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Student Name	Criselda Bartlett
Student ID	2426386
Lecturer's Name	Christopher Mafuva
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Bowlby Cognitive Developmental Theory

- Bowlby linked cognitive development to attachment, stating that prolonged maternal deprivation during a critical period could impair intellectual development, leading to a lower IQ. He also proposed that early experiences with caregivers create an “Internal Working Model”, a cognitive framework of beliefs and expectations about the self and others that shapes a child’s understanding and future relationships, including their ability to think and learn.

Impact of Maternal Deprivation on Cognition

- Delayed intellectual Development: Bowlby believed that a lack of continuous emotional care could lead to a delay in intellectual development, resulting in an extremely low IQ.
- Support from other studies: Research. Such as Goldfarb’s study of children in orphanage has lower IQ than those adopted or fostered.
- Critical period. Bowlby emphasized a critical period **(up to 30months) where prolonged separation from a primary caregiver could cause severe long-lasting problems with intellectual and emotional development.**

Bowlby (Attachment Theory)

- Attachment theory states that infants need to form a close relationship with at least one primary caregiver to ensure their survival and to develop healthy social and emotional functioning. It is first developed by psychiatrist and psychoanalyst John Bowlby (1907-1990).
- The theory proposes that secure attachments are formed when caregivers are sensitive and responsive in social interactions and consistently available, particularly between the ages of six months and two years. As children grow, they are thought to use these attachment figures as a secure base from which to explore the world and to return to for comfort.
- Bowlby proposed that the first two and a half years of child’s life are the most important for forming and maintaining attachment. If the attachment is disrupted this can lead to negative effects later in life such as delinquency, antisocial behaviour and depression.

John Bowlby identified four stages of attachment:

1. Asocial or Pre-attachment Stage (birth to 6 weeks) - where infants don’t show a preference for a specific caregiver and will respond to any caregiver, baby is forming bonds but relationship with objects and humans are similar. The crying and smiling behaviors are the way to attract attention.
2. Indiscriminate Attachment –in –the –making (6 weeks to 6-8 months)

Child begins to be familiar with persons around and will respond more to those persons, child display more observable social behavior, have preference for people over objects and prefer familiar adults. However, child do not show stranger or separation anxiety, so that Child can accept other caregivers but will tend to respond more to the primary caregiver.

3. Specific or Discriminate attachment (6 – 8 months to 18-24 months)

The child forms a strong, specific attachment to a primary caregiver. This is the stage where the child develops separation anxiety when the caregiver leaves and stranger anxiety can develop also.

4. Formation of reciprocal relationship (18-24 months and beyond)

Child's cognitive development grow, where the child understands that the caregiver is leaving and will return, so the child will have less separation anxiety and will have ability to accept and form relationships with other caregiver

Case Study :

- This is a case of Amira, 3 years old, recently joined the nursery, who shows signs of anxiety when left by carers, limited verbal communication and difficulty engaging in group play.
- According to Bowlby's Attachment Theory, Amira is on Formation of Reciprocal Relationships stage since her age is 3 years old, she should understand the carers schedule and form a stable bond, however she is showing a Discriminate Attachment stage, where it is seen on a 8months to 24 months. Amira experienced separation anxiety, limited verbal communication and difficulty engaging in a group play.
- Early intervention must be done to Amira, involves providing support to children and their families to address developmental, physical, cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural issues from an early age, from pre-birth through adolescence.

A range of professionals including physicians, therapists and educators may be involved.

PHYSICAL, support could include services like home visits, early language development program, assistance for families dealing with abuse, neglect or disabilities.

INTELLECTUAL Prolonged separation and deprivation were linked to delayed intellectual development , which could manifest as an abnormally low IQ, encourage child to attend free pre -school sessions

EMOTIONAL , early separation can lead to lack of affection , remorse and emotional responsiveness, can result to increased risk of criminality

SOCIAL, Amira must be encouraged to attend group play, church services, and activities that can make her meet people to be familiar with other and overcome her anxiety and fear of stranger.¹

Nature and Nurture

Bowlby's theory is both nature and nurture, as it acknowledges the innate, biological drive to form attachments for survival (nature) while also recognizing that the quality of the attachment is shaped by environmental experiences with the caregiver (nurture).

Nature (the innate biological drive)

- Evolutionary perspective: Bowlby believed that the need for attachment is an innate, inherited trait that increases a child's chances of survival.
- Social releasers: Infants are born with behaviors like crying and smiling that are "social releasers" designed to attract and maintain the attention of a caregiver.
- Monotropy: This concept suggests that infants have a biological need to form one primary attachment, often with the mother, as the most important figure for survival.

Nurture (the environmental influence)

- Caregiver's responsiveness: The quality of the attachment is shaped by the caregiver's behaviour
- Sensitive responsiveness: Children who have caregivers who are consistently sensitive to their needs are more likely to form secure attachments.
- Deprivation: Bowlby's research also highlighted the negative effects of a lack of attachment or "deprivation" on a child's development; thus, environmental influence comes in.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Strengths of the Attachment Theory

- the theory provides a strong practical application such as in formulating childcare practices and social policies, a clear testable framework for understanding the formation and importance of early bonds, it explains development in social relationships
- Predictive power: it has predictive power, suggesting that secure attachment in childhood leads to more trusting, stable and successful relationships in adulthood
- Provides information about specific-interventions that can improve social functioning

WEAKNESSES

- Overemphasis on the mother child bond
- Only comparative cross-cultural research has been conducted
- Does not well predict behaviour in cultures where children have more than one primary caregiver.

CONCLUSION:

Bowlby concluded that prolonged-separation from a primary caregiver in early childhood which is the critical period (first 30 months) can lead to serious emotional and intellectual/cognitive problems, including delinquency and "affectionless psychopathy" and delayed intellectual development. Bowlby's conclusion that the Critical importance of a stable, secure, Continuous bond during the First two and a half years of life for healthy psychological development which influence d child-rearing practices and institutional policies.

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