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BOWLBY'S MONOTROPIC ATTACHMENT THEORY

What is Bowlby's monotropic theory of attachment?
What are the different types of attachment according to this theory?
How might said attachment affect later development?

ANSWERING THOSE QUESTIONS

Attachment = an emotional bond between child and caregiver that helps the child feel safe (Bowlby, 1969)

Secure attachment develops through consistent care and supports confidence, exploration and social development (Salter Ainsworth et al., 2015)

Insecure attachment may contribute to anxiety, distress and social difficulties (Salter Ainsworth et al., 2015)

Internal working model means early relationships shape how children view trust, safety and future relationships (Bowlby, 1969).

Separation anxiety is common if attachment is stifled

Caregiver responsiveness → secure attachment → exploration and social confidence



HOW DOES THIS EXPLAIN AMIRA'S
SITUATION?

- Bowlby argued children may become distressed when separated from an attachment figure, especially if they do not feel fully secure or view the caregiver as reliably available
- Inconsistent, disrupted or emotionally unresponsive caregiving may affect a child's sense of trust, safety and security (Bowlby, 1969).
- Amira's distress when carers leave may suggest difficulty using carers as a secure base. Her limited communication may reflect reduced emotional confidence. Her difficulty in group play may suggest she does not yet feel secure enough to explore relationships with peers



FACTORS INFLUENCING AMIRA'S DEVELOPMENT

Biological factors such as temperament may affect how sensitive Amira is to stress. . For example, a more sensitive or reactive temperament may increase the need for emotional reassurance, predictability, and security, while a less reactive temperament may be associated with greater tolerance for change or uncertainty In this way, temperament can affect needs related to safety, emotional regulation, and interpersonal support (Mehdi Abadi, 2023)

NATURE

Environmental factors such as caregiving experiences and major life transitions can also shape psychological needs by influencing the development of trust, security, and belonging. Consistent and responsive caregiving may support needs for safety and connection, while inconsistent or stressful environments may increase needs for reassurance and stability. Similarly, transitions such as entering new social settings can shape needs related to adjustment, support, and familiarity. These factors help influence how psychological needs develop and how they are expressed.(Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

NURTURE

PRACTICAL SUPPORT STRATEGIES

A key person approach can help Amira build trust with one familiar adult
(Department for Education, 2024)

Small group play may support confidence and social interaction
(Sroufe, 2005)

Gradual exposure approach can help the child build confidence at their own pace
(drmorwenduncan, 2024)

STRENGTHS OF BOWLBY'S ATTACHMENT THEORY

The theory helps explain links between early relationships and emotional development

It supports practical relationship-based interventions in nursery settings (Sroufe, 2005).

Bowlby placed strong emphasis on emotional development and the importance of relationships, which earlier developmental theories often gave less attention



Limitations of Bowlby's theory

The theory may place too much emphasis on maternal attachment (Mehdi Abadi, 2023)

Cultural bias – It may not reflect cultures where multiple caregivers are common (Mehdi Abadi, 2023)

Oversimplification of human development (Mehdi Abadi, 2023)

IN CONCLUSION, **BOWLBY** HELPS EXPLAIN HOW AMIRA'S ANXIETY, COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES WITH GROUP PLAY MAY BE LINKED TO ATTACHMENT INSECURITY AND DIFFICULTY USING CAREGIVERS AS A SECURE BASE.

THE THEORY ALSO HELPS INFORM PRACTICAL STRATEGIES, SUCH AS A KEY PERSON APPROACH, PREDICTABLE ROUTINES AND GRADUAL SEPARATION SUPPORT, WHICH MAY HELP AMIRA BUILD TRUST AND FEEL MORE SECURE IN THE NURSERY ENVIRONMENT.

HOWEVER, AS DISCUSSED, ATTACHMENT THEORY DOES HAVE LIMITATIONS AND DOES NOT FULLY EXPLAIN ALL ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT ON ITS OWN.

OVERALL, I WOULD ARGUE BOWLBY'S THEORY REMAINS VALUABLE FOR UNDERSTANDING AMIRA'S EMOTIONAL NEEDS, BUT IT IS STRONGEST WHEN USED ALONGSIDE WIDER CONSIDERATION OF BIOLOGICAL, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

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