more understood. But it is well to remember that the influence of family on the cognitive development of children, although critical and greatly contributory, is not the sole factor that shapes and guides the personality of an individual. As Kagan (1999) summarized, parental influence cannot determine or predict an overall outcome with regards to an individual's personality. Development of cognition and personality is an accumulation of many factors among which parental influence is just one.

Parenting refers to the incorporation of parents' attitudes, values, and practices in raising children (Weiss, Caspe, and Lopez, 2006). An effective parenting is one that nurtures and develops responsive relationships

between parents and children (Weiss et al., 2006). Considering the paramount effect of the influence of parents on the cognitive development of a child, it helps to consider the different parenting styles which may be used to exploit to the full extent the great role of parents in influencing their children. According to Harvard Family Research Project, family involvement in the activities of children is one of the best ways by which parents can establish influence on their children's development to help them acquire good and acceptable personality traits (Weiss et al., 2006). The involvement of parents in school activities of their children also helps in learning development among children (Weiss et al., 2006).

Parenting is undoubtedly essential in the development of cognition and personality among children which would bear a lasting effect as they mature. The most effective parenting style is one which allows children to explore things on their own while being guided by their family or parents in particular. Parents should devote a great amount of attention especially to their children within the infancy and early childhood phases. It would help if parents would create a home that allows children to play and interact with his/her environment. Parents' views on their children's capacities and skills also help in building and promoting self-esteem and confidence among children (Weiss et al., 2006). Intellectual parent-child discussions are also essential in molding academic competency among children. Also, parents' extensive involvement in their children's activities during their early childhood years helps in monitoring their learning progress.

Aside from parents, as stated above, children's involvement with their environment also helps in their learning development. As stated in Harvard

Family Research Project, it is through peer interactions that “ young children develop self-concepts and self-esteem, improve emotional self-regulation, and form their first friendships” (Weiss et al., 2006, p. 2). Additionally, together with family and parents, friends and educators play a key role in the cognitive development of children as they provide interpersonal, social and emotional connections—factors that promote progress and development in learning (Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, 2010). Therefore, cognitive development of children within years of early childhood does not only progress with the influence and guidance of family and parents. It will help if children in their early childhood phase will be exposed to other peer groups that will yield other nurturing connections aside from that offered by parents. With this reason, it is generally favorable and helpful to include children in an early childhood education program that has a large-group setting. This way, children become more open to the presence of other people and become easily adjusted in a social setting—another factor that helps in cognitive development.

References

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