Abstract

Parents have their own way of interpreting their child’s abilities and skills, or lack of those. When you don’t understand your children, you may misinterpret or misjudge them. Sometimes these misinterpretations can be harmless. The role of parents is most important in a child’s psychological development. Lack of awareness about child development can often lead to poor judgment of children, which in turn leads to poor parenting decisions. Early adolescence can be a challenging time for children and parents alike. Parents often feel unprepared and they may view the years from 10 through 14 as a time just “to get through.” However, research tells that this view is very limited. During the early adolescent years, parents can greatly influence the growth and development of their children. We sell our children short if we expect little from them and we sell ourselves short if we believe that we have no influence. It’s not easy to raise a young teen. Many outside influences distract our children and complicate our efforts. Exhaustion, anxiety, a lack of support and limited resources may make it hard for us to be all that we want to be for our children. Therefore, Parenting is one of the most challenging, yet meaningful life tasks. One of the most important things that you, as a parent, should work on is to understand your child’s psychology. You need not get a ‘degree’ in parenting to understand your child’s psychology. What you should do, though, is find out about the simple things that tell you what your child likes or dislikes, what makes your child laugh or cry, and what motivates your child or causes your child misery. The objective of this paper is to study and elaborate on the psychology of parents towards their child. This study of child and adolescent behaviour will help the parents in making proper growth and development of their child.
I. INTRODUCTION

Parenting is a huge job, but it is one of the most meaningful things that a person could devote their life to. The sleepless nights and moments of stress are worth it all when you look at your child and realize the lifelong impact you have in their world. It may be tough, but parenting is without doubt, one of the most rewarding jobs that someone could ever dream of or hope for. Some parents use authoritarian parenting strategies that do not allow the child an independent voice or sense of efficacy. Other parents overcompensate with overly permissive parenting that doesn’t teach kids about limits and self-control. Research shows both extremes can interfere with kids’ ability to regulate emotions and form healthy relationships as adults. The best type of parenting is fair, flexible, respectful, and has learning, rather than submission as its goal. Hearing and respecting feelings, allowing choice, yet setting fair and clear limits on unacceptable behavior is the healthy balance that we should all strive for. One must learn how to avoid ineffective ways of communicating that lead to noncompliance and power struggles, or damage self-esteem. According to eminent psychologist Sigmund Freud, babies are initially driven by instinctive and selfish urges but gradually adapt to a more realistic approach by imbibing their parents’ values and rules. These play a role in the development of the child’s conscience. One of the most important things that you, as a parent, should work on is understand your child’s psychology. No, you need not get a ‘degree’ in parenting. What you should do, though, is find out about the simple things that tell you what your kid likes or dislikes, what makes him laugh or cry, and what motivates him or causes him misery. One must understand child psychology and learn tips to understand what’s going on in your child’s mind. The questions that arise in our mind are given below:-

a) What is Child Psychology?
b) Importance of Understanding Child’s Psychology
c) How to Understand Children’s Psychology?
d) Childhood Psychological Disorders

1.1 What is Child Psychology?

Child psychology, a key part of developmental psychology, is vast and one of the most commonly studied types of the subject. This specialized branch focuses on the psychological processes of children from birth to adolescence. It takes note of the psychological changes that occur from infancy. The scope of the study includes motor skills, cognitive development, language skills, social change, emotional development, etc.

1.2 Need for Understanding Child Psychology

Parents have their way of interpreting their child’s abilities and skills, or lack of those. When you don’t understand your children, you may misinterpret or misjudge them. Sometimes these misinterpretations can be harmless, but most of the times they are not. Parents’ role is key in a child’s psychological development. Lack of awareness about child development can often lead to poor judgment of children, which in turn leads to poor parenting decisions. A study by Dr. Brenda Volling, director and research professor, University of Michigan, revealed that children are directly affected by the amount of time...
a parent invests in their development. Hence, it is important for parents to educate themselves about the different aspects of child psychology and development so that they can contribute meaningfully towards the child’s emotional and mental growth.

1.3 Tips to Understand Your Child’s Psychology Better
Well-known child psychologist Jean Piaget says, “From the moral as from the intellectual point of view, the child is born neither good nor bad but master of his destiny.”
Parenting is more than just providing comforts for your children. It is being there for the child emotionally, and providing them a sense of security. Here are a few basic child psychology tips that will help you understand children better [1]:

1. Observation is Key
One of the simplest, yet most effective, ways to learn about child psychology is observation. Show interest in what your children are doing or saying. Observe their actions, expressions, and temperament when they eat, sleep, and play. Keep in mind that your child is unique and may have a personality that stands out, even as he grows. So avoid comparing your child with other children, as that not only adds stress to parenting, but also makes the child feel inferior.

Do ask yourself a few questions that can help you understand the kids’ psychology.
- What does the child like to do the most?
- How does he react when he has to do something he does not like, such as eating vegetables, sleeping early or doing homework?
- How social is he? Is he willing to share or try new things?
- How long is the child taking to familiarize himself with his surroundings? Is he able to adjust to the changes in the environment?

While you answer these questions, remember not to judge the child. Just observe to be aware.

2. Spend ‘quality’ time with your children
Parents today are busy juggling work and home. Multi-tasking, as they call it, allows them to take care of many things at a time, one of the ‘things’ being the child. If you have been spending time with your kid in this fashion, it is time for a change. If you want to understand your children, you need to make time for them. The time you spend with your kids at the dinner table or driving them to school and back is not enough. You may have to dedicate time to talk and play with them, and spend quality hours that allow you to understand their psychology. Conversations with your kids let you know what’s happening in their life at school and home, what their favorite music or TV show is, and what gets them excited and what doesn’t. Quality time needn’t always mean talking or doing something together. Sometimes you can just sit together and silently observe them to gather some insights about their personality.

3. Children need your undivided attention
When you plan to spend time with your children, plan to do only that and nothing else. Your children deserve your undivided attention. If you try to talk to your kid while you
are cooking, driving or doing something else, chances are you’ll miss on the most important insights your kid might give you about himself. Plan at least one activity that allows you to spend time exclusively with your kid. When you pay undivided attention to your kid, he or she feels safe and validated and is likely to open up to you more.

4. Pay attention to your child’s environment
Research has proven that a child’s behavior and attitudes are shaped largely by the environment that he is brought up in. To know the child better, you should pay attention to the environment [3] he is influenced with. Research also proves that the environment can affect the child’s brain development, which in turn affects the development of his language and cognitive skills. A child’s early home environment has long-term effects on development. A child’s early home environment [4] has a profound effect on his well-being. Beginning in infancy, a problematic home environment can disrupt the brain’s stress response system and interfere with healthy development. Your child’s behavior is largely dependent on the kind of people that are around him and how they interact with him. Take time to gauge the kind of ambiance that has been created at home and his school. For example, if your child is being aggressive or is withdrawing from socialization, you may want to know what or who has influenced the child to behave in such a manner.

5. Listen – Let your kids tell you their stories
Talking is good, but listening is important when you have a conversation with your child. Initiate a conversation to get your child talking and then listen to what they are trying to say. Kids may not be able to express themselves clearly, which is why you should pay attention to the words that they use and their non-verbal cues as well.

Focus On:
- Tone: the way they stress a word or phrase.
- Expressions: which tell you how they feel. Try to gauge their emotions when they speak about something to understand if they like it, if they are afraid of it, or if they are stressed about it.
- Body language: watch out for eye-contact, how they use their hands and the posture. Not only should you listen, but also let your child know that they are being heard and taken seriously. Acknowledge what they say and respond to let them know that you understand what they say. If you don’t understand, ask questions for clarity. But be careful not to talk too much or ask too many questions, as that can shut your kid off completely.

6. Kids express in different ways
Your children can express themselves in more than one way. Besides talking, kids express their feelings through activities.
- If your children love to draw, write, or act, encourage them to do that more often. Get them to attend art or painting classes and help them express themselves better. You can also give them different themes for drawing, without restricting their imagination.
Likewise, you can ask your kid to maintain a journal in which they can write about what they did on a given day and how they felt about it. The more your child writes or draws, the better he gets at expressing himself.

Take time to go through their art work to get an idea of what goes on in their minds. Don’t read too much into it, or you may end up displacing your emotions as theirs and misjudge their feelings.

Let them explain what they are writing or drawing and how they feel about it.

7. **Ask the right questions**

If you want your child to speak, it is important to ask the right kind of questions. Initiate conversations by asking open-ended questions, which would encourage the child to share details.

Instead of asking “Do you like this song?”, which warrants either a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’, ask “What do you think about this song?”, which will allow the kid to say more.

Instead of asking who they played with, ask them what games they played. Let them explain it to you in details, and don’t cut them off.

Also, never dodge the questions your child asks. If you do not have an answer to your child’s question, park it and come back to your child with a response later. Brushing away a kid’s question as silly can discourage them from asking any questions in future.

8. **Educate yourself about child development**

Be proactive in understanding the different stages of child development to know how well your kid is faring. Take time to read books, online journals, and speak to a specialist who can give you some insight into child psychology and development. When you don’t know what to expect, anything and everything may seem alright or vice-versa. Don’t make wild guesses.

9. **Observe other kids**

Sometimes, observing other kids who are of the same age as yours can also help you understand your child better. This can let you understand how your child behaves in a social setting and identify his strengths and weaknesses that determine his personality. This does not mean you compare your child with every kid his age and pass judgment on who is better.

Parents tend to ascertain their children’s performance abilities by comparing them to other children. However, this can have a negative impact on the child, in the long-term. While comparison is not always bad, it can be dangerous when you overdo it.

10. **Empathize – Step into your child’s shoes**

Sometimes you have to think like a kid, and even act like one to reach out to them. Empathy is an important quality that parents should develop if they want to understand their children better. You may be aware of what your children are going through when they tell you about it. But you may not even come close to understanding what they are experiencing if you cannot empathize. Below are some simple ways to empathize:

- Listen to their feelings; try to gauge what they are going through.
1. Use their language to help them understand you better. Ask yourself this – if you were a child, would you understand adult-like talk, with complicated words and expressions?

2. When you don’t understand your child’s behavior, ask yourself – how would you have behaved or reacted if you were in your child’s place?

**11. What’s your kid’s emotional quotient?**

“What a distressing contrast there is between the radiant intelligence of the child and the feeble mentality of the average adult.” – Sigmund Freud

For a long time, kids were not considered as important as adults. Their feelings and emotions were taken for granted, for it was assumed that they’d forget all of it when they grow up. Now, we know it is not true – what a child goes through in his childhood has a significant impact on the kind of person he grows up to be [5]. As a parent, you should never underestimate your child’s emotions, or his capacity to manage them. Emotional intelligence or emotional quotient (EQ) is a person’s ability to identify, express, and control their emotions. Children are born with a unique temperament. Some may be outspoken and proactive while others may be shy or slow-to-warm-up. As a parent, it is your responsibility to understand your children’s EQ and do what is needed to help them grow into healthy, emotionally intelligent adults.

**12. Don’t assume**

Do not assume that you know what your child wants or how she feels at any given point of time. If your child is not complaining, you may assume that she is happy. You assume that you are a great parent because your child behaves well in public and does not throw tantrums.

When you assume, you are closing yourself to understanding your children accurately, thereby making poor choices for your kids. Asking them should help clear any air of doubt and you will know for sure what the matter is.

**II. CHILDHOOD PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS**

Children acquire certain behaviors, influenced by their parents, family members and the society. Most children have minor behavioral issues [6] such as being adamant and rude or lacking attention. If these issues get complicated they become disorders. Here are a few common psychological disorders in children:

1. **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):** Children with ADHD display three main characteristics: inattention, impulsiveness and hyperactivity. They can also be fidgety, aggressive and excitable.

2. **Depression and Bipolar Disorder:** Children with bipolar disorder tend to have abrupt mood swings, long periods of hyperactivity followed by lethargy, temper tantrums, frustration and defiant behavior.

3. **Anxiety Disorder:** Children with general anxiety disorder tend to worry excessively about everything. Even the most trivial of issues tend to give them sleepless nights.
4. **Asperger’s Syndrome**: This is a mild form of autism. Symptoms include lack of social skills, dislike in change of routine and the familiar environment, no eye contact, unusual gestures and facial expressions, lack of empathy and awkward motor skills.

5. **Learning Disability**: This is psychological disorder that makes learning a challenge. Symptoms include inability to pay attention, poor memory, poor coordination, inability to follow instructions or directions, and lack of organization.

6. **Disruptive Behavior Disorder**: Children with this disorder may tend to bully others, isolate themselves from social situations, destroy property or hurt animals deliberately, lie or even steal things.

7. **Eating Disorders**: Children with eating disorders like anorexia or bulimia tend to have abnormal eating habits. These disorders are usually the result of obsessive thinking about weight gain and physical appearance. Symptoms include inability to eat anything, vomiting and binge-eating.

8. **Schizophrenia**: Schizophrenia is not as common among children as it is in adults. Symptoms of this psychological disorder include social withdrawal, sleeplessness, lack of motivation, drop in performance at school, depression, forgetfulness and strange behavior.

If you think that your child displays symptoms of any of the disorders mentioned above, consult a medical professional immediately.

### III. WORST MISTAKES PARENTS MAKE WHEN TALKING TO KIDS [7]

The words can change your kid’s brain. Let us learn to use the right ones. The worst mistakes parents make when talking to their kids are given below:-

**1. Talking Too Much**

When parents go on and on, kids tune them out. Researchers have shown that the human brain can keep only four “chunks” of information or unique ideas in short-term (active) memory at once. This amount to about 30 seconds or one or two sentences of speaking.

**Ineffective Example**

“I’m not sure what we should do about ballet and softball this semester. You know, you really probably can’t do both because softball is on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 4, but then you have to change and put your hair in a bun, so that won’t be enough time, unless you pack all your ballet stuff on Monday night, which means it has to get washed on Sunday…….”

There are so many different ideas in this message that the kid will get confused and tune the parent out. Also, the message has an overall negative, anxious tone that can cause the kid to react with doubt and anxiety. It is not necessary to tell the kid all of the information at once. Rather, break it up into separate steps to be more digestible. Let the kid express his/her overall preference first, before bringing up all the obstacles.
Effective Example: “If you do both ballet and softball this semester, you’ll have to go right from one to the other some nights. Let’s sit down and figure out if this makes sense for both you and me.”

In this example, the parent is limiting the conversation to two sentences, which makes it easier for the kid to absorb the information. She is also being clear about the overall goal (make it work for both), and the next steps she is requesting (sit down and discuss the issue). Finally, she is communicating a willingness to collaborate and consider the kids’ needs as well as her own.

(2) Nagging and Giving Multiple Warnings

Most parents are familiar with the early morning rush to get everybody out the door on time, along with their lunches, gym clothes, musical instruments, signed homework, and so on. The child who gets distracted and seems unmotivated to get ready on time is the greatest challenge to a busy parent. Many parents feel out of control and try desperately to control the situation by nagging or criticizing. The problem with nagging is that you are actually training kids to ignore you because they know there will be more reminders down the road. While very young kids, may need more assistance and instruction, effective parents allow the kids to take increasing responsibility as they grow older.

Ineffective Example (to a 10-year-old kid)

“I am waking you up an hour early because you are never ready on time. You need to get dressed right now. Do you have the homework for me to sign?”

Ten minutes later.

“I told you to get ready and you’re still lollygagging. You’re going to make us all late. Go and brush your teeth and put your clothes on.”

Ten minutes later.

“Where is your homework? I asked you to bring it for me to sign? And you’re not finished dressing. We are going to be late.”

And so on.

This parent is taking way too much responsibility and indirectly communicating to the kid that she doesn’t trust him to manage the situation without extensive instruction and interference. This so-called “helicopter parenting,” can lead to unconfident, overly dependent kids, according to Dr. Carol Dweck, a best-selling author and researcher on parenting and motivation. The tone is also negative and intrusive, which is likely to create resentment and resistance or passive-aggression.

Effective Example

“We will be leaving for school in 45 minutes. If you don’t have everything you need, it’s up to you to explain it to your teachers.”

These instructions are brief and convey a clear expectation, with a consequence for not complying. They are free of judgment, anxiety, and attempts to control. The parent allows the kid to learn from the natural consequences of his/her own behavior.

3) Using Guilt and Shame to Get Compliance
One of the biggest lessons one learns as a parent is that young kids don’t naturally have empathy and consideration for your needs. They develop empathy slowly as they mature, by experiencing your empathy for them. That’s why the expectation that young kids walk in your shoes and see things from your point of view may not be reasonable. The failure to do so does not mean they are a bad or uncaring kid. They are just being a kid — focused on having fun in the moment, and testing their limits to learn about what is acceptable. Most parents are stressed multi-taskers who often forget to take care of themselves. This can lead to resentment when kids don’t seem to be cooperating. It is important to take some time to connect with your own feelings and calm down using deep breathing or self-talk before letting these emotions leak and derail your communication with your kid.

**Ineffective Example**

“I have asked you repeatedly to tidy up your toys and here they are, strewn all over the living room floor. Don’t you care at all? Can’t you see that I’ve been on my feet all day taking care of everybody’s needs. Now I have to trip over your toys or waste my time cleaning them up. What’s wrong with you that you’re so selfish?”

This parent is creating a lot of negative energy. While we can all empathize with her frustration, her communication is blaming and disrespectful. Calling a kid “selfish,” or implying there is something wrong with her is also harmful. Kids internalize these negative labels and begin to see themselves as “not good enough.” Humiliating or shaming a kid can shape brain pathways in negative ways. Label the behavior as unacceptable, but the kid as still lovable.

**Effective Example**

“I see the toys haven’t been packed away yet and that makes me upset. It’s important for me to have an orderly house that we can all function in. All the toys that are out will need to go sleep in the garage tonight. You can earn them back by tidying away all of your toys tomorrow.”

This parent is clearly communicating her own feelings and needs without anger or blame. She is applying a clear, but not overly punitive consequence for the behavior and providing an opportunity for the child to try again tomorrow and succeed. She does not attribute any negative motivation to the kid or label his personality in negative ways.

**4) Not Listening**

We would all like to teach our kids to respect other people. The best way to do this is by modeling respectful and caring behavior in our own interactions. This helps the kid learn the value of respect and empathy and teaches them the skills of effective communication. Often, attentive listening is the most difficult thing for parents to do, because kids keep interrupting us, or our minds are preoccupied with all the errands that have to be done. In this case, it is okay to say to the kid “It’s difficult for me to listen to you now because I’m busying cooking, but I’ll be there in 10 minutes.” It’s better to set aside a clear time for communication than to listen half-heartedly or resentfully. Remember, though, that it’s difficult for kids to wait for long periods to be listened to.
Ineffective Example
Parental response to a kid saying they scored a goal at soccer
(without making eye contact) “Oh, that’s nice, dear. Now go and play with your sister
(muttering to herself) What temperature do I cook the chicken at?”
Effective listening involves all of the non-verbals, such as maintaining eye contact,
conveying understanding with our faces and voices, and using words to reflect our
understanding. This parent is teaching her kid not to bother her, and that the things that
are important to him are not important to her. This can make a kid feel alone and not
good enough.

Effective Example
Parental response to a kid saying they scored a goal at soccer.
“You scored a goal. Fantastic! I can see you feel really proud of how you played. I want
to hear all about how it went down today.”
This parent is displaying interest and enthusiasm; inviting the kid to elaborate and
describe what happened. She is effectively tuning into the kid’s nonverbal expression and
reflecting his feelings, thereby helping the kid to gain awareness of his own reactions.
This type of response leads to the kid feeling that he is important and worthy of attention
and care. This type of empathic resonance helps the kid to develop more interconnected
brain pathways to process and make sense of emotion.

Parenting is a difficult job, and one in which we all make mistakes at times.
Communicating effectively with our children takes time and energy. We need to become
aware of our own feelings and automatic reactions, and slow down enough to be able to
choose a more mindful way. Following through with consequences teaches kids limits,
while listening and granting autonomy teach kids respect. Be sure to take care of yourself
enough so that you have this type of mindful energy for your kids. This may mean re-
examining your priorities and letting some things go. It is well worth it. Kids who have
respectful, engaged, consistent parents learn to regulate their own emotions more
effectively, feel better about them, and are able to have more loving relationships as
adults.

IV. PRIMARY THEORIES AND EXPERTS STUDY
Child psychologists work on two primary theories:-

a) Development in children is internal, change is innate (nature)
b) Development of children depends on their external environment (nurture)

One must understand Experts study regarding development of children under different
contexts including:

- Social context: how relationships with parents, siblings, friends, teachers, and
  significant others affect the development of a child.

- Cultural context: how cultural factors like traditions, preset values, and guidelines to
  life affect the child’s growth and development [2].
- **Socioeconomic context**: how the social status of the child, the class, lifestyle and availability (or lack of) of financial resources can affect the child’s development [3].

V. CONCLUSION
Understanding the psychology of kids can be challenging. If you have more than one kid, the first child’s psychology may be different from the middle child’s, which may be different from your youngest ones. Believing that all children are the same and using a one-size-fits-all parenting style for your children could misfire. It might be tedious and time-consuming, but understanding the psychology of a child is the most important thing that you can do to nurture him into a healthy adult.

VI. REFERENCES


PAPER CITATION