

Commentary

Emotional Intelligence and Parental Emotional Competence

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Over the past three decades or so, 'Emotional Intelligence' (EI) has made a substantial contribution to psychological research across the social sciences and beyond. As a human being in order to survive optimally in the increasingly difficult and complex situations around us, we generally need adequate level of intellectual functioning. However, apart from this intellectual or cognitive functioning, correct understanding of emotional functioning in others and ourselves does require adequate level of emotional or social intelligence as well. We believe that it is a very crucial element of our survival in grasping the emotional colors of the world, yet it has been predominately overlooked. In this commentary, we offer a reflection on this emerging concept of EI with respect to the parenting competence with the aim of fostering strong emotional connection of parents with their children. Due to its widespread recognition in the various sectors of social competence, the optimal level of emotional functioning in the parents are paving the way for

the foundation of effective parenting practice. Furthermore, it has been noticed that the emotional competence of the parents is increasingly contributing to the development of a high level of Parental Emotional Intelligence (PEI). Hence, it is considered as an important aspect of parenting practice, which is often neglected by parents while raising their children. We are in the favor of a strong opinion that it does have potential to mitigate the detrimental effects of parental anxiety and negative parenting styles on child raising practices.

In our extensive experience working with children and adolescents, we have frequently observed that children or adolescents are often brought by their parents in our clinics with frequent complaints of inappropriate or oppositional defiant behaviors, which can be the source of disappointments in many parents. We generally work on attachment related issues and parent management training when it comes to children's maladaptive behavior. It is

generally believed that strong emotional attachments between children and their parents lay the foundation for healthy emotional development. Each parenting style plays a distinct role in a child's emotional development and ability to manage their emotions. Understanding and applying EI is vital in the context of attachment styles and its impact on parent-child interaction that also play a major role in shaping EI of developing children. EI enhances parental resilience, making them better equipped to handle the difficulties of developing children.

Effective parenting, guided by emotional awareness, promotes better social and emotional growth in children. Conversely, maladaptive attachment patterns can hinder parents' ability to meet their children's emotional need. When parents exhibit warmth through unconditional love, acceptance, and care, it fosters a nurturing environment for their children. Specifically, an authoritative parenting style that is characterized by balance and responsiveness and supports children in developing self-esteem, a growth mindset, and emotional autonomy. Parents who adopt authoritative parenting style strike a balance between authority, flexibility, and gentleness, while also showing empathetic understanding towards their children. This parental competency actively guides and nurtures the children's emotional development from an early age. While authoritative parenting promotes emotional growth, parents with a more authoritarian approach tend to have strict expectations, placing significant emphasis on their children's obedience to rules. They closely monitor and assess their children's behavior against specific standards, often maintaining high expectations while showing limited acceptance of their children's perspectives and emotions. On the contrary, parents with a high level of emotional intelligence tend to exhibit greater parental competence. Their ability to understand and manage their own emotions, as well as recognize and respond to their children's emotional needs, enables them to adopt effective parenting strategies. These parents are more likely to create a nurturing environment that fosters their children's emotional growth, resilience, and social competence. Furthermore, individuals with a secure attachment style typically possess higher emotional intelligence, which enhances their capacity to manage personal stress. Unlike those with insecure attachments, individuals with secure attachments are more adept at confronting stressful situations without becoming overwhelmed or losing control of their emotions. Their ability to remain calm and composed during challenging moments allows them to navigate difficulties with confidence. This self-assurance also extends to their interpersonal relationships, as they trust their problem-solving abilities and maintain healthier connections with others. Parental emotional intelligence and competence are increasingly recognized as fundamental aspects of effective parenting. When parents possess a high level of emotional intelligence and self-esteem, it significantly enhances their parental competence. Another important style known as emotionally neglectful parenting style characterized by a lack

of emotional responsiveness in the parents. This approach can lead to long-term adverse effects on a child's ability to form and maintain effective interpersonal relationships and may in turn negatively impact their mental health. When parents fail to provide emotional support and guidance, children may struggle with emotional regulation and self-worth, which can hinder their overall psychological well-being.

Furthermore, parental education also seems to play a crucial role in shaping children's emotional and social well-being. It serves as a vital foundation for addressing and reducing the negative impacts of various factors that can lead to the social exclusion of children. Additionally, educating parents about effective parenting strategies can equip them with the necessary tools to foster their children's emotional, social, and cognitive development. However, despite its importance, parental education is often neglected. This can be attributed to parents' limited resources, both financial and emotional, as well as the time constraints they face due to the numerous responsibilities that come with parenthood.

Research has also highlighted a concerning correlation between parental anxiety and its effects on children. When parents experience heightened levels of anxiety related to their parenting responsibilities, it can indirectly affect their children's well-being. This emphasizes the need for greater support systems for parents, including accessible mental health resources and parenting education programs. Reflecting on these topics within a broader academic context encourages a reconsideration of how psychological concepts and methodologies are applied. Understanding parenting through the lens of emotional intelligence and competence can lead to a more comprehensive approach in developmental psychology. By acknowledging the interconnectedness of parental mental health, emotional intelligence, and child development, researchers and practitioners can develop more effective interventions and support mechanisms. Emotional intelligence also serves as a critical tool for navigating interpersonal relationships. This skill set not only strengthens family dynamics but also improves relationships in various other areas of life.

Given the increasing popularity of Emotional intelligence (EI) and its applicability to understand a wide range of human emotional expressions, we have attempted to write a commentary on its relationship with parenting practices. However, it is also important to acknowledge the cultural variations in EI and parenting styles as we have often observed a great disparity in terms of comprehending emotions in children. By shedding light on how EI impacts parental competence, emotional regulation in both children and parents, this commentary attempts to highlight the significant impact it can have on the socio-emotional development of growing children.