

Assumptions About Human Nature: Its Implication for Emotional Atmospheres in Learning Environments and Psychological Development

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Abstract

This article is made up of three sections. In the first section (I) literature review about the importance of emotional experiences of children for learning and self-development will be presented. In the second section (II) five different psychological perspectives will be evaluated in terms of their assumptions about the nature of children, i.e. behavioral, psychoanalytical, humanistic, psychoanalytic-behavioristic and humanistic-psychoanalytic. How these assumptions within each psychological perspective guide approaching children will especially be stressed. Finally in the last section (III) the benefits of expressive approaches to children will be emphasized and problems related to repressive approaches will be discussed. Expressive environments for children are especially provided by the humanistic-psychoanalytical perspective. Expressive environments are claimed to be based on a positive approach to the nature of children, assuming a built-in potential to grow and transform.

Keywords: Human nature; Emotional atmosphere; Learning environments; Psychological development; Expressive environments; Repressive environments; Humanistic psychology; Psychoanalytic-humanistic perspective; Child development; Educational climate

Introduction

A latent variable that underlies one's reaction to the state of children today is one's subjective view of human nature. If one believes that humans are naturally violent and individualistic, then one is not surprised that so much violence, aggression and alienation pervade society. However, if one believes that humans are typically none violent but pro-social, one is more likely to view aggression and alienation as indicative of unbalanced state of affairs that can be remedied. Clearly, we take the latter position. (Narvaes, Panksepp, Shore & Gleason, 2013)

In this paper our aim is to emphasize the significance of positive emotions and expressive environments for healthy self-development and learning of children. When children feel secure and accepted in educational settings, they can express their ideas, wishes, and emotions. Such an expressive environment is claimed to provide better motivation for learning and encourage self-development. Educators' assumptions about nature of children actually guide how they are going to approach them. We will argue that psychoanalytic-humanistic (humanistic as well) view of nature of children helps to provide the appropriate emotional

climate for children to express themselves and hence promote healthy self-development.

This paper is made up of three parts. First, we will present a brief literature review about the importance of emotions in educational settings, for better learning potentials and healthy self-development. In the second part, we will try to explain how different psychological approaches understand nature of children and how these understandings influence their educational philosophies. The question is which one of these psychological approaches provide more secure and accepting learning environments where children can readily express their ideas, wishes and emotions. Finally in the third part, we will discuss why expressive rather than repressive environments provide better learning and development opportunities for children.

Part-I: Significance of Emotions in Educational Settings

Philosophy of education is concerned with questions such as what is a child? what is the nature of the child? how do children

develop? what are the factors that prevent the development of children? in which environments the brain learns better? and so on. These questions are the overlapping concerns of psychoanalysis, evolutionary psychology, and neuroscience. We think that the fundamental aim of an educational system is to provide the necessary environment for the holistic development (mental, psychological, and social) of the child and the actualization of their inherent potential. When we take this approach, two important questions arise:

- What kind of environment is necessary for the holistic development and maturation of the child (intellectual, psychological, social)?
- What are the key characteristics of an optimal learning environment?

The answer to the first question covers the main features of the educational system in which the child participates. Education systems are shaped by the educational philosophy derived from particular cultural settings. The educational philosophy prevalent in a culture is formed by our thoughts regarding questions such as “what is the nature of the child?”, “what are the needs of children?”, and “which factors are important for their emotional and mental development?”.

The answer to the second question is also directly related to the nature and basic needs of the children. Findings show that when basic needs of children are appropriately satisfied children are best motivated to learn [1-3].

The characteristics of the physical and social learning environments have varied greatly over time, according to how the nature of children is defined by adults. Definition of children’s nature and childhood have changed throughout history [4]. In line with these assumptions and opinions, the physical (conditions of the school and classroom environment), social, and emotional components of the learning environment (communication and relations between the teacher, administration and the student) are shaped.

For the healthy psychological and physical development of children, it is crucial that their fundamental needs are appropriately met [5-7]. Among the most significant psychological needs of children are the requirement to feel loved, valued, and accepted [8-10]. Children, and indeed adults as well, establish their psychological presence when their emotions are recognized by the people close to them. The emotions that children feel most intensely are helplessness and dependence (on their parents) [11,12]. When children receive love and their expressed emotions are understood by those around them, they can alleviate feelings of loneliness and insecurity. However, when a child experiences emotions of rejection, neglect, and intimidation, these negative feelings can detrimentally affect their psychological and brain development, potentially impeding the learning process [13]. The adverse impacts of negative emotions on development and

learning are particularly pronounced during early ages (1-3) and throughout childhood. It has been observed that children learn more effectively in environments that foster peace, happiness, and safety [14-16]. Learning does not reach its full potential in environments characterized by rejection, fear, disturbance, and anxiety [17]. Research has indicated that emotions also significantly influence learning in adulthood [18-22]. Negative emotions are considered to be one of the factors inhibiting psychological development and contributing to the emergence of psychological problems [23-26].

Studies have demonstrated that the stress experienced by children has detrimental effects on their brain development [27-33]. Prolonged and heightened stress leads to elevated cortisol levels in the body, and excessive cortisol contributes to the degradation of hippocampal neurons crucial for learning and memory [34]. Additionally, even temporary increases in cortisol induced by stress can hinder the ability to differentiate between significant and insignificant events [35]. The presence of a stressful school environment not only impedes children’s wholesome self-development but also interferes with their capacity to fully benefit from the learning environment [36].

The scope of the impact of emotions that children experience within the learning environment on the trajectory of their personality development, their attitudes towards the learning process, and their mastery of acquired knowledge has become evident through the aforementioned research. Regrettably, the significance of emotions felt by children in the educational setting has only recently begun to be recognized [37-40].

Within an educational context, the intense emotions felt by children are molded by the perspectives and beliefs concerning the inherent nature of children within that culture. Consequently, presuppositions regarding perception of child’s nature offer insights into the emotions a child within that environment is likely to feel. In the next sections we will focus on how these viewpoints regarding nature of children influence the emotional atmosphere of learning environments and attitudes towards children.

Part-II: Psychological Perspectives and Assumptions Concerning Nature of Children

In this section we will present five different psychological perspectives concerning nature of children, and try to explain how these viewpoints influence the way children are approached in educational settings. How much children’s psychological inner processes, self-expressions like ideas, emotions, wishes are valued, cared for and permitted, depends on how educators and psychologists conceptualize the nature of children.

Behaviorist Approach

This perspective is rooted in the notion that a child begins as a blank slate with an exceptionally adaptable nature [41]. Derived from the epistemological framework of the British Empiricist

philosophical tradition, this approach posits that children are not born with any inherent qualities; rather, almost everything is acquired through learning. The important mechanisms for this acquisition are associations, rewards, and punishments (classical and operant conditioning) [42]. Observational learning also plays a significant role. Children strive to acquire information based on these principles and manifest diverse behaviors. This standpoint is represented by the behaviorist perspective within the fields of psychology and education. The emphasis in child development, according to this viewpoint, is placed on the exhibited behaviors and their consequences, unfortunately disregarding the child's emotions and developmental needs. Behavioristic perspective stresses environmental determinism and associationism [43,44]. In this framework, the child barely possesses any inherent positive or negative potential. The child is not perceived as having an internal structure or inherent capability to regulate their own behavior. Any behavioral self-regulation that emerges as the child matures is attributed to the learning processes they are exposed to. If the child exhibits inappropriate behavior, immediate punishment is deemed necessary to prevent its recurrence. Consequently, the child is subjected to something uncomfortable (and sometimes painful) to deter the repetition of such behavior. This approach is the most basic learning principle of Thorndike [45], one of the founders of behaviorism.

In this perspective, concepts like "a child's developmental needs" or "self-development" are not recognized and the emotions they experience are considered unimportant. Children, and even adults, are perceived as creatures whose conduct is governed by the principles of reward and punishment. Given the absence of notions such as "critical periods" and "developmental processes" or "psychological needs", within this framework, there is little distinction, psychologically speaking, between children and adults. Neither children nor adults have been considered to have basic psychological needs. They do not have the inherent potential to regulate themselves. Children are perceived as miniature adults. They possess a more limited range of behaviors merely due to their shorter lifespan. One of the founders of the behaviorist school, Watson [46], conveys the approach of this school to children precisely through his writings on the subject. The most important point in the development of children is the behavioral patterns they learn at the end of the conditioning processes, a bit like an "automaton" (robot).

One of the most important concepts in this approach is how they learn (acquire) certain behaviors or develop a habit of it (get used to it). Children need to promptly acquire certain behavior patterns that are considered to be correct. For example, babies should be put in a separate room immediately after birth in order to learn to sleep alone, and should develop a habit of it (get used to it) [47-50]. Otherwise, they learn to sleep with their mother. Babies' fundamental need to sleep with their mother and feel secure is not considered as important. It is strongly advised not to

rock babies, as they might develop a habit of it (get used to it) and subsequently struggle to sleep without rocking. Similarly, holding babies excessively can lead to a persistent desire for cuddling (conforming to the behaviorist school's concept of certain behaviors becoming associated with specific environments, thereby leading to a tendency to engage in those behaviors in those settings). We think this approach largely neglects the concepts of needs, development, and awareness. Within this perspective, the primary focus is on behavior, which is molded by rewards, punishments, and associations with the environment. Unfortunately, this approach excludes ideas related to children's emotions, needs, and self-development. The principal objective is to obtain the necessary behaviors through environmental stimuli [51]. Children's developmental needs, and the notion that children will naturally mature in an environment that caters to those psychological needs is almost completely neglected.

Furthermore, within the framework of this perspective, childhood is seen as a mere preparation phase for adulthood, rather than holding an intrinsic value on its own. Children are expected to be prepared for behaviors considered necessary for adulthood at an early stage. Since this approach overlooks concepts like development, emotions, and needs, educators solely concentrate on achieving desired behaviors. In this process, the focus is not on understanding children's feelings, identifying their developmental needs, fostering self-, development promoting awareness, or nurturing self-regulation. This perspective fails to acknowledge that these characteristics are inherent in both the nature of the child and humanity.

Psychoanalytic Approach

Another perspective on understanding children's nature comes from the psychoanalytic school. The importance of psychoanalytic theory in education is only starting to be realized. As the significance of emotions in education became more recognized, the value of the psychoanalytic theory became clearer [52-54]. Unlike the behaviorist approach, the psychoanalytic view suggests that children are born with certain natural impulses. These impulses are rooted in our evolutionary past and manifest as needs, desires, or emotions in our lives. Freud [55] divided personality into three parts (id, ego, and superego). The id is the personality component that holds these impulses. It is the most fundamental one, and it operates based on the pleasure principle and encompasses impulses like aggression, sexuality, or selfishness. The drive for survival and happiness originates from these impulses. In essence, psychoanalytic theory is a theory of motivation [56], proposing that the primary motivation of human behavior is satisfaction of the impulses of the id. Freud mainly identified two primary impulses: sexuality and aggression. At birth, children are essentially governed by these impulses. They seek immediate gratification—such as babies kicking when they're upset. Control over these impulses develops slowly over time. This evolution happens as two other personality components develop:

the ego and the superego. The superego is akin to an internalized version of the environment (parents and significant individuals) and embodies moral standards. It's that inner voice that says, "Don't do it, it's not right." The ego aims to balance these two components (id and superego) and operates based on the reality principle. The id seeks instant gratification, while the superego attempts to temper the id's desires. However, the ego endeavors to fulfill the id's desires in appropriate situations, functioning based on reality rather than mere pleasure-seeking. Freud formulated this notion of human nature through his psychoanalysis of the patients he treated.

An essential aspect of this approach is the qualitative distinction between the psychological structure of children and adults. Unlike the behaviorist viewpoint, children are not simply miniature versions of adults. Fairbairn [57] outlines three crucial qualities of childhood different from that of adults: immaturity, impulsivity, and vulnerability. These characteristics distinctly set childhood apart from adulthood. Fairbairn stresses that children have one major duty; healthy development. Anything that hinders this development is actually pathological. To facilitate their development, children require interaction with a more mature mindset. Bion [58,59] terms this process as 'containment'. Given that children are still developing, impulsive, and delicate, they often struggle to regulate their emotions. How the adults around a child respond to the child's raw emotional expressions during an event (which Bion labels as "beta-elements") is crucial for the child's healthy self-development. If an adult possesses the capacity to manage their own emotions (what Bion refers to as the 'alpha function'), they can absorb these raw emotions from the child, soften their impact, and return them in a manner that the child can process. Bion [60] elucidates in his writings that how this relationship between parent and child is paramount for the child's healthy personality development. We believe that a similar process of "containment" is highly significant for the teacher-student relationship. This process of "containment" plays a significant role in the progression of the child's impulsive, developing, and vulnerable self since:

- Children reflect the emotions they cannot cope with, on to the adults, and receive them back in a softened and manageable way.
- They observe an adult who calms and transforms raw emotions, and they internalize this process.

According to psychoanalytic theory, children have developmental needs that change according to their current stage. Every developmental phase requires the appropriate satisfaction of psychological needs to enable a child's full growth and the attainment of healthy adulthood. Bowlby [61] explains this with the following analogy: "Similar to how vitamin D is essential for bone development, secure attachment is crucial for healthy self-development." One might question how this topic relates to education. Although the id is composed of impulsive desires

that seek instant gratification, it also holds all creative potential (eros, the life drive). Therefore, suppressing the id doesn't foster a healthy self; instead, it may lead to the formation of unhealthy selves that lack creativity and zest for life. Expressing impulses in a refined and civilized manner is crucial for maintaining a healthy and creative life. The ultimate goal of education is to promote a healthy ego development, which translates to cultivating a personality that's rational, balanced, moderate, and yet permits life's (id's) energy in certain ways. From a psychoanalytic standpoint, the developmental process and life involve grappling with how individuals' needs will be met, to what extent, and in what manner, beginning from birth (infancy, later childhood). Education encompasses a significant part of this developmental process. Its aim is to assist a child's inherent potential in fully emerging and shaping. It helps the child channel their inner impulses towards greater refinement. The origins of children's drive to wonder, learn, comprehend, and explore lie in these urges and impulses. Hence, it's crucial that these impulses within the child are not stifled or held back, but rather, encouraged to surface, undergo refinement, and transform through the process of awareness, all contributing to the child's healthy self-development. A self-developed in this manner will find pleasure in learning and exploring. Fairbairn [57] believes a child's most important task is to grow and fully realize their potential. Anything hindering this process can lay the groundwork for psychopathology. Summarizing the points above, according to the classic psychoanalytic approach:

- Children are born with certain impulses that manifest as psychological needs a differing based on their age. Children's psychological structure differs from that of adults.
- The gratification of these impulses in specific ways and amounts is essential for healthy personality development.
- The maturity of a child's ego and the development of their control system depend on satisfying these impulses.
- The suppression of these impulses (internally and externally) leads to internal conflicts and the development of a neurotic (unhealthy) personality. Children (and later adults) who suppress their impulses (needs) lead a shallow and lifeless existence. Curiosity, desire to understand, explore, and learn all arise from the transformation of impulses through their satisfaction and the development of awareness within these processes.

According to the psychoanalytic view, children have negative destructive impulses that they are born with. However, they also have the potential to transform, control, and divert these impulses into more positive channels, if a secure, respecting, loving, holding and containing environment is provided by adults. The maturation of the personality means that it regulates its impulses better, satisfying them in more refined ways, developing an awareness of itself and its surroundings. This is a long and laborious process. Perhaps the most important function of education is to assist in this development.

Humanistic Approach

Another perspective on the nature of children suggests that they possess positive attributes rather than innate destructive impulses, aligning with the humanistic psychology school. A prominent proponent of this view is our [62,63]. Somewhat similar ideas to the humanistic perspective can be found in the object relations school of psychoanalysis, with R. Fairbairn and D. Winnicott [64-66] being important figures. According to this outlook, children's nature encompasses positive potentials like love, compassion, understanding and self-actualization. Aggression arises when children are not understood or their fundamental needs go unmet, or they experience mistreatment such as humiliation and violence. Essentially, negative and destructive behaviors in children are not driven by their inherent nature, but by the negative environment they find themselves in [57]. This approach correlates childhood psychological problems with environmental failures. In this viewpoint, a child's developmental needs hold great significance. For individuals to mature and grow, they require an environment that addresses their psychological needs. Rogers [67] identifies these needs as genuineness (being open and able to freely express thoughts and feelings), acceptance (unconditional respect), and empathy (feeling heard and understood). Similar to how plants fail to grow when they are deprived of water and sunlight, without such a nurturing environment, personality development is hindered. According to humanistic psychology, children are primarily motivated by the desire to realize their potential. If the environment (family, education, and the broader culture) offers the right conditions, individuals can develop and fulfill their potential. Rogers [67] maintains that humans possess an inherent goodness and creativity. Childhood experiences play a significant role in realizing this potential. One's self-perception and perception of the world emerge during childhood. The relationships with parents, educators, and others significantly shape a child's beliefs about themselves and their surroundings. Receiving unconditional respect and valuing oneself are fundamental needs for children. The appropriate fulfillment of these two needs is essential for psychological well-being and self-actualization. Teachers, after parents, assume an important role in this regard. As children possess an intrinsic inclination to learn, understand, and create, their learning capacity flourishes when they are unconditionally respected, understood, and accepted [68]. Learning diminishes when they perceive threats to their individuality. From the humanistic psychological viewpoint, the purpose of education is to create the optimal environment for fulfilling children's needs. In such nurturing environments, children naturally endeavor to unlock their potential.

Psychoanalytic - Behaviorist Approach

In my perspective, this approach is rather problematic and yields the most adverse consequences on children's development among educational philosophies. We think that this viewpoint is prevalent in authoritarian educational practices (both secular and

religious). For example, current applications in religious centers across the Orthodox Islamic Educational Philosophy (However, there are some alternative educational philosophies in Islam like that of Rumi's which has some similarities to the humanistic view, [69]). Moreover, such educational philosophy can also be seen in some religious practices (e.g. Christianity) all over the world especially in the past [70].

We think that all authoritarian educational approaches (secular or religious) are based on the psychoanalytical-behavioral perspective of human nature. However, we will try to explain this perspective with the example of Orthodox Islamic Educational Philosophy. Unlike considering the child as a blank slate (like behaviorists), this approach perceives children (and people) as possessing certain inherent potentials or tendencies, often exhibiting negative traits like selfishness, sexuality, aggression, together with some positive ones like love and care [71]. These negative qualities align with the id's characteristics in psychoanalytic theory (selfishness, sexuality, aggression), implying the presence of negative innate impulses within children. In this approach, the initial understanding of the "nature of the child" somewhat parallels the classical psychoanalytic outlook. However, we think that methods employed in the particular educational settings significantly diverges from psychoanalysis and align more closely with the behaviorist school (environmental control) elaborated above, because self-regulatory mechanisms in children are not considered to exist. In the psychoanalytic perspective, however, the potential to regulate and transcend these negative and destructive impulses within children is acknowledged through ego development and sublimation. The aim of education is to foster the development of this self-control mechanism (Ego) and improve awareness by providing appropriate environment for sublimation through a mixture of expression and repression of impulses and desires. In psychoanalytic educational philosophy both expression and repression are emphasized [72]. In contrast, within psychoanalytic-behavioral and religious educational philosophy, children are indeed perceived as possessing negative impulses, however, the presence and development of internal psychological structures to effectively manage these negative potentials is not trusted. Therefore, external control procedures akin to behaviorism are commonly applied. Furthermore, in this approach submission to a greater spiritual authority and obeying its orders is seen as the aim of education [73-75]. Because submission and obedience are over emphasized, expression is almost totally disregarded. There is no idea of learning through experiences by expression, just the contrary, suppression and punishment are advised. Expression of wishes, desires, affects are not really perceived as something important for psychological development. Just the contrary. submission to the will of greater authority and inhibition of self-expression are recommended. Therefore, this approach advocates environmental control measures akin to behaviorism, especially stimulus control and punishment. Sexual segregation in education and covering of females' bodies are good examples (of stimulus control).

Females are seen as sexual stimuli leading to triggering of sexual excitement in males. Males are depicted as organisms with almost no self-control, or no self-regulatory systems, only responding to environmental stimuli. In this case sexual excitation is controlled by removing the stimulus causing sexual excitation, either by segregation or covering of female bodies. If these measures are not enough to control behavior, corporal punishment is readily applied with no consideration of its adverse effects on self-development. Submission and obedience to a great spiritual authority is perceived as the ultimate goal of education. There exist no idea or intention of promoting self-control and affect regulation through expression, because specific rules are set forth for children and students to follow, being a servant of a greater spiritual authority [76]. In such a context of educational philosophy, submission and obedience are stressed and psychological development through expression have no place at all, due to their particular conceptualization of human nature. Since the ultimate aim is conceptualized as serving to a greater spiritual authority, the role of self-expression, development of psychological potential and self-actualization are downplayed in education. It's evident how deeply ingrained this approach is within the family, culture, and consequently, the educational context of some secular or religious authoritarian societies. Children's desires, wants, and impulses are often molded through operant conditioning mechanisms, particularly punishments. In this view, children (and humans in general) are seen as having harmful innate impulses but lacking the capacity to develop psychological mechanisms to control and transcend them. Therefore, educational systems are not interested in development of self-control or self-regulatory systems through expression. This leads to reliance on punishment to suppress these impulses. We believe that a substantial mistake is made here, both in the family and educational spheres, as well as in the broader culture, resulting in a reduction of children's motivation to learn, understand, explore, and be curious. While this approach seemingly aligns with psychoanalytic notions about children's nature, it dismisses the concepts of development, understanding, maturation and self-awareness through expression thus applying methods akin to the behaviorist school (environmental control procedures) in child education. Consequently, it significantly diverges from the humanistic approach. The concept that children inherently desire learning, understanding, and self-actualization, and that education should provide an environment where these tendencies can flourish and grow by expression of ideas and wishes finds no place in this approach. This approach begins with the premise of negative impulses existing within children and subsequently seeks to suppress these impulses further through behaviorist methods. Notably, the emotional experiences of children in the educational setting hold little importance in the behavioral school's context. Hence, when constructing an educational system, considerations regarding the nature of the child significantly influence the system's content and methods applied.

The significant point within this approach lies in the emphasis on specific behaviors to be acquired as described in religious texts or by people in authority. The desired aim of education within family, school, and culture is to make children or adolescents comply to specific rules defined in given religious texts or authority, students are seen as ones where principles of good conduct are to be "instilled" [74]. Cultivating humans so that they would serve a higher authority (spiritual or secular) is defined as the basic aim of education [76]. Actualizing their potential however is not considered as an important aim of education or culture [77]. Thus, within this perspective seeking obedience from children and youth becomes inevitable. In the absence of concepts like psychological needs, self-development and self-actualization, obedience becomes a desired form of education. Educators and families cannot be aware of the damage that they inflict on the fragile and immature self of the young. They see no problem in applying punitive measures to regulate children's behavior [78]. In truth, forcing obedience and application of punitive measures can cause comprehensive psychological damage, as acknowledged even by some behaviorists who worked on aversive conditioning (e.g., [79]). Application of punitive measures can have detrimental effects on child development, young individuals' personalities, their vitality, curiosity, and their incentive to learn. Obedience means annihilation of one's personality. The essence of our psychological existence lies in our desires, wishes, thoughts, and behaviors. Demanding obedience from someone equates to saying, "Cease being yourself; think, want, and act according to my desires." Our identity comprises our personal desires, wishes, thoughts, and behaviors. The culture of obedience, coupled with the constraints that arise within it, accepting these constraints mean giving up on one's unique personality. This involves relinquishing our true selves and adopting someone else's persona. When one commands, "Obey me!" to others, it essentially communicates, "Do not be yourself; let all of you be me, living according to my wishes." Obedience, according to Winnicott, means "psychological death" [80]. The obedient individual develops a fictitious and superficial self, unable to forge their true identity. This fabricated self diverges from their core essence – impulses, feelings, wishes, and thoughts – and consequently, they cannot effectively realize their capacity for self-actualization, creativity, investigation, and comprehension. In societies heavily influenced by this approach, people exist only superficially, struggling to define their true selves and foster creativity. This denies them the opportunity for self-realization, and they become unable to authentically develop and embrace their being. A prevalent trait among societies embracing this perspective in child education is their estrangement from creativity. According to Winnicott [66], only the real self could truly feel and could be creative. The drive to explore, examine, and look into the unknown stems from our impulses. If we succeed in sensing, experiencing, and recognizing our impulses, refining and transforming them, we can mature and evolve as a genuine self. Winnicott terms this the "true self." This progression is a daunting, lengthy endeavor, constituting the

central goal of education. If impulses are unjustly disparaged and suppressed through punishment and threats during childhood, children are left no chance but to develop a shallow existence, detached from their emotions and inner selves. Consequently, they resort to engaging in various actions not out of genuine desire or enjoyment, but rather to evade punishment or to please others. A false existence that distances itself in this manner carries little potential for creativity. Recent research supports the notion that attempting to regulate children's behavior through punishment yields results similar to subjecting them to trauma [81,82]. The severe detrimental consequences of governing children's conduct through punishment can be listed as follows:

- Punishment creates a sense of resistance in the recipient, potentially breeding resentment and hate toward the punisher.
- Punishment induces fear and anxiety, amounting to a form of trauma with each instance of punishment. Consequently, it triggers defensiveness and pathological processes.
- Punishment hinders the understanding of why the behavior being punished is wrong. Instead of comprehending the underlying reasons for the incorrect behavior, the individual's focus shifts towards the negative emotions triggered by the punishment, such as fear and self-preservation.
- Punishment fails to demonstrate what the correct behavior is.
- Children who receive punishment often observe aggressive behavior and learn it. When faced with future challenges, they tend to resort to similar aggressive behavior as a problem-solving strategy. Punishment can lead to the development of aggressive and oppressed personalities in both children and adults.
- Due to the inhibiting effects of punishment on processes such as understanding and comprehension, a child may modify his behavior to evade punishment when the punishing authority is present. However, this behavior might not persist when the authority figure is absent, and the child may struggle to grasp why their actions were considered wrong.
- The association of a punishing environment with negative emotions, like fear and anxiety, subjects the child to adverse conditioning in that setting. As a result, the child's cognitive function becomes compromised, impeding healthy mental engagement within that environment. For instance, the child may develop detachment from school and the classroom, hindering his ability to enjoy the learning process. Neuroscience studies have indeed indicated that a stressful learning environment can suppress cognitive processes and complicate the learning process [83].

What our education system truly requires is not instilling fear to enforce specific behaviors in children. Instead, our goal should be to aid children in developing their capacity for observation,

exploration and understanding. A child equipped with these abilities will gradually learn to figure out the errors in their actions and adjust their behavior accordingly. This potential takes time to flourish, necessitating a period of learning from mistakes and a loving, nurturing environment.

Humanistic –Psychoanalytical Approach

Let's discuss a mixture of psychoanalytic and humanistic approaches that reflect our approach to education and the nature of children. It is thought the besides their natural tendencies toward aggression, selfishness, and sexuality, children also have a drive to understand, be aware, and unlock their potential. Positive growth happens when children feel loved, accepted, and can freely express and question their feelings and thoughts. In this kind of supportive environment, children start developing their potential to the fullest and also get an opportunity to transform basic traits like aggression and selfishness, which are assumed to come from our evolutionary past [84,85].

Self Determination Theory [86] has assumptions similar to this approach. Children are thought to have some basic needs, like relatedness, autonomy and competence. When learning environments provide appropriate satisfaction of these needs' children are expected to thrive academically and psychologically. At the base of this theory is the idea that children have inner positive qualities like motivation to learn and understand [3]. Emotions experienced by children in learning environments has utmost significance for motivation to learn, especially through the relationship between teachers and students [87]. Reeve [88] has shown that if teachers encourage engagement in class and build good relationships, students will have more motivation to learn, get better grades, and show more creativity. The relationship between how motivated students is in class, as well as how much they enjoy school, and how well they do academically, and how creative they are having been backed up by studies [88]. Teachers who create an open environment for learning, listen well, show empathy, build positive connections, offer support to students, and are flexible. The most important thing that affects students' motivation at school is the relationship between the teacher and the students [89]. Teachers who create an environment where students can participate freely, and treat students with respect, understand their emotions, and believe that the drive to learn comes from inside the students [88,90,91]. Research findings suggests that the students of teachers following this approach tend to be more motivated in the educational setting, achieve better academically, and foster better development [88]. The crucial point raised in the above research is that children need to grow up and receive education in an environment where they feel connected, loved, accepted, and not threatened. Importance of classroom emotional atmosphere on learning and psychological wellbeing of students have been documented in many research [92-96]. In such an environment, students feel free to express and own their ideas and emotions. Assumptions of self-determination theory are rather similar to those of the humanistic view.

The view that the expression of feelings, desires and thoughts is one of the most basic needs of people has long been expressed in the psychoanalytic school [97-98]. It's very important to own one's impulses. Owning one's impulses starts with their expression. Owning impulses is the first step to becoming aware of them [99]. If we don't own our impulses, if we don't say "it's my feeling," or "it's my desire," we could be in need of suppressing or disowning them. In this case, our self becomes alien to itself and to its feelings and becomes divided into compartments, losing its integrity [100]. When disowned and denied, these feelings and desires get detached from our awareness and pushed into the unconscious (suppressed and /or repressed) leading to the formation of psychopathology [101,102]. So, why do children have to suppress their own emotion or desire? With the influence of the outside world, of course. The children's external world consists of his mother, father, and other close caregivers in their family. In the school environment, it consists of teachers and other educational staff. The feelings and wishes of the children which are not accepted and opposed are suppressed through concerns and fears such as losing their love or receiving punishment. Every repressed experience and emotion of the child cuts one off from her personality, wholeness of her personality will be lost. Thus, not only that feelings and desires, but also contact with the part of her personality attached to these feelings and desires will be lost. There will be a compartmentalization in her personality, which is the first step in the development of psychopathology [64]. The more the family, school and society reject and repress the behavior and feelings of children (people), the more the wholeness of psychological structures of the people in that society will be lost, their integrity will be weakened. Nothing creative can be expected from that person anymore. Instead of dealing with the realities of life, discovering, learning, understanding new phenomena, a significant part of the person's mind will be focused on dealing with internal conflicts. Wants, needs, impulses not accepted by parents and society will be repressed and separated from consciousness, leading to a compartmentalized self. Freud [103] defined neurotic anxiety as the fear of repressed subconscious material coming into consciousness. In other words, at that point, while the subconscious conflicts are trying to come to consciousness, the ego is trying to keep them out of consciousness by using defense mechanisms. In other words, the more one's experiences, desires, or feelings are not accepted in the family or society, the more they are repressed rather than expressed, the more their personalities lose their integrity. Every emotion or desire you repress is actually a part of you. Fairbairn thinks that by repressing, we lose touch with that part of our self, we remove a part of ourselves out of consciousness, we get disconnected from ourselves [100,102]. Repression by preventing development of awareness inhibits the process of self-actualization. Our psychological life gets dominated by struggling with our inner conflicts and keeping repressed impulses under control rather than development of self-regulation, understanding and awareness. Such individuals waste their time and energy trying to manage their inner conflicts. A dynamic structure is

formed, which Freud called "neurotic anxiety" [104]. The more psychological material is repressed, the more intense the conflict is. The critical point in the psychoanalytic approach is the issue of which impulses (needs) are to be satisfied, to what extent and in what ways (to be revealed, expressed).

We think that both education and culture are based on these issues. This is where my thinking differs from the classical psychoanalytic view. Unleashing an impulse, a need, means more than its gratification. When you express an impulse, when you experience it in a non-threatening environment, you realize the impulse, and say "this is my desire, my need".

This can only happen if emotions can be experienced freely, without fear. Every desire and experience that is lived freely without fear causes a person to own and become aware of that desire. Noticing it is the first step in controlling and refining it [99]. This process is repeated countless times during the growth stages, but each time it is repeated – including environmental support – the person's awareness and control over that impulse can increase, a self can mature through experience. If one has exaggerated or gone a bit too far in expressing this impulse, they can later reflect on this process and make necessary adjustments. A learning from experience and development process is triggered by experiencing the impulses and desires. This process can only work effectively in an environment where the child feels accepted, respected, loved and there is no threat or punishment. In such a setting, individuals can mature, and self-control over their impulses and can develop. Research results show that positive affect in educational settings not only increases enjoyment and interest in the work but also improve self-control [105].

The treatment of children differs in educational settings (and also in homes) depending on how their nature is perceived within a given perspective. If their nature is understood as having inherently good qualities like a tendency for self-actualization, understanding, self-control, growth and motivation to learn, they are approached more tenderly. Within this approach the source of motivation is assumed to be internal to the child so when educational environments provide appropriate satisfaction for basic psychological needs, learning and self-growth is thought to ensue [3,106]. In such environments children will feel loved, accepted and secure therefore they can express their ideas, emotions and wishes freely (expressive environment). On the contrary, if nature of children is perceived as having no inherent tendency (e.g., behavioristic approach), or having rather negative qualities without potential for self-control, understanding and self-growth (e.g. psychoanalytical-behavioristic approach), environmental control of behavior becomes the main target of educational system. Rather than focusing on emotions and needs of children, educational systems mainly focus on acquisition of desired behaviors through classical or instrumental conditioning mechanisms as defined by educators. Rather than expression, suppression or repression of emotions and as well as wishes and desires will be encouraged. Because what will be expressed is

thought to be inner negative qualities, leading to no development, learning or refinement. In the next section, the importance of expression of emotions, wishes and ideas to the development of self and learning will be discussed.

Part-III: Why Expressive Environments provide better learning and development.

Children and youth, if they can freely express their emotions, be themselves in the absence of fear of punishment or loss of love, thus they can learn through their experiences and can psychologically develop (expressive environment) [107,108]. Development involves making mistakes, reflecting on those mistakes and learning from these lessons to approach subsequent challenges with greater maturity and understanding. This progression signifies a journey of growth, one nurtured by an environment of love and acceptance that starts within the family, extends through education, and is encompassed by the broader culture. Only in such an environment provided by adults can children think, evaluate and reflect on their mistakes. Fear and threats activate defensive measures and the process of learning from mistakes halts [17]. This journey of development and maturation, however, is neither swift nor simple; it demands patience and love. Offering such an environment to children requires believing in the inherent positive potential within children—a potential to develop, understand, learn, and self-actualize. While classical Freudian theory does not explicitly emphasize this perspective, it holds a central position in Rogers' humanistic viewpoint. Notably, figures like Winnicott [109] and Fairbairn [110] exhibit closer alignment with the humanistic approach than with classical psychoanalysis. When individuals feel rejected and threatened in their surroundings, their developmental process is disrupted. Rather than reflecting on their errors, seek comprehension, understand their errors and self-actualize, children (people) often resort to defense mechanisms such as denial, rationalization, and projection, distorting reality to avoid acknowledging mistakes. The reality can be overwhelmingly painful for fragmented selves to bear. Rather than learning from experience, and self-development, defensive structures may be developed. As W. Bion claimed for the process of learning from experience (for the development of the mind) to work at any experience, tolerance of frustration must be greater than the potential to evade frustration which can happen if children live in a containing environment (where caretakers can provide love and affection and sooth child's anxieties) [58,59]. Consequently, unmet needs, desires, and wants, denied by the environment and met with punishment, remain repressed, underdeveloped, and raw (repressive environments). This keeps the self in the sense of constant fear. Regrettably, progress and maturation within such a defensive and conflicting personality framework cannot take place, potentially culminating in psychological distress and psychopathology [106,111,112].

We think that one of the fundamental aims of educational systems is healthy self-development of [113,114]. It is also assumed that a healthy self where psychological needs are

appropriately satisfied will have high motivation to investigate and learn [115]. In a threatening and fearful environments, the learning potential of the brain will decrease and the defensiveness will possibly be activated leading to neurotic tendencies. Rogers describes neurotic individuals as conservative, indicating their inflexibility, resistance to change, their defensive nature and avoidance of development [116]. As psychoanalyst Paul Russel said in one of his talks, "we are the most conservative in the places where we have been hurt." (p.2, 1996) [117]. In contrast, those with a more mature self, capable of realizing their potential, are open to new experiences and adaptable to change. People burdened by a surplus of repressed content constantly grapple with anxiety, as this repressed material consistently pressures the ego to come into conscious awareness. When confronted with any kind of alteration, these individuals fear the emergence of these unconscious desires and inclinations that are hard to control. Their existence revolves around a subtle yet pervasive state of unease and anxiety [118]. In such an environment, reflecting on one's mistakes becomes a formidable task. They cannot accept and evaluate their mistakes due to their defensive measures and therefore learning from experience cannot actually happen. Any lapse in impulse control, any wrongdoing, cannot be owned by them due to the intolerable fear and anxiety they provoke. However, the crux of the issue lies in the unrestrained, repressed impulses that have been detached from them. The self of a child or adolescent can develop only if they can live out their impulses and own them in a loving and accepting environment, reflect on them and understand them [99]. In such a self, internal conflicts will be minimized. The most significant difference of this approach from Freud's classical psychoanalysis is as follows: Freud constructed human nature as primarily driven by the pleasure principle, with two fundamental impulses of sexuality and aggression seeking satisfaction. Conversely, the humanistic approach posits that the most fundamental urge within a person is their ability to self-actualization. Additionally, we believe that alongside the urge for self-awareness, understanding, and self-actualization, individuals also have the potential for sexuality, aggression (in response to danger), and selfishness. The classical psychoanalytic perspective does not consider positive higher motives in human nature; however humanistic psychology gives cardinal emphasis to them to begin with [63]. Children are seen as intrinsically motivated to learn, explore, and investigate. As a result, classical psychoanalysts do not have the idea of impulse satisfaction leading to development and awareness. Actually, this point can be easily seen in Bettelheim's paper about the application of psychoanalysis to education. "How does the child move from id expression to ego achievement?.to educate have a great deal to do with conscience, or super-ego.... much learning is not pleasurable experience but hard work, there is no easy transition from pleasure to hard work" [119]. Within this view, the human experience is treated in a rather mechanistic manner, i.e. pleasure by discharge of id's impulses. Impulse satisfaction is lived out according to the pleasure principle. As the pleasure-principle-based existence inevitably

leads to frustration, the ego gradually forms, acting in accordance with the reality principle. Frustration is given a cardinal role in the development of ego and reality. Rycroft [120], in contrast, rebuts this notion by stating, "Frustration may lead to acceptance of reality, however only satisfaction may lead to love of reality." (p. 24). Parallel to this claim, more recently proponents of Self Determination Theory claim that children are naturally interested in learning in the presence of a context where their fundamental psychological needs are satisfied [121,122]. They defined 3 three basic psychological needs: autonomy (sense of volition and feeling of freedom), competence (sense of effectiveness) and relatedness (closeness, relatedness and mutual care) [123].

When learning environments provide conditions for satisfaction of these basic needs, students thrive academically and developmentally [124]. On the other hand, need frustration was found to be related to adverse consequences as depression, burnout or stress [125].

For healthy development of personality and the actualization of one's own potential, it is critical that the impulses are expressed in a loving and non-threatening environment and owned. Owning an impulse (Havens, 1988) is the first step for reflecting on it and regulating it. Expressing impulses, desires and wishes in a loving and non-threatening environment is crucial for healthy self-development.

- A non-threatening environment allows the child, the young person, to express her/his impulse, desire and thoughts where there is no threat, to experience her/his impulse freely, to own it.
- When the impulse is expressed and recognized and owned the child can reflect on and evaluate the impulse.
- In this way, little by little awareness of the positive and negative aspects of the experience begins to form for the moment. This is the first step in developing awareness and self-control over the impulse.
- As the impulse is expressed and becomes known, its power over the personality decreases. For example, it can be observed that in more peaceful societies where self-control systems are more developed, the relations between men and women are more egalitarian and libertarian [126].

When impulses are suppressed, the child's connection with these impulses is severed, leading to fragmentation in their personality (because of repression). This fragmentation breeds internal conflicts and results in an anxious and unsettled (neurotic)

existence. Mental and emotional potential will be wasted within these conflicts. Suppressed impulses do not vanish, rather they begin to dominate the individual's entire psychological existence and perception. Life begins to be viewed through the lens of these suppressed impulses. Such individual's entire existence becomes centered around managing these suppressed impulses, dealing with internal conflicts. It wouldn't be realistic to expect creativity from such individuals. They might feel inexplicable envy towards those who can fulfill the desires and impulses they themselves couldn't satisfy.

Those who trust children and wholeheartedly accept them, with their both positive and negative aspects, provide an environment compatible with their developmental needs. In such an environment of trust, acceptance and love, children experience less fragmentation and detachment within their personality. This enables them to mature by reflecting upon their mistakes. On the contrary, environments that fail to accept children as whole individuals, burdening them with excessive rules and punishments, lead to severe personality fragmentation. Consequently, spontaneity and creativity become nearly unattainable. In societies that don't foster freedom and creativity, individuals tend to be more impulsive, restless, aggressive, depressed, and anxious. Their fragmented state engenders severe internal conflicts, diminishing their curiosity, vitality, and life energy for pursuits in science and art. Due to the constant search for satisfaction by these repressed impulses, the conscious mind is persistently threatened. As a result, the mind becomes preoccupied with the external manifestations of these representations in the world. Anything that could activate these impulses becomes a symbol, triggering substantial anxiety within the individual. The person's thoughts and life energy are directed towards controlling these anxiety-inducing events. Societal norms and values within communities composed of individuals with suppressed and insufficiently gratified impulses develop according to this neurotic structure. We argue here that these societies, unable to create the appropriate environment for the development of healthy selves in their children and youth, are founded on the notion of 'crushed selves.' The true purpose of education, we think, is to provide environments where children and young individuals can self-actualize by expressing themselves freely and reflecting on what they express. As claimed by Rogers, understanding, learning, and self-actualization are the fundamental motivations and impulses within us humans. All it takes is for families, education, and culture to provide an environment that enables individuals to actualize and transform their potential within. Figure 1 summarizes the points discussed. (Figure 1)

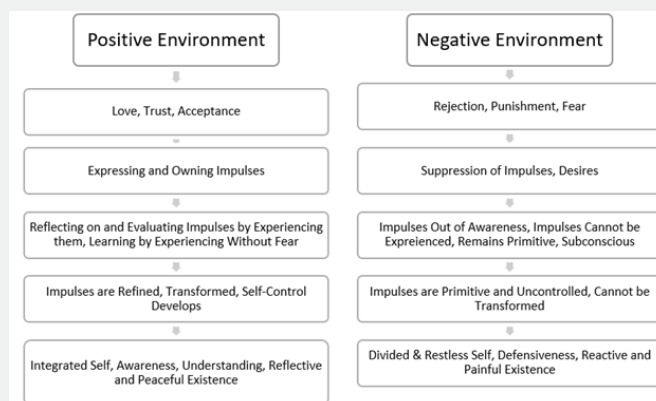


Figure 1: The development (or underdevelopment) of awareness and self-control of children according to the reactions they receive from the environment for their desires and impulses.

Conclusion

In this paper the importance of emotions experienced by children in educational settings for healthy self-development and learning is stressed. The five different approaches in psychology about the nature of children are explained with reference to how they view emotions experienced by children. Psychoanalytic-humanistic approach is claimed to provide the most suitable emotional environment for both self-development and learning. The most important factor for self-development is claimed to be the opportunity for expression of impulses, emotions and desires in a none-threatening environment. Such an experience is claimed to provide ownership of impulses, emotions and desires leading to development of awareness of and control over them. Moreover, such an expressive environment is assumed to be a precondition not only for the learning process, but also for the development of a holistic self and peaceful existence.

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