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1- presentation: supporting
Shona using Bowlby's
attachment theory.



Introduction



Good Afternoon my name is Samara Morgan, but for the purpose of this presentation I am an early years practitioner working in a nursery setting.

What this presentation will do is explore Shona's developmental needs, apply a lifespan development theory to understand her behaviour and propose a support plan to promote her emotional, social, cognitive and physical wellbeing. I will also be focusing on Bowlby's attachment theory

Case study overview: Shona is a 3-year-old child who has recently joined the nursery, She shows signs of anxiety when left by her carers. She has limited verbal communication and finds it difficult to engage in a group. She has experienced disrupted childcare, which appears to be impacting her sense of security and development.

Overview of Bowlby's attachment theory.

General overview: Bowlby's attachment theory explains that children are biologically preprogrammed from birth to form deep, emotional bonds with their primary caregivers. These early attachment relationships act as a secure base- giving children the confidence to explore the world and shape their expectations of relationships.

Main ideas and arguments: Attachment is innate and adaptive- it evolved to keep children close to caregivers for protection and survival.

The sensitive period: (birth to around 5 years) is critical: consistent, responsive care in these years is essential for healthy emotional and social development.

Applying key concepts to Shona.

1) Signs of anxiety when left by her carers.

2) Shona's anxiety reflects separation anxiety, which is a natural attachment response.

3) Without consistent, responsive care, her internal working model may be developing as "people leave".



Evaluation of Bowlby's attachment theory.

ATTACHMENT THEORY

British psychologist John Bowlby (1969) proposed the attachment theory, a theory that explains how and why a newborn becomes so emotionally connected with its mother.

BOWLBY QUOTE

"The instinctual responses mature at different times during the first year of life and develop at different rates; they serve the function of binding the child to mother and contribute to the reciprocal dynamic of binding mother to child" (Bowlby, 1958, p. 351).

STAGES

- 1 **Pre-attachment** (newborn to 6 weeks)
- 2 **Attachment in Making** (6 weeks to 6-8 months)
- 3 **Clear-cut Attachment** (6-8 months to 18-24 months)
- 4 **Formation of Reciprocal Relationships** (24 months +)

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Groundbreaking: The first theory to explain why early bonds matters, it has changed how we understand child development (Bowlby, 1969).

Real-world impact: this theory influenced hospitals and visiting policies, childcare practices and family support services (Rutter, 1981).

Supported by harlow's monkey studies and Ainsworth's strange situation research (Harlow, 1958; Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Universal application: This theory highlights the importance of consistent loving care across cultures (Bowlby, 1982)

Criticisms & Limitations

--This theory is too deterministic, suggests early attachments shape personality and ignores that later relationships can change us (Rutter,2006).

- Father role underplayed: heavily focusing on the mother figure and downplays the vital role of fathers and other caregivers (Lamb,2010).
- Cultural bias: This theory is based on western middle-class families. Attachment patterns may differ across different cultures (Van Ijzendoorn &Kroonenberg,1988).
- Overemphasis on one primary bond: children often form multiple secure attachments, not just one relationship (Lewis et al.,2000).



Nature vs Nurture.

▪ Biological influences (nature)

▪ Shona's development and wellbeing are shaped by natural, biological factors from birth. Her temperament, her natural personality and emotional style, is something she was born with. Influencing how she responds to stress and separation (Bowlby, 1969). Shona's early brain development is also key: during these early years, the brain is rapidly growing and forming connections, particularly in areas that handle emotions and relationships. Bowlby believed that infants are biologically programmed to seek close attachments as a survival instinct.

▪ Environmental influences (Nurture)

▪ Shona's experiences and surroundings play a huge part, the care she receives from her mother and other people around her builds her sense of safety and trust, this is her most important environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

▪ - How people interact with her. Is she receiving comfort, consistency and love?



Evaluation n (part A) Strengths of Bowlby's attachme nt theory.

- One of the greatest strengths of Bowlby's theory is that it fundamentally changed how society understands and cares for young children. Before this work, separation from parents was often seen as something children would simply get used to, but Bowlby showed that it can cause deep emotional distress (Bowlby, 1969). For children like Shona, this means hospitals now actively encourage parents to stay overnight or visit frequently, and childcare settings ensure children have a key worker they can build a bond with.

Weaknesses and Limitations:

- The theory has important limitations. It places almost all focus on one primary attachment figure usually the mother and doesn't fully acknowledge that children can form equally strong bonds with fathers, grandparents, or other key people in their lives (Lamb, 2010). It also suggests that early attachment patterns are set for life. Research shows that children who experience difficult early separation can recover and build healthy relationships later when they receive good support (Rutter, 2006).

Evaluation (part B)
alternative theory:
Bronfenbrenner's
Ecological
systems theory.



A very useful alternative is Bronfenbrenner's Ecological systems theory, which looks at the child not just through their relationships with one person but, as part of a whole network of influences from family and school to wider society (Bronfenbrenner's 1979).

However, Bowlby focuses mostly on the parent-child bond, Bronfenbrenner helps us see that Shona's wellbeing is also affected by her hospital environment, the staff who care for her, visiting rules and even the support available to her parents. This can be seen as more useful because it gives professionals a bigger picture.



Conclusion.

- Overall, Bowlby's attachment theory is extremely valuable for understanding Shona's experience and the impact of separation. It clearly explains why she went through protest, despair and detachment and it has directly improved how hospitals and care settings support children and their families (Bowlby, 1969, Robertson & Bowlby, 1952).

- The important takeaway is that psychology gives us powerful tools to understand what children feel and need even when, they cannot tell us themselves.

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