

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES: A STORY OF GROWTH

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Abstract

A huge number of immigrant families live and work in America where most aspects of lives are remotely similar to the ones we have here in Indonesia, for instance. Many of their children experience some unique developmental realities that are different from the ones experienced by children in some other parts of the world. Some experience challenges in their growth through the dynamics of their relationship with others, particularly their family members. Some others experience it because of their socioeconomic status. This study looks at children from Asian minority communities growing up in the US, Zahra and Linda. Understanding their developments is deemed critical to help us understand the distinction of their developments. Zahra is from Saudi Arabia and lives with her parents in Northern Albuquerque and Linda is from Indonesia, living in California. For Zahra, Arabic is her first language and she is still learning English at this time. Linda, however, was born in Indonesia but raised since she was 3 months old in the US which makes English her first language, although her family still uses Indonesian at home. By observing them, we can gain great insights into their cognitive, social, and physical development and utilize that knowledge to better understand childhood and adolescent development within the immigrant community as a whole.

Keywords: *Cognitive, social, and physical, childhood, and development*

INTRODUCTION

Every child goes through development differently. There are two main factors that influence the growth and development of children, namely congenital factors and environmental factors (Broberg, Hästbacka, & Helle, 2021; Erdei, Liu, Machie, Church, & Heyne, 2021). Congenital factors or heredity (heredity) is the first factor that affects the growth and development of children. This factor can be interpreted as all the characteristics or individual characteristics that are inherited to the child or all the potential both physical and psychological that a person has since the time of conception as an inheritance from parents. Inherited factors are also known as endogenous factors. Endogenous factors are factors that are carried

by individuals from the womb to birth (Afriani, 2021). Because the individual occurs from the meeting of the ovum from the mother and the sperm from the father, it is not surprising that the endogenous factors brought by the individual have characteristics like their parents.

Besides individuals having innate factors related to physical traits and temperament, individuals still have innate traits in the form of talent (aptitude or talent) (Piiro, 2021). Talent is not the only factor that an individual brings when he is born, but is only one factor of their developments (Stambaugh, 2021). Talent is a potential that contains the possibilities to develop in one direction. Talent is not something that has been formed at the time the individual is born, but is only potential. In order for this potential to become actualization, opportunities are needed to actualize these talents. Therefore, there may be talents that cannot develop or cannot be actualized because opportunities do not or are less likely to present. To actualize talent, a good or supportive environment is needed. Herein lies the role of the environment in individual development. Therefore, it is a good step to give children the opportunity to develop their talents as well as possible. To be able to find out a person's talent is generally used an aptitude test (aptitude test).

The second factor is the environmental factor. The environment can be interpreted as various events, situations and conditions outside the individual that directly or indirectly affect the growth and development of children or individual development (Burliyevna, 2022). This environment consists of the physical environment and the social environment. The physical environment is everything that is physical around the individual such as the state of the house, yard, rice field, soil, water, seasons and so on. The physical environment is also known as the natural environment. Different natural environments will have different effects on individuals. For example: mountainous areas will have a different effect when compared to coastal areas. Areas that have winter will have a different effect than areas those are summer all year round. Social environment accommodates humans with various interactions that create a distinctive social environment. The social

environment is a community environment, where in this community environment there are individual interactions with other individuals. The state of society will have a certain influence on individual development.

The social environment is usually distinguished into: (1) Primary social environment, namely the social environment in which there is a close relationship between members of one another, members of one know each other well with other members. Therefore, there is a close relationship between members, so of course the influence of this social environment will be more profound when compared to the social environment which is not closely related; (2) The secondary social environment, namely the social environment in which the relationship between members is somewhat loose. In general, members of one with other members are less or do not know each other. Therefore, the influence of the secondary social environment will be less profound when compared to the influence of the primary social environment. Thus, the environment is also often translated as a whole physical or social phenomenon (event, situation or condition) that affects the growth and development of children.

Environmental factors are also called exogenous factors, namely factors that come from the outside of the individual, namely experiences, the environment, education and so on which are often put forward with the meaning of milieu (Quinn, Kaiser, & Ledford, 2021; Vygotsky, 2021). The influence of education and the influence of the surrounding environment is, in most cases, different. Generally, the influence of the environment is passive, in the sense that the environment does not give a coercion to the individual while the environment provides both possibilities and opportunities for individuals. How individuals take advantage of the opportunities provided by the environment depends on the individual concerned, unlike education. Education is carried out consciously and systematically to develop the potentials or talents that exist in individuals in accordance with the ideals or goals of education. Thus education is active, full of responsibility and directions to lead individuals' developments to a certain goal.

Although the influence of the environment is not coercive, the role of the environment, ranging from family environment, school environment, and peer group environment, is undeniably large in individual development. The family environment has a very important role in efforts to develop a child's personality. Loving parental care and education about the values of life, both religious and socio-cultural, are beneficial factors to prepare children to become healthy individuals and members of society. This means that the attitude and treatment of parents towards children has a very large influence on the personality and psychological development of children. A family environment that is less/does not support the child's growth and development process or is said to be a high-risk family environment is if the condition of the family:

1. The mother's age is less than the legal marriage years (Rahiem, 2021).
2. Close spacing between births (Das & Roy, 2021)
3. Mothers/caregivers have a poor knowledge on parenting and children's needs and find it difficult to exercise health messages for not knowing about general things that are known by the community, unable to understand actual health instructions, unable to answer questions which mothers can usually answer about their children (Zhong, Wang, He, Gao, Liu, Lai, ... & Luo, 2021).
4. Mothers/caregivers experience mental disorders or severe mental stress marked by, among others, the following: looking hopeless, crying easily, reacting very slowly, indifferent to their surroundings, strange behavior, restless, or depressed (Guo, De Carli, Lodder, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Riem, 2021).
5. Mothers/caregivers ignores the child or is indifferent to the child's growth and development, which is marked by: stifling or hitting a child or showing signs of displeasure in talking to their children
6. Chaotic housing environment
7. Abusive partner

8. Tumultuous relationship between husband and wife relationship, which is characterized by frequent fightings or arguments in front of children
9. Poverty which is characterized by, among many others, poor living environment, dirt floor, leaking roof, bad hut, insufficient eating utensils for all family members, insufficient bedding, not having a change of clothes, insufficient food provided in quantity and quality which causes the child's growth to be disrupted which will affect the development of the whole person.

Based on the research through a literature review conducted, elementary school students are in the late childhood phase which has development in terms of physical-motor, cognitive, socio-emotional, language, and religious morals (Kullmann & Heimann, 2022). There are several reasons why teachers or prospective teachers need to think about the development phase and primary school students. Through the teacher's understanding of the tasks and phases of student development, various development efforts can be anticipated, both at home and in the community, in addition to knowing the developmental phases of students can adjust the developmental tasks that must be mastered by students with their development phase.

METHODS

This research is a qualitative study with a case study approach. This study emphasizes a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of individual development in a particular context studied from, in this case, developmental psychology points of view. This study is useful in exploring the developmental challenges experienced by the subjects of this study. Researcher using an in-depth interview techniques in data collection. Several stages in making a case study starts with determining the problem, making designs and instruments, collect data, make data analysis, and prepare research reports. The final result of the case study is understanding the depth of a phenomenon. There are only two participants in this study that are recruited through convenient sampling method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Cognitive Development

Cognitively, early childhood development is marked by the development of many complex thinking processes such as categorizing, remembering and playing things. Measuring the cognitive development thus can be conducted in various ways, for example they can be given test using large and skinny glasses to measure reversibility. In Zahra's case, memorization was used to test her remembering ability. According to Johnson, Mooney, Estes, Nordahl & Ghetti's (2021) research shows that toddlers's ability to remember clearly improves with age. Toddlers habituate more quickly and more efficiently as they grow older. They also remember more information across longer periods of time, as they get older and with helpful reminders. This can be seen in Zahra's remembering ability. Zahra is now in the process of learning to read the Koran in Arabic letters. Some Muslim children start to learn to recite Koran at the age of six. However, because Zahra lives in an Arabic speaking family, and the Koran is in Arabic, this becomes easier for her during early childhood. Although she is only 3, Zahra is now started to memorize some short Surahs (Titles) in Koran by rote. Zahra's mother usually uses Deferred Imitation system by reciting a short verse asked her to repeat it over and over until Zahra memorizes it well. This is one of Zahra's daily routines. Knowing this, her memorization was tested by reciting some verses of the Koran Zahra was working on and then asking her to continue them. Zahra managed to complete the recitation with clear speech, although not as clear as adult's speech. However, the recitation was clearly understood. This is the proof that her cognitive development is very good.

According to Wu, Kurum, Ahmed, Sain & Aslin's (2021) studies of the way children play with objects from similar and different categories also shows that categorization abilities progresses during the first three years. Accordingly, Zahra now is in the stage of building her categorization ability. This can be seen from the way Zahra distinguished a boy toy and a girl toy. When asked whether she likes to play sword or doll, Zahra answered that her mother teaches her that she should not play sword because that is a boy toy and she preferred doll more

than any other toys offered. Her answer does show that Zahra can identify things around her, at least to her mother's point of view. When asked how Zahra know such thing, her mother answered that she asked a lot, talk a lot about things that immediately attract her attention. Referring to Piaget's stages of cognitive development, Zahra now is in sensorimotor period which would later be followed by Preoperational stage in which the child conceptualize and classify things from their concrete or physical situations, or from important features. In this stage, according to Piaget, infants learn through actions: looking, listening, touching, sucking, mouthing, and grasping.

In the regard of adolescence's cognition, it is important to look back at the Piaget's stages of development, as follows (Huang, 2021):

1. Sensorimotor stage: birth - 2
2. Preoperational stage: 2 - 7
3. Concrete Operational stage: 7 – 12
4. Formal operational stage: 12 – older.

The difference among the four stages have possibly and primarily related to what an individual can think, how it is changed, and how correctly someone can use logic. According to Piaget, the formal operational stage is signed when one starts having abstract thinking, meaning that an adolescent begins to think about abstract concepts such as love, justice, religion, etc. One thing that has a relation to this is the development of the brain that has an impact on the way one thinks. During the adolescence stage, brain keeps remodeling which considerably affects the development of the prefrontal cortex. Prefrontal cortex is responsible for connections between neurons that affects planning, thinking ahead, weighing risks and rewards, and impulse control, and decisions making. In the middle or even in the late of the adolescence, formal operational stage becomes consolidated and integrated into the individual's general approach to reasoning (Steinbergs et al., 2011).

In the case of Linda, some effects of this can be seen through some of Linda's thoughts and behaviors that are seen during the conversation in the movie. In

regard to her ability to draw logical reasoning about a problem which is commonly referred to as deductive reasoning ability, Linda is fine. This can be seen from the fact that when Linda given a question about whether Indonesian students who study in America are always having a better opportunity to get a good job upon the completion of their studies, her answer was no because according to her, it really depends on their academic records, the preference, the vacancies, and some other lucky factors. Thus cannot be assumed that all Indonesian students who graduated from American universities will always have a good job later. This answer showed that Linda has started to understand some abstract concepts, a sign that her deductive reasoning ability is developed.

Related to the deductive reasoning development is the development of hypothetical thinking or commonly known as the ability to plan ahead (Steinbergs et al., 2011). The example of this is when Linda said having a plan to continue her undergraduate program in another country to enrich her experience of studying in a different culture.

Furthermore, another behavior that can be seen is that Linda had a cliques of smart friends. This is showing that during the adolescence, peer relationships are oriented around cliques and crowds. Judging from her opinion about her smart friends who are very serious and sometimes boring, it can be said that Linda actually does not like to be a serious person. However, there are still some other of her cliques that are similar with hers. This is known as homophyly.

Another fascinating way about adolescence is the egocentrism concept. This term basically refers to the feeling of “all about me” (Steinbergs et al., 2011). This leads to two different thinking attitudes. The first one is imaginary audience. This imaginary audience makes an adolescent feel being watched, or valued by some invisible audience. The example of this in Linda can be seen when she worried about her hijab does not match her dress that she became very unconfident when asked to eat outside. This is basically happened because of the thinking that people care about what she does, wears, and things that.

In line with that, the second one that helps explain the egocentrism is personal fable. Personal fable was also exposed during the conversation. Personal fable is a belief that what experienced by an adolescent has never happened to anyone else before, thus no one can understand the situation. When Linda talked about how disappointed she is when one day a stranger called her terrorist in front of her friends just because her hijab, the concept of personal fable was clearly seen. Although her friends tried to comfort her because her crying, Linda said they did not really know how hard it is to be a Muslim in America, apart from the fact that that is a common story nowadays. Her friends might just do that because they are friends.

B. Physical Development

Physical development of a child is as important as cognitive development because physical development can tell us about the other domains development as well. Physical growth, which is easy to observe and quantify, tells us a lot about whether a child is developing normally. If a child stops growing, it is a concern. In the case of Zahra, her physical development is good which can be seen from her body features. When asked about her physical growth, her mom said that Zahra is fine. Zahra was regularly taken to the doctor for monthly visit when they were in Saudi Arabia. From the doctor, her mom knew that Zahra physical growth is normal. She weight 13,8 kg and height 79,9 cm. In terms of Directionality, Zahra's body proportion is rapidly changing. Zahra is taller now compared to the first time arriving in Northern Albuquerque.

Zahra is very active. Zahra likes running and jumping, walking, climbing the ladders or stairs, carrying some books, combing her doll's hair and etc. Zahra can manipulate movements easily. This is because as motor system develop, infants acquire the ability to move about and manipulate objects (Zhang, Okely, Pereira, Sousa-Sá, Veldman & Santos, 2022; Andalò, Rigo, Rossi, Majorano & Lavelli, 2022). Her motoric function is highly developed. This is in line with the statement that the growth of motor function across infancy is as dramatic as physical growth.

Naturally, an individual will experience some drastic physical changes during the period of adolescence which is commonly referred to as the adolescent growth spurt. This is usually marked by some biological changes such as increased height or weight, particular hormones growth, or primary and secondary sex characteristics developments. In the case of Linda, the acceleration of height and weight are clearly seen from her body during the last four years. Before the age of sixteen, her height was only 152 cm, eight cm lower than she is now.

As the first sign of maturation, menarche happened to her in during her first year of junior high school in Indonesia. Although menarche freaked her out at that time that made her crying without telling anyone why, Linda finally realized that she is “mature” now from her friends. This menarche thing was also very embarrassing for her, that it takes a while for her family to know that. This primary sex maturation then led to the secondary sex characteristic not long after her menarche. Linda started to feel uncomfortable with her breasts as they started to grow and result some funny experiences, followed by the appearance of pubic hair in certain parts of her body. In Steinbergs et al.’s (2011) summary about sexual maturation in girls, the first sign of sexual maturation in girls is the elevation of the breast. However, this statement does not match with Linda. This might be due to some hormonal differences that happened to Linda.

For Linda, the first sign of maturation she had is the menstruation which was followed by the changes in her breast size, the widening of the hips and shoulders. Furthermore, based on the photos shown, Linda was used to be a chubby girl some years ago. But then, her cheek now looked gaunter which is commonly part of the secondary sex characteristic too. Another thing about her physical development is when Linda was in junior high school, her body height was rocketing over the other students. However now, some of her male students caught her height now. This fact proved that even though the physical development in girls start earlier, it may also finish earlier.

C. Social Development

The development of social skills in the early childhood can be seen through the child interaction with her friends. Zahra, based on Erik Erickson Theory, is now in the stage of Play stage. The conflict of this stage is Initiative vs Guilt. In this stage, children have sense of initiative reinforced by being given the freedom to play. When stifled by caregiver, child begins to feel a sense of guilty. The example of this in Zahra's case when her requests for more chocolate candies is not granted by her mother. Zahra was stifled by her mom rejection.

Apart from that, Zahra has a very high interest in interacting with other children at the mosque and park near where she lived. She likes to be around other children. However, when observed watching other children in the park, Zahra was asked if she has a close friend in the neighborhood, Zahra said no one. When asked why, Zahra did not answer. She seems to have a verbal limitation in expressing what she feels. Later her Mom said she has no friend in the neighborhood because of her lack ability in English. This makes sense because most of the children in the neighborhood speak English. However, at the mosque in which the children usually speak both English and Arabic, Zahra feels very comfortable. Although this is just her third month in Albuquerque, Zahra has made many friends that she loves to play with at the mosque. Judging from the way her Arabic language spoken, Zahra has a very good Fast Mapping ability, meaning that Zahra managed to extend the use of words correctly and fairly quick. This is a good sign about her English improvement later. The only problem about her social development now is her English disability, although children who were securely attached to their mothers as toddlers are usually more socially competent and popular with classmates as well as less aggressive with friends during early childhood.

In terms of attachment, Zahra has a secure attachment with her mother. Babies with secure attachment are more cooperatively playful than insecure infants when interacting with a friendly stranger. Her active participation during the observation shows that Zahra is quite playful even when her mom was in the

kitchen and left her. The quality of early attachment predicts social relationship with siblings and peers.

In the case of Linda, there are only some sign of social concepts of social development such as identity crisis, identity status, and ethnic identity that can be observed during the initial interview. Some other concepts related to the adolescent's matters such as family life or romantic life are obviously not obtained, at least from Linda herself.

Socioemotionally, adolescence is one of the most periods for the development of an independent identity (Steinbergs et al., 2011, p. 374). During this period, adolescent is trying to develop a clearer sense of who they are and where they are heading that often times leads to "identity crisis". According to Erikson, this type of crisis is one of the most important task of an adolescent. The key to resolving the identity crisis, he argued, lies in the adolescent's interaction with others. This theory explains why people whom the young person interact with matters very much because one will get the influence that affect how or what she ought to be in the later facets of her life.

This concept of identity crisis was seen in Linda when for example saying that she does not know what to be in the future. Furthermore, reinforce it by questioning herself about the decision to study in one of the American high school. This attitude clearly shows that Linda is in identity diffusion which refers to a condition when an individual does not have firm commitment and is not currently trying to make them.

The last one is the ethnic identity. This term refers to the aspect of one's sense of identity concerning ancestry or racial group membership. According to Linda, at first it was quite embarrassing for her to introduce herself Indonesian because it is not very popular. Additionally, this feeling also emerge because of her opinion that people think Indonesia is under developed country. However, as the time went, the growing concern about her Indonesian or Muslim identity is

established now which happens after her success in impressing her friends with Indonesian food, clothes, or cultural arts.

This identity status might also be the reason between some of Linda's behavior such as not having a sex, not even dating, not going to club or place like that because having an awareness about her Muslim status. This can be seen when given a question whether having a boyfriend or not, Linda said she cannot date because she is a Muslim. From this, it can be concluded that Linda does not really experience some sort of extreme exploration in her psychosocial moratorium like having tattoo, piercing her lips, or dressing openly or so on.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to gain an understanding of early childhood development, it is necessary to conduct an observation that examines a child's cognitive, physical, and social development. Based on the observation made, Zahra's cognitive, physical, and social developments are normal. However, as an immigrant, language barrier becomes her difficulty in social development since most of the children in the neighborhood speak English. Millions of immigrants are just like Zahra, Physically and cognitively normal but facing additional social and emotional challenges because of their lack ability to communicate in English. In the case of Zahra, there is a high possibility that Zahra will learn English very fast, judging from how fast her vocabularies picks up.

In line with that, in order to get a better understanding about adolescent's development, an observation was applied to Linda. The result shows that Linda has some differences in terms of physical development with common adolescents which signed by her menarche came first, followed by some other secondary sex characteristics soon later. However, her cognitive and social developments are normal. Although there is identity crisis happened to her, but overall she is fine. Except for the physical development, the interviews portrayed the aspects of adolescence accurately.

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