

Gender Differences in Developmental Tasks of 3 Years-old Boys and Girls

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Abstract

This study was conducted to compare the developmental tasks of 3 years-old boys and girls. The study was delimited to only one private school of Lahore city. Sample of 30 boys and 30 girls were selected randomly. A checklist was developed by reviewing related literature and adapting Portage Early Education Programme Checklist Published by Nfer Nelson for 0-6 years-old children. The checklist was comprised of three categories such as motor development, cognitive development and social development. Each category was consisted of 33, 16 and 19 items respectively. Students were observed, interviewed and were asked to perform tasks in order to collect the data. Data were analyzed in terms of percentages and t-test. Results of the study revealed that there was no difference among 3 years-old boys and girls in motor development, cognitive development and social development.

Keywords: Developmental tasks, Private schools, Early education, Lahore, Pakistan

1. Introduction

According to Uhlenhorff (2004) the term “developmental task” was introduced by Robert Havighurst in the 1950’s. The term refers to tasks, which arise in a social context during an individual’s lifetime. Lindenmann (2006) presented a cross-cultural and intercultural study comparing the developmental tasks of adolescents of native and foreign origin in France (French and North African origin) and Germany (German and Turkish origin). The results of the study suggested that developmental tasks are not identical for adolescents in the national cultures (France and Germany) and furthermore that they are not the same depending on the acculturation framework to which adolescents of foreign origin are exposed in these two European countries. Bowen (2005) examined the developmental task attainment histories of 554 children (6 to 12 years) receiving mental health services and their association with aggressive behavior in middle childhood. Children who did not encounter difficulty attaining any of the examined tasks or who had difficulty with tasks only in middle childhood had better functioning than children with task difficulties that began in infancy or early childhood. Walsh, Shulman, Feldman, and Maurer (2005) scrutinized the impact of immigration on the internal processes and developmental tasks of emerging adulthood. The findings of this study points to the complex and unique process that emerging adult immigrants undergo while coping with developmental tasks in their new environment. Roisman, Masten, Coatsworth and Tellegen (2004) investigated the predictive links from 3 salient (friendship, academic, conduct) and 2 emerging (work, romantic) developmental tasks during the transition years around age 20 years. The results of this study confirmed the utility of salient developmental tasks for predicting adult success. Schulze, Harward, Schoelmerich and Leyendecker (2002) undertook the study to compare middle-class Anglo and Puerto Rican mothers' beliefs and self-reported practices related to infant feeding, sleeping, and toilet training. Results showed that Puerto Rican mothers emphasized instrumental independence, or the ability to perform tasks without

help, whereas Anglo mothers focused on emotional autonomy, or concern about the child's inner self. Glover (2000) reviewed major developmental tasks of adults during early adulthood along with issues associated with transition into middle and later adulthood and he also provided suggestions for community college counselors working with these individuals. Ruth (1998) empirically investigated the relationship of several developmental tasks to the developmental outcomes of life satisfaction, moral reasoning and occupational attainment at age 28. Structured retrospective interviews of 62 men and women in their late twenties were converted to variable scores and submitted to quantitative analyses. The results indicated differing patterns of influence on each of the outcomes, clarifying the relative importance of each developmental task, and also highlighting the multi-faceted nature of human development. Sittiwong (1998) described the developmental tasks of expectant fathers during the pregnancy of their wives. He investigated five developmental tasks which were: accepting the pregnancy; establishing a relationship with the unborn child; adjusting to changes in self; adjusting to changes in the couple relationship; and preparing for labor, birth, and early parenthood. The findings showed that the mean scores of all five developmental tasks of the subjects had moderate levels but the task of establishing a relationship with the unborn child was the highest mean of all. Fanos (1996) highlighted the importance of genetic testing of children and adolescents with disorders to improve their ability to achieve developmental tasks. He suggested that testing of adolescents may alter the achievement of developmental tasks, including seeking freedom from parental figures, establishment of personal identity, handling of sexual energies, and remodeling of former idealizations of self and others. Johnson, Wilkinson and Mcneil (1995) explored that parental divorce and family conflict significantly affects the developmental tasks attainment of young adulthood. The interactions between sex and age and family structure (i.e., single-parent or stepfamily) were also significant predictors of post-divorce developmental tasks attainment of young adulthood.

Purpose of the study was to explore and compare motor, cognitive and social developments of 3 years-old children. For this study age group of 3 years has been chosen because of its uniqueness as preschool starts at this age. Pre-schooling is the first and most important stage in the lifelong learning continuum as it provides the developmental foundation for all later learning. The basic knowledge, skills and dispositions that lie at the heart of adult role performances can be traced back to early childhood learning experiences. There is a strong connection between the development a child undergoes early in life and the level of success that the child will experience later in life. It has a very important and fundamental bearing on the format of child education. Through this study it has been attempted to explain that 3 years old children have certain developmental tasks, which they have to master during a specific period of time. It is important for parents and other caregivers to understand these developmental tasks in order to help children grow and develop appropriately.

2. Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the study were:

1. To explore motor, cognitive and social developments of 3 years-old children.
2. To compare the developmental tasks of 3 years-old boys and girls.
3. To investigate any significant difference in the developmental tasks of 3 years-old boys and girls.

3. Hypothesis of the Study

It was hypothesized that there was no significant difference among 3 years-old boys and girls in motor, cognitive and social developments.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Design

The present study was descriptive in nature. It covered the comparison of developmental tasks of 3 years-old boys and girls. 30 boys and 30 girls were randomly selected from playgroup of a private school. They were asked to perform the tasks to collect the desired information.

4.2 Subjects

Out of 90 students 60 (30 boys and 30 girls) were randomly selected from playgroup class of a private school of Lahore City in Pakistan.

4.3 Instrument

A checklist developed by reviewing the related literature and adapting Portage Early Education Programme Checklist published by Nfer-Nelson for children aged 0 to 6 years was used as instrument.

4.4 Procedure

Portage Early Education Programme Checklist published by Nfer-Nelson was adapted and related literature was also consulted to develop a checklist for the assessment of developmental tasks of 3 years-old children. Checklist was divided into three categories such as, motor development, cognitive development and social development. Each category was consisted of suitable number of relevant items. Items were grouped to their affinity and nature. Motor development category was consisted of 33 items which were grouped under leg-skills, hand-skills and self-help skills. Cognitive development category was consisted of 16 items which were grouped under knowledge, comprehension and application and social development category comprised of 19 items which were grouped under social skills with adults, social skills with peers, social ethics and general social skills. The checklist was shown to 10 experts (university teachers, early childhood teachers, subject experts and psychologists) to determine its content validity. In the light of their opinion, the checklist was revised. The researcher observed and interviewed 30 boys and 30 girls of 3 years old children. The researcher herself administered the checklist and spent one full week in playgroup during summer session from 8:00 am to 12:30 pm. Researcher interviewed and observed the students. They were also asked to perform some tasks in order to collect the desired information.

4.5 Data analysis

To reach certain conclusions t-test and percentages were computed to compare the developmental tasks of 3 years-old children. The norm for acceptance or rejection of statement was α 0.05 level of significance. Results of the study are shown as under:

5. Results

Table 1 indicated that there was no significant difference in motor development among 3 years-old boys and girls. The P-value was 0.579, which was greater than level of significance at α 0.05. It means the difference of motor development between boys and girls was statistically insignificant. Table 2 indicated that 88 percent of boys and 78 percent of girls performed developmental tasks related to leg-skills. Hand-skills were demonstrated by 86 percent of boys and girls. 85 percent of boys and girls could do the self-help skills. Table 3 indicated that there was no significant difference in cognitive development among 3 years-old boys and girls. The P-value was 0.893, which was greater than level of significance at α 0.05. It means the difference of cognitive development between boys and girls was statistically insignificant. Table 4 indicated that 57 percent of boys and 60 percent of girls had knowledge. 73 percent of boys and 64 percent of girls demonstrated comprehension skills. 46 percent of boys and 62 percent of girls could apply the knowledge. The table 5 indicated that there was no significant difference in social development among 3 years-old boys and girls. The P-value was 0.832, which was greater than level of significance at α 0.05. It means the difference of social development among boys and girls is statistically insignificant. Table 6 indicated that 74 percent of boys and 78 percent of girls showed social skills with adults. 70 percent of boys and girls demonstrated social skills with peers. 71 percent of boys and 70 percent of girls exhibited social ethics. General social skills were demonstrated by 85 percent of boys and 86 percent of girls. Table 7 indicated that there was no significant difference among cumulative percentages of 3 years-old boys and girls in motor, cognitive and social developments as 85 percent of boys and 83 percent of girls performed developmental tasks of motor development. Developmental tasks related to cognitive developments were exhibited by 59 percent of boys and 61 percent of girls. 75 percent of boys and 76 percent of girls demonstrated tasks related to social development. Above mentioned results do not show any significant difference among 3 years-old boys and girls in motor, cognitive and social developments. So the hypothesis is accepted.

6. Conclusion and discussion

Cumulative percentages and statistical analysis showed that there was no significant difference among 3 years-old boys and girls in motor, cognitive and social developments, although there was a slight difference in percentages of few items. More boys showed leg-skills than girls. Mostly boys could ride tricycle as compared to girls. The reason behind this might be that mostly boys had the opportunity to ride tricycle at home as compared to girls. Girls are mostly considered to play with dolls and engaged in indoor activities. Mostly boys play with vehicles, construction toys and action games such as football or soccer. Girls prefer art activities like doll play and dancing.

Data related to cognitive development showed that boys had more comprehension ability but girls applied the knowledge more. There are many studies which suggest that there are no astronomical differences among boys and girls in cognitive development and many studies suggest that gender influences the cognitive development. Leahey (2001) states that boys' mathematical skills are superior to girls' has been a controversial topic among

social scientists for decades. There are many other factors which could be influencing the performance of children. Experience and environment are one of them. It is suggested that parents and teachers should have the knowledge of developmental tasks of certain age. They should be meticulous about experience child is having and environment in which child is interacting. They should use appropriate methods to actuate and help children master appropriate developmental tasks. Creation of various situations for acquisition of a specific developmental task for children is must. It is further emphasized that astute observation and individual attention is necessary in identification of any atypical behavior of child.

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Table 1. Comparison among boys and girls in motor development

Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	T-value	P-value
Girls	5	3.6672	58	0.558	0.579
Boys	4.5	3.2669			

Table 2. Cumulative percentages on different aspects of motor development

	Boys	Girls
Leg-skills	88%	78%
Hand-skills	86%	86%
Self-help skills	85%	85%

Table 3. Comparison among boys and girls in cognitive development

Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	T-value	P-value
Girls	6.4	4.2718	58	-0.135	0.893
Boys	6.5333	3.2877			

Table 4. Cumulative percentages on different aspects of cognitive development

	Boys	Girls
Knowledge	57%	60%
Comprehension	73%	64%
Application	46%	62%

Table 5. Comparison among boys and girls in social development

Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	T-value	P-value
Girls	4.4333	3.0926	58	-0.213	0.832
Boys	4.6	2.9665			

Table 6. Cumulative percentages on different aspects of social development

	Boys	Girls
Social skills with adults	74%	78%
Social skills with peers	70%	70%
Social ethics	71%	70%
General social skills	85%	86%

Table 7. Cumulative percentages of motor, cognitive and social development

	Boys	Girls
Motor development	85%	83%
Cognitive development	59%	61%
Social development	75%	76%