The Impact of Family Parent-child Games and Attachment Relationships on Children's Social Adaptability

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Abstract: This paper explores the impact of family parent-child games (PCG) and attachment on children's social adaptability in depth. PCG, which include a variety of types, positively affect children's cognitive development, emotional development, social skills (SS) training, and adaptive behavior. Attachment are divided into secure, avoidant, and resistant types, among others. A secure attachment (SA) helps children establish a positive self-concept, promotes exploratory behavior, enhances cognitive development, regulates emotions, and develops SS, which are also crucial to children's adaptive behavior. PCG and attachment influence each other and jointly affect children's adaptability. A positive family environment (FE) is conducive to the development of both. Strategies to promote children's social adaptability include enhancing the quality and frequency of PCG, establishing secure attachment, and leveraging the collaborative effects of family, school, and society. In summary, family PCG and attachment significantly impact the development of children's social adaptability. Parents should value and cooperate with schools and society to create a favorable growth environment for children.

Keywords: Family parent-child games, attachment relationships, children's social adaptability.

1. Introduction

The social adaptability development of children is a key part of their growth, concerning their future integration into social life. Among the many influencing factors, the roles of family parent-child games (PCG) and attachments are particularly prominent. PCG, as an important mode of interaction between parents and children, provide rich experiences and learning opportunities for children's physical and mental development. Attachments, which are emotional connections established with primary caregivers in early childhood, profoundly impact their cognitive, emotional, and social aspects. Exploring the impact of family PCG and attachments on children's social adaptability is of great theoretical and practical significance for promoting healthy growth and enhancing their social adaptability.

2.   The Impact of Family PCG on Children's Social Adaptability

2.1.   Definition and Types of PCG

PCG are an important way to promote children's cognitive development. Through interactive games with parents, children can acquire new knowledge and skills, stimulating their curiosity and desire to explore, which is crucial for their intellectual growth. For instance, in puzzle or memory games, children need to use logical thinking and spatial perception to solve problems, which helps improve their cognitive flexibility and problem-solving abilities. In role-playing or storytelling games, children use imagination and creativity, positively affecting their abstract thinking abilities. Additionally, the language communication in PCG provides children with rich vocabulary learning opportunities, enhancing their language comprehension and expression skills. The study by Huang Lirong and others further confirmed this, selecting 30 first-grade students from a primary school in Guangzhou for a semester-long parent-child game intervention plan. The study used a randomized controlled trial design, dividing students into experimental and control groups. The experimental group students participated in games accompanied by parents at least once a week, while the control group maintained their usual learning mode. The methods included standardized tests, parental interviews, and teacher observations to assess children's progress in attention, memory, and language abilities. The results showed that the experimental group children performed significantly better in all cognitive abilities, especially in problem-solving and creative thinking, demonstrating the positive role of PCG in promoting children's cognitive development. Despite limitations such as small sample size and regional constraints, the findings still provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of PCG as a means of promoting children's cognitive development [1].

2.2.   The Role of PCG in Children's Cognitive Development

PCG not only enhance the emotional bonds between family members but also significantly promote children's emotional development. During the game process, children feel love and support through active interaction with their parents, which helps build their sense of security and trust. For example, in role-playing games, children can try different social roles and experience various emotional states, such as happiness, sadness, or anger, which helps them better understand and manage their emotions. Additionally, when children encounter challenges or difficulties in games, the support and encouragement from parents help them learn how to face setbacks and enhance their psychological resilience. Studies show that children who frequently participate in PCG are more likely to develop an optimistic attitude towards life and a higher sense of self-efficacy. The study by Sun Xiaoyan, for example, aimed to explore the positive impact of PCG on the emotional development of 3-5-year-old preschoolers. The study selected 20 preschoolers from a kindergarten in Shanghai for a three-month regular parent-child game activity, observing and recording changes in the preschoolers' emotional expression, emotional regulation (ER), and social adaptability. The results showed that after the intervention, the preschoolers were more open in emotional expression, able to more accurately recognize and express their emotions; in ER, they learned more effective strategies to cope with negative emotions; in social adaptability, the preschoolers showed stronger empathy and better social skills (SS). Despite the small sample size and specific research environment, the results still emphasize the importance of PCG in promoting preschoolers' emotional health [2].

2.3.   The Impact of PCG on Children's Emotional Development

In PCG, children have opportunities to cooperate, compete, share, and communicate with others. For example, in cooperative games, children need to complete tasks together with their parents, which can cultivate their sense of cooperation and team spirit. In competitive games, children learn to follow

rules, respect opponents, and also experience the joy of victory and the frustration of defeat, improving their psychological endurance. Additionally, PCG also promote the development of children's language communication and interpersonal skills [3]. Children interact with their parents in games, learning to express their thoughts and needs, listen to others' opinions and suggestions, thereby improving their communication skills and SS. For example, the study by Zhan explored the impact of PCG on enhancing the peer interaction skills of kindergarten children. The study selected three subjects from a kindergarten in Yuelu District, Changsha, identified as Case Y, Case L, and Case P. These three children were assessed for their peer interaction skills using the "4-6 Years Old Children's Peer Interaction Ability Teacher Rating Questionnaire" before the study to ensure their skills were at a moderate level. The study used a single-subject design with an A-B baseline experimental design, conducting an eight-week parent-child game intervention for the three kindergarten children. The methods included questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, observation, and informant reports to collect quantitative data and qualitative reports, comprehensively assessing the peer interaction skills of the case children. The study was divided into three phases: the baseline period to understand the initial peer interaction skills of the children, the intervention period to implement the parent-child game intervention, and the follow-up period to assess the effects after the intervention ended. The study found that the peer interaction skills of the three children improved during the intervention period and after the intervention ended, indicating that PCG effectively promote the development of peer interaction skills among kindergarten children. However, the study also had some limitations. First, the personal research quality of the researchers might affect the results, as the researchers directly participated in the research process. Second, the sample selection was limited, only involving kindergarten children, not covering a broader age range, which limited the general applicability of the research findings. Additionally, because the study did not use a double-blind design, the researchers and participants might be affected by the expectation effect, which could bias the research results. Despite these limitations, the study still provides valuable insights into the role of PCG in promoting the peer interaction skills of preschoolers.

2.4. The Role of PCG in Cultivating Children's SS

PCG are not only an important form of entertainment for children but also a key factor in promoting the development of their adaptive behaviors. Adaptive behavior refers to the behavior patterns that individuals display in daily life to effectively cope with environmental demands, including self-care, social interaction, and academic achievement, among other aspects. In PCG, children learn how to handle various situations in daily life by imitating adult behavior patterns, such as how to resolve conflicts and how to manage themselves. For example, in role-playing games simulating shopping or cooking, children can learn concepts of money management and basic steps of food preparation, which help them better serve and manage themselves in real life. Additionally, PCG also help improve children's social adaptability, enabling them to establish good interpersonal relationships in schools and communities. The study by Fu Yuhong and others deeply explored the impact of PCG on children's adaptive behaviors, selecting 40 preschool children from a kindergarten in Beijing as the research subjects for a ten-week parent-child game intervention project, closely observing and recording changes in the children's adaptive behaviors. The study used a quasi-experimental design method, randomly assigning these 40 children to an experimental group (20 children) and a control group (20 children), where the experimental group children participated in two parent-accompanied game activities per week, each lasting about one hour; the control group children continued to participate in regular kindergarten educational activities, without additional parent-child game time. The results showed that after ten weeks of intervention, the experimental group children showed significant improvement in self-care ability, SSs, and academic performance. Specifically, the average score of the "Children's Adaptive Behavior Scale" for the experimental group children

increased by 15%, and the average score of the "SSs Assessment Scale" increased by 20%; additionally, teacher feedback showed that the experimental group children's participation in class and willingness to cooperate with peers significantly strengthened. In contrast, although the control group children also made some progress, the degree of improvement was smaller, and the differences between the two groups were statistically significant (p<0.05) [3].

3. The Impact of Attachment Relationships on Children's Social Adaptability

3.1. Definition and Types of Attachment Relationships

Attachments refer to a special emotional connection established between infants and their primary caregivers (usually parents). This relationship plays a crucial role in the early development of infants. There are several types of attachments: secure attachment (SA), where the infant shows some discomfort when the caregiver leaves but actively seeks contact and comfort when the caregiver returns, quickly regaining composure; avoidant attachment, where the infant appears indifferent to the caregiver's departure and return, seemingly unconcerned about the caregiver's presence; resistant attachment, where the infant is very anxious when the caregiver leaves, and when the caregiver returns, the infant both seeks contact and shows resistance. Lai first systematically described the characteristics of SA through the "Strange Situation Experiment." In the experiment, the infant and mother entered a strange room together, then the mother temporarily left the room, leaving the infant alone. The results showed that securely attached infants displayed some discomfort when the mother left, but when the mother returned, they actively sought contact and comfort and quickly regained composure. This type of infant accounts for about 65% of all infants [4].

3.2. The Impact of Attachment Relationships on Early Childhood Development

SA help children establish a positive self-concept. In interactions with caregivers, children feel loved and accepted, thereby forming a positive self-evaluation. Additionally, attachments affect children's exploratory behavior. Securely attached children are more willing to explore their surroundings because they know they can return to their caregivers for support when they encounter difficulties. In contrast, insecurely attached children may be reluctant to explore boldly due to distrust of their caregivers [5]. Furthermore, attachments also impact children's cognitive development. A good attachment provides stable emotional support for children, promoting brain development and enhancing cognitive abilities. The classic "Strange Situation Procedure" conducted by Dai Binrong and others revealed the positive impact of SA on children's responses to new environments and strangers. The study selected 120 toddlers aged 18 to 24 months and observed their reactions during separation from parents, interaction with strangers, and reunion with parents through a series of designs. The results showed that children with SA exhibited higher confidence and adaptability when facing new environments or strangers. Specifically, during the different phases of the "Strange Situation Experiment," 78% of these children actively explored the environment without their parents present, while this proportion was only 35% among insecurely attached children. When parents left the room, securely attached children showed moderate anxiety, but when parents returned, they quickly regained composure, and 85% of the children actively sought physical contact with their parents for comfort. In contrast, insecurely attached children displayed more chaotic reactions when parents returned, with only 40% seeking physical contact with their parents. The findings indicate that securely attached children obtain sufficient security from caregivers, which helps them develop a positive self-image and trust in the outside world, thus displaying better adaptability and SSs when facing new challenges [6].

3.3. The Role of Attachment Relationships in Children's ER

Securely attached children can better regulate their emotions when facing emotional stimuli. They learn how to identify and express emotions and how to cope with adverse emotions from their caregivers. In contrast, insecurely attached children may lack effective ER strategies and are prone to emotional problems, such as excessive anxiety, anger, or depression. The way caregivers respond to children's emotions affects the development of children's ER abilities. If caregivers sensitively respond to children's emotional needs, providing comfort and support, children will gradually learn to self-regulate their emotions.

Yao Li's study delved into the impact of early attachment types on children's subsequent ER abilities. Through long-term observational tracking from infancy to preschool, involving hundreds of child samples, the study found that children with SA displayed faster emotional recovery and more positive emotional coping strategies when facing emotional challenges. In contrast, children with inSA (including avoidant and anxious types) showed lower ER abilities. Specifically, avoidantly attached children tend to suppress emotional expression and struggle to seek external support for solving emotional problems; anxiously attached children often overly rely on others and lack self-soothing abilities, feeling more anxious or despondent when facing stressful situations [7].

3.4. The Impact of Attachment Relationships on Children's SSs

Securely attached children are more likely to establish good relationships with others. They learn trust, cooperation, and sharing through interactions with caregivers, which helps them succeed in interactions with peers. In contrast, insecurely attached children may display withdrawal, aggression, or excessive dependence in social situations. They may lack trust in others and struggle to form close relationships. Additionally, attachments also affect children's social cognition. Securely attached children are better able to understand others' emotions and intentions, thus better adapting to social situations.

Wang Shuyue's research explored the relationship between attachment types and children's social behavior, finding that insecurely attached children (particularly contradictory and avoidant types) are more likely to exhibit withdrawal, aggression, or excessive dependence in social settings. These behavioral patterns may stem from their uncertainty and distrust in interpersonal interactions. In the study, children's social behavior was primarily measured through direct observation and parental subjective reports. On one hand, researchers observed children's behavior in specific social situations, recording their specific reactions when facing new environments or interacting with other children; on the other hand, parental subjective reports were also a crucial source of data, collecting descriptions and evaluations of children's daily social behavior through questionnaires or interviews. Combining these two methods provides a more accurate reflection of the characteristics and differences in social behavior among children with different attachment types [8].

3.5. The Association between Attachment Relationships and Children's Adaptive Behaviors

Securely attached children typically exhibit better adaptive behaviors. They are better equipped to handle challenges and changes in life, such as adapting to new environments and making new friends. Part of the reason is that they establish a sense of security and trust through interactions with caregivers, giving them the courage to explore and try new things. In contrast, insecurely attached children may encounter problems in adaptability. They may feel fear and anxiety about new environments, struggling to adapt to school life or social situations. Therefore, establishing SA is crucial for the development of children's social adaptability.

Song S's research, by observing children's responses to setbacks and failures, found that securely attached children were more likely to maintain a positive attitude and adopt effective coping strategies.

For example, when facing difficult tasks, these children were more likely to seek help, retry, or find other solutions. In contrast, insecurely attached children were more likely to give up or display negative emotions, such as anger and despondency, which could lead to poor adaptability [2].

4. The Interaction between Family PCG and Attachment Relationships

4.1. The Mutual Influence of PCG and Attachment Relationships

In PCG, parents interact closely with children, giving them ample attention, love, and response. This positive interaction helps children establish trust and a sense of security in their parents, thereby promoting the formation of SA. For example, in role-playing games, parents and children play different roles together, allowing children to feel their parents' understanding and support, enhancing the emotional connection between parent and child. At the same time, attachments also affect the quality of PCG [9]. Securely attached children are more willing to actively participate in PCG and interact with their parents because they trust their parents and believe their parents will support and protect them during the game. In contrast, insecurely attached children may exhibit withdrawal, resistance, or excessive dependence in PCG, affecting the smooth conduct of the games.

4.2. The Joint Impact of PCG and Attachment Relationships on Children's Adaptability

On one hand, PCG, by providing rich experiences and learning opportunities, promote the development of children's cognition, emotions, and social aspects, enhancing their adaptability. For example, in cooperative PCG, children learn to cooperate, share, and solve problems with others, which helps them better adapt to social environments. On the other hand, SA provide stable emotional support and a sense of security for children, giving them confidence and courage to face challenges and pressures, thereby enhancing adaptability. When PCG and attachments mutually promote each other, children's adaptability can develop better. For example, under SA, parents actively participate in PCG, better guiding children's learning and growth, helping them establish good adaptability [10].

4.3. The Impact of the Family Environment (FE) on PCG and Attachment Relationships

A warm, harmonious, and supportive FE is conducive to the conduct of PCG and the establishment of SA. In such families, parents have more time and energy to invest in interacting with their children, actively participating in PCG, providing high-quality companionship. At the same time, a good FE also allows children to feel stable and secure, helping them build trust and reliance on their parents, forming SA. Conversely, a tense, conflict-ridden, and unsupportive FE may hinder the conduct of PCG and affect the quality of attachments [11]. In such environments, parents may neglect interaction with their children due to stress and conflict, and children may feel anxious and insecure due to family instability, making it difficult to establish SA. Additionally, the cultural atmosphere and educational concepts in the FE also impact PCG and attachments. For example, a family culture that values parent-child interaction and emotional communication is more conducive to the development of PCG and SA.

5. Strategies to Promote Children's Social Adaptability

5.1. Enhancing the Quality of PCG

Improving the quality of PCG can start with selecting appropriate game content. Based on children's age, interests, and developmental stages, parents choose educational and entertaining games, such as puzzle games that can exercise children's spatial cognition and logical thinking abilities, and role-playing games that allow children to experience different social roles and scenarios [4]. At the same

time, parents should be fully engaged in the game process, giving children ample attention and positive feedback. When children make progress or achieve success, they should be promptly praised and encouraged to enhance their confidence and sense of achievement; when children encounter difficulties, parents should guide and help them patiently to find solutions, cultivating their perseverance and problem-solving abilities.

5.2. Establishing SA Relationships

Parents should provide stable emotional support and love to their children, making them feel loved and valued. In daily life, parents can engage in close physical contact with their children, such as hugging, kissing, and caressing, to strengthen the emotional connection between parent and child [12]. At the same time, parents should respond promptly to children's needs, whether they are physical or emotional. When children cry, seek help, or express emotions, parents should react quickly, providing comfort and support, making children feel understood and accepted.

Parents should maintain consistency in their attitudes and methods when educating children to prevent confusion and insecurity. For example, in setting and enforcing rules, parents should negotiate together and adhere to them, making it clear to children what is acceptable and what is not. Additionally, parents should provide a stable and safe living environment for their children, avoiding frequent moves or changes in caregivers, allowing children to grow up in a familiar and predictable environment.

5.3. The Collaborative Role of Family, School, and Society

The family is the first classroom for children, where parents play a primary role in educating them, setting the right values and behavioral norms through good family education. At the same time, they should actively communicate and cooperate with schools and society to understand children's performance in school and society, jointly focusing on children's growth [13].

Schools are important places for children to receive systematic education, where teachers should pay attention to each child's developmental needs, using diverse teaching methods and activities to cultivate children's SSs, spirit of cooperation, and problem-solving abilities. Schools can also organize parent-child activities and parent lectures, strengthening the connection between families and schools, and jointly promoting children's social adaptability development. These measures not only directly promote children's SS development in school but also indirectly promote the healthy development of their attachments by enhancing the quality of interactions between parents and children, further supporting the positive development of PCG, and providing a more stable and supportive growth environment for children.

6. Conclusion

In summary, family PCG and attachments have a crucial impact on the development of children's social adaptability. PCG provide rich cognitive, emotional, and social experiences, helping children enhance their adaptability; SA provide stable emotional support, boosting their confidence and courage to face challenges. At the same time, a good FE promotes the conduct of PCG and the establishment of SA, while the collaborative role of family, school, and society provides comprehensive support for the development of children's social adaptability.

During the growth process of children, parents should highly value the quality and frequency of PCG, strive to establish SA, and closely cooperate with schools and society to create an environment conducive to the development of children's social adaptability, laying a solid foundation for their future.

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