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Parent Workshop on Young Children's Emotional Development

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Hispanic Parents' Workshop on Young Children's Emotional Development

Margarita Camacho

A Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Science

Introduction

My capstone project focuses on parents with preschool-aged children. At this age, children feel their emotions before they can recognize what they mean, and it is difficult for them to self-regulate their emotions. Executive function abilities, as well as language abilities, are some of the potential reasons. Research has demonstrated that the first five years of life are crucial for children's emotional development. Forming relationships with people and expressing and managing their emotions are some of the areas of development that happen around this time. According to Chronis-Tuscano et al. (2016), to be able to regulate emotions and respond to them effectively, the use of executive functioning skills as well as several cognitive processors are required. Also, as Chronis-Tuscano stated, even though social-emotional development gets better with the maturity of cognitive and neurological systems, parents play an essential and important role in helping their children's ability to regulate emotions effectively. Also, children from immigrant families have unusual development challenges and opportunities due to their multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. This makes it difficult for children to verbalize their feelings, resulting in inappropriate behavior such as temper tantrums. For this reason, educating Hispanic immigrant parents about young children's emotional development is essential. This workshop was geared specifically towards Hispanic immigrant parents with preschool children ages three to five. This two-session workshop focused on informing parents how to teach their children to identify their emotions, learn how to name the emotions they are feeling and show their children how to regulate emotions through different techniques. The workshop took place at Virginia Rocca Barton belonging to the Alisal Union School District schools located on the east side of Salinas, California.

Needs Statement

Studies on early education have shown that the first years of children's life are crucial for their development. They get better with their verbal skills and emotional development as they mature. In order for children to understand social situations around them, how to respond constructively, and their behavior in general, it is important that they learn emotional competence skills. A child can benefit in many ways when they learn about identifying their feelings, and learn how to express them and regulate their emotions. Helping children understand and manage their emotions can also give them skills that they will use in their adulthood. As stated by Hernandez et al. (2018) parents are very influential in their children's emotional competence development, including emotional recognition, emotional verbal intelligence, and emotion regulation. In the same way, parenting practices have been extensively associated with children's emotional skills development as stated by Ornaghi et al. (2018). Not acquiring the necessary emotional competence skills at a young age can affect children's psychological and social well-being and potentially affect academic performance, mental health, and social relationships (Ellis et al. 2014).

Parents play a very important role in children's development of emotional skills. According to Li (2023), parents can have an influence on their children's emotional regulation by becoming their children's emotional coaches. In emotion coaching, parents help their children to recognize their emotions as well as to acquire the language to verbalize their emotions and use suitable strategies to cope and regulate (Li, 2023). One of the ways this can be done is by validating children's feelings. Also, even though children's neurological and cognitive systems will mature as they grow, parents have an important role in supporting their children's ability to regulate their emotions (Chronis-Tuscano et al. 2016). When parents can effectively teach their children how to deal with their feelings in a healthy way, children acquire self-control and the

necessary skills to function appropriately in a stressful world. In addition, Chan et al. (2021), stated that immigrant parents focus more on giving advice to their children instead of helping them verbalize their emotions. Chan, M., Teng, D., Teng, Y.T., and Zhou, Q. (2021) also stated that children from immigrant families have developmental distinct challenges and opportunities due to their multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. Children from immigrant families also grow up with different behavior expectations and norms. Cervantes (2002) also found that conversations between parent-child are thought to be crucial for fostering children's verbalization and understanding of emotions. For these reasons and more, Hispanic parents will benefit from this workshop in Spanish.

The first area of emotional development addressed in my project/workshop is children's recognition and understanding of emotions. Young children feel their emotions before they know what they mean. Understanding what children are feeling when having trouble regulating their emotions is the first step to responding to a child three to five years of age. According to Golan et al. (2015), the capability to recognize other people's emotions is an important process in the development of empathy and emotion recognition. Emotions can be shown in both the face and the voice. Children get better at the speed and accuracy of detecting differences in emotions between the ages of three and five. Most emotion recognition studies have focused on the "basic" six emotions (happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust) (Golan, et al. 2015). These "basic" six emotions are considered to be expressed and recognized cross-culturally. Golan, (2015) also mentioned that according to a Psychology study done by Lumen Learning, emotions are not only shown through facial expressions. The tone of voice and body language can also be used to communicate our feelings. According to Chronaki, et al. (2015), being able to understand and recognize others' emotions via facial expressions is known to be essential to the

development of positive social interaction. Similarly, Chronaki et al. (2015) also mentioned that preschoolers from ages three to five who have the capability to recognize nonverbal emotional cues during social relationships are better able to acquire better social skills and develop more meaningful relationships over time. For the purposes of our parenting course, we will be focusing on examining pictures, stuffed animals, toys, and books to help children understand and recognize emotions through visuals.

Verbalizing emotions was addressed next in my Parent Workshop. When children don't have the verbal intelligence to express their emotions, tantrums and meltdowns usually occur. Children may feel different feelings throughout the day, but parents can help them out by naming those emotions. When parents teach their children to label the feelings when they take place, with time, their children will acquire an emotional vocabulary and eventually, they will be able to recognize those feelings and talk about them. Doing this will make it easy for them to learn the basics of expressing their feelings appropriately (Beck, 2022). When toddlers have feelings like sadness, mad, fear, or disgust, and do not have the vocabulary to say what they feel, negative behavior can take over and impact learning and personal relationships. According to Ornaghi et al. (2017) having the language to express emotions can help children with emotion regulation. Children are more resilient when they have the words to express their emotions. Children can learn from their parents when it comes to properly expressing emotions and reactions toward others' emotions (Denham et al. 1997). As stated by Ornaghi et al. (2018) parenting practices have been proven to successfully develop children's emotional skills. Denham et al. (1997) suggested that parents can teach their children how to express their feelings through modeling and using coaching techniques.

Once children can identify and name their emotions, self-regulation will be easier. Emotion regulation has been deeply investigated by developmental psychologists as this might affect other areas like cognition and social development. According to Sala et al. (2014) “the study of emotion regulation development has shown the preschool years to be of critical importance because, during this period, children acquire an appreciation of emotion regulation strategies and learn to use them to manage their emotions” (page 440). Parents can have a big impact on self-regulation by becoming their child’s emotional coach. In the technique of emotional coaching parents show children how to utilize suitable techniques to cope in healthy ways. Parents can help develop self-control, which is a skill necessary to function effectively in a stressful world. The lack of emotional regulation has been linked with risk factors like mental health disorders, depression, and anxiety. Parents can help their children with their emotional regulation by modeling, breathing exercises, and redirection.

Research has shown that emotional development is a crucial factor and parental coaching is an important tool for children to gain this skill. According to Ellis et al. (2013), validating and acknowledging children’s emotions as well as showing them how to manage and regulate negative feelings is part of parental emotional coaching. Through parent-child conversations on past emotions, children can reflect, understand, and manage negative feelings (Hernandez et al., 2018). According to Hernandez (2018), children can have fewer behavior problems when parents converse with their children about their emotions. Using emotional coaching techniques like modeling, verbally labeling emotions, showing empathy and supportive responses will help children gain emotional understanding (Wilson et al., 2012). Wilson et al., (2012) also suggested that these approaches are being more utilized and recognized as not only being effective but also cost-effective. With this approach, parents will learn how to help their children identify,

organize, verbalize, and finally develop techniques to self-regulate. The parent workshop will be a two-part series of 45 minutes each, conducted in a school classroom setting belonging to the Alisal Unified School District.

The workshop developed was implemented for Hispanic immigrant parents. Parents who were part of this workshop live in the east side of Salinas which according to demographic statistics tend to be from lower socioeconomic status. Chan et al. (2022) stated that research has shown that children from Hispanic parents coming from lower socioeconomic status have less exposure to child-directed speech and lower oral parental speech compared to parents coming from high socioeconomic status. On the other hand, according to Cervantes (2002), Mexican immigrant mothers explain more instead of labeling their children's emotions, compared to Mexican-American parents. This can mean that first-generation Mexican parents' conversations about emotions can be linked to cultural practices (Chan et al., 2022). This research also showed that positive emotional talk was linked to parents' cultural background and suggested that Hispanic first-generation parents used more emotional explanations rather than labeling feelings. In contrast, Cervantes (2002) indicated that children from lower socioeconomic status include more negative emotions in their conversations. In addition to this Cervantes (2002) indicated that immigrant Mexican parents show more proficiency in the Spanish language.

Gaining the necessary emotional competence skills at a young age is crucial for children's psychological and social well-being as well as academic performance, mental health, and social relationships. (Ellis, B. H. et al. 2014). Parents can have an influence on their children's emotional regulation by becoming their children's emotional coaches (Li, 2023). I particularly focused on immigrant parents with children ages three to five. At the end of the workshop, parents should be able to teach their children strategies to foster their children's

recognition of emotions, how to verbalize their emotions, and finally parents will be able to list at least two ways they can help their child regulate emotions. The workshop will be delivered in Spanish at Virginia Rocca Barton Elementary School in Salinas, California.

Theory

The theory I am using for this project is based on Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory. Erikson suggested a theory for making connections between the various stages of human development including the development connecting the individual and society. His eight-stage theory of development includes human development from birth to old age. The third stage of development is Initiative vs Guilt which occurs during the ages of three to six years of age. During this time, children learn to develop a sense of autonomy and the ability to make decisions. If this stage of life is not fully met, either by criticism or lack of encouragement by the caregiver, the child can develop a sense of guilt. According to Gillian Knoght (2016), if this occurs, the child may become scared of trying new things affecting the development of leadership skills, and becoming scared of trying new things. According to Batra (2013), this area of development is influenced by external forces that help us develop our morals founded on self-regulation, reasoning, and agreeability.

Erik Erikson believed that each human being must find his or her own sense of regulation as a result of interaction between the individual child and outside influences including parents. He acknowledges that personality traits such as instincts, temperament, interest, and emerging maturity as well as outside factors like family, culture, and a child's life can influence social-emotional development in children. Batra (2013) also added that everyday relationships or lack of relationships with family members such as parents as well as their own experiences

can influence social and emotional development. Also, emotion regulation in preschoolers can be influenced by how adults respond to their initiatives and help them cope with feelings of guilt or frustration positively and effectively. For this reason, my project will include a workshop for parents. The purpose of my focus with parents is to give them ideas on how to work with their children at home to help them cope with their negative emotions by recognizing, verbalizing, and regulating their negative emotions. The children of these parents were between the ages of three and five which makes them preschool-aged children. I chose this theory because if children are not encouraged to recognize, verbalize, and regulate their emotions, it will be difficult to initiate play, planning, and finishing activities which will lead them to feel guilt.

Consideration of Diversity

My project took place in one of the schools belonging to the Alisal Union School District. These schools are located in the east part of Salinas, California. According to ed-data.org, the majority of students attending this school district are Hispanic or Latino populations. The district has a total of 7,509 students out of which nearly half of them are English learners with a total of 4,916. The majority of students qualify for free or reduced meals which means that most of the students come from low-income backgrounds. When looking at the population in the area code where the district is located, I found that 94% of these families are Hispanic, almost 15% live in poverty, and 14.2% do not have health insurance compared to 9% of the country.

I have been working for this school district for over 10 years and have found that most children attending these schools are first-generation Americans. This means that the parents I worked with in this workshop were immigrant parents who mostly spoke Spanish. For this reason, the project was designed and or modified in Spanish. The information presented as well

as the activities were also written and given in Spanish. Children from immigrant families are influenced by their multilingualism as well as multiculturalism making it sometimes difficult to recognize, verbalize and ultimately regulate their emotions. These aspects were also taken into consideration when developing this curriculum.

Learning Outcomes

I created a workshop for Latino immigrant parents with preschool-age children that focuses on helping children regulate their negative emotions. My project had 3 learning outcomes.

1. Parents will identify two ways to foster their children's recognition of their own negative emotions.
2. Parents will identify three ways to help their children express their negative emotions appropriately.
3. Parents will identify two ways to help their children regulate their negative emotions.

Method

Location and Participants

This project was presented at Virginia Rocca Barton Elementary School, belonging to the Alisal Union School District. The workshop was delivered on two different days, with a

45-minute session each time. The first session gave information about the workshop in general and the recognition of three negative emotions. The second day focused on three ways to help their children express their negative emotions appropriately and, lastly, three ways to help their children regulate their negative emotions. The participants were Hispanic immigrant parents who had children ages three to five years old. Each day had 10 participants and was composed only of mothers. The participants have been a part of Playgroup sessions during this school year which meet once a week and were invited to participate in this workshop. Although some mothers were bilingual, others spoke only Spanish. For the sake of time and since all mothers spoke Spanish, the information was delivered to them in Spanish only. Mothers' ages ranged from 25 to 35 years old.

Procedures and Materials

In the first part of the workshop, I started by introducing myself and giving information about the topics we would be discussing. I then allowed each parent some time to introduce themselves and say the names and ages of their children. After the introductions were done, I proceeded to ask them a few questions about the challenges they currently face with their children's social-emotional development state.

For part one, I shared a slide I created that gave them an overview of children's Emotional Development. Please see Appendix A to view the slides presented to the mothers. I started by going over the fact that feelings are important, but when children do not know what they are feeling, it can be challenging to explain what they need to someone and act out in a negative way. I also introduced a book that talks about emotions called *A Little Spots of Feelings-Emotion Detective* by Diane Alber. Please see Appendix B to view the book.

For the second day of this workshop, I started by reviewing the information from the day before. I then proceeded to introduce the topic of emotion verbalization. For this session, I also used the slides shown in Appendix A. An emotional chart was used to help connect the emotion to the name of the feeling. A discussion with the group about the learning outcomes concluded this part of the workshop. The second part of this workshop consisted of the topic of Self-Regulation. I also used the slides shown in Appendix A to inform the parents about this topic. Acknowledging the emotion, breathing exercises, and modeling are some of the techniques discussed to help children self-regulate. A stuffed animal similar to the one shown in Appendix C was also introduced to help them self-soothe. A group discussion about self-regulation concluded on the second and final day of the workshop. Due to time restraints, a written questionnaire for the learning outcomes was handed out a week later. Please see Appendix E.

Results

Ten Hispanic mothers with children ages three to five participated in this workshop. At the end of each topic, I assessed the learning outcomes with the participating parents. The purpose of the first learning outcome was that parents would be able to identify two ways to foster their children's recognition of their own negative emotions. By the end of day one, I was able to determine that parents were able to identify ways to foster their children's recognition of emotions. To assess the first learning outcomes I handed out a written questionnaire with multiple-choice options. See Appendix D. Only two of the possible responses were correct and the rest were incorrect. Each answer was worth one point. By this point, we were running out of time, so I decided to ask the questions out loud and answer as a team. Once the question was

read out loud, mothers were to raise their hands if they knew the answer. I then proceeded to pick on someone with their hand up. When that person answered the question, I asked the rest of the participants if they agreed. I continued to go over the rest of the correct answers. After reviewing the answers it was concluded that Learning Outcome One was fully met since all 10 participants were able to identify two ways to foster their children's recognition of emotions.

The second learning outcome focused on the parent's ability to recognize three ways to help their children express their negative emotions appropriately. This learning outcome was delivered on the second day of the workshop. I handed out the same questionnaire given to them on the first day of the workshop. This time, however, they had to answer question number two. This question had five possible answers with only three of them being correct. Each correct answer was worth one point. Since the assessment completed on the first day was answered as a group and for the sake of time, I decided to do the same for this assessment. All parents participated in the answer to the question with all the correct answers. I considered a passing score if the parent was able to recognize three ways they could help their children name the emotion. After reviewing the answers it was concluded that Learning Outcome Two was fully met since all 10 participants were able to identify three ways to help their children express their negative emotions appropriately.

The third learning outcome consisted of parents being able to identify two ways to help their children regulate their negative emotions. This was done on the last part of the second day of the workshop. There was only one question related to the regulation of negative emotions. This question had five possible answers with only two of them being correct. If the participating parents selected 2 correct answers, it was considered to be a passing score. All ten participants were able to identify at least 2 correct answers which made Learning Outcome Three fully met.

The questionnaire had three different sections with each one about a learning outcome. Due to a lack of time, I handed out the written questionnaire a week later. All ten participants were able to identify two ways to foster their children's recognition of emotions, three ways to help their children verbalize their emotions, and 2 ways to help their children regulate their emotions. At the end of the evaluation, it was concluded that all learning outcomes were fully met.

Discussion

The focus of my capstone project was the Hispanic Parents' Workshop on Young Children's Emotional Development. The workshop was centered on three areas that would help Latino/Hispanic parents work with their young children to foster the recognition of their own emotions, help their children express their negative emotions appropriately, and lastly help their children regulate their negative emotions. After the implementation of the workshop, it can be determined that the project was successful in meeting the focus of my capstone project. All three learning outcomes were met. Participating parents were able to determine at least one way they can help their children recognize, verbalize, and regulate their emotions. During the workshop parents were involved in the discussion and seemed interested in the information provided to them. At the same time, the written quiz was fully answered by all parents getting 10 points out of a possible 10 points. The parents were happy to return for the second day since the workshop was delivered to them on a two-part system. They were engaged and seemed happy to be there. They also expressed their willingness to implement some of the ideas given to them during the workshop.

Although all three learning objectives were met, there were some limitations within this project. Since the participants were parents with young children between the ages of three and

five, there were some instances where the children were in the same room. Although childcare was provided during the workshop, some children needed to use the restrooms or simply be with their parents. Also, we ran out of time at the end of both sessions. This could have been because I waited until all the parents registered for the workshop were there. Due to this reason, I had to improvise and deliver my assessment in the form of a discussion. Since this did not meet the requirements of the workshop, I had to administer the questionnaire for my learning objectives a second time a week after the workshop was delivered. This was not ideal since the correct answers had been discussed at the end of each day of the workshop. A challenge was that the workshop was delivered in Spanish. This meant that the information had to be translated to be able to accommodate the parents who only spoke Spanish. Some of the challenges with doing this was the extra time it took to translate the information.

An area of improvement for me in this workshop would be to start delivering the information on time. Although being understanding towards parents with young children is important, starting on time proved to be a challenge for me. For this reason, this is something I would change to improve the overall outcome. This will enable me to have enough time for learning outcomes and not make the same mistakes of having to do it twice. Another thing I would do differently would be to have toys available for children who needed to be with their parents instead of in the childcare. This way parents would be less distracted and concentrate on the material being delivered. Overall, this project can be seen as a success. In doing my capstone project, I learned that working with parents is important since they are considered to be their child's first teacher. In the future, I would love to create a similar workshop focused on the children since they are a population I like working with as well.

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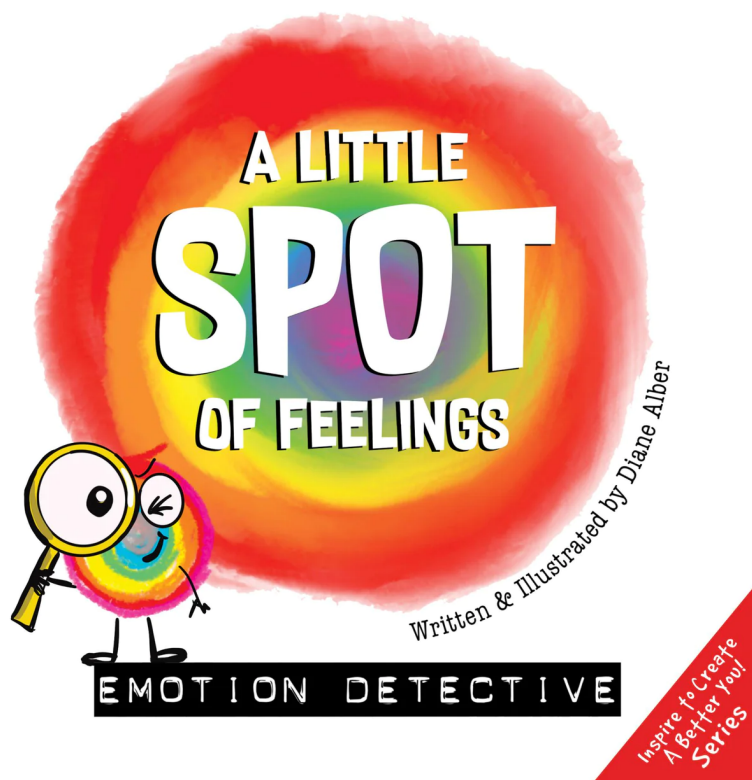
Appendix A

Slide presentation used at the workshop

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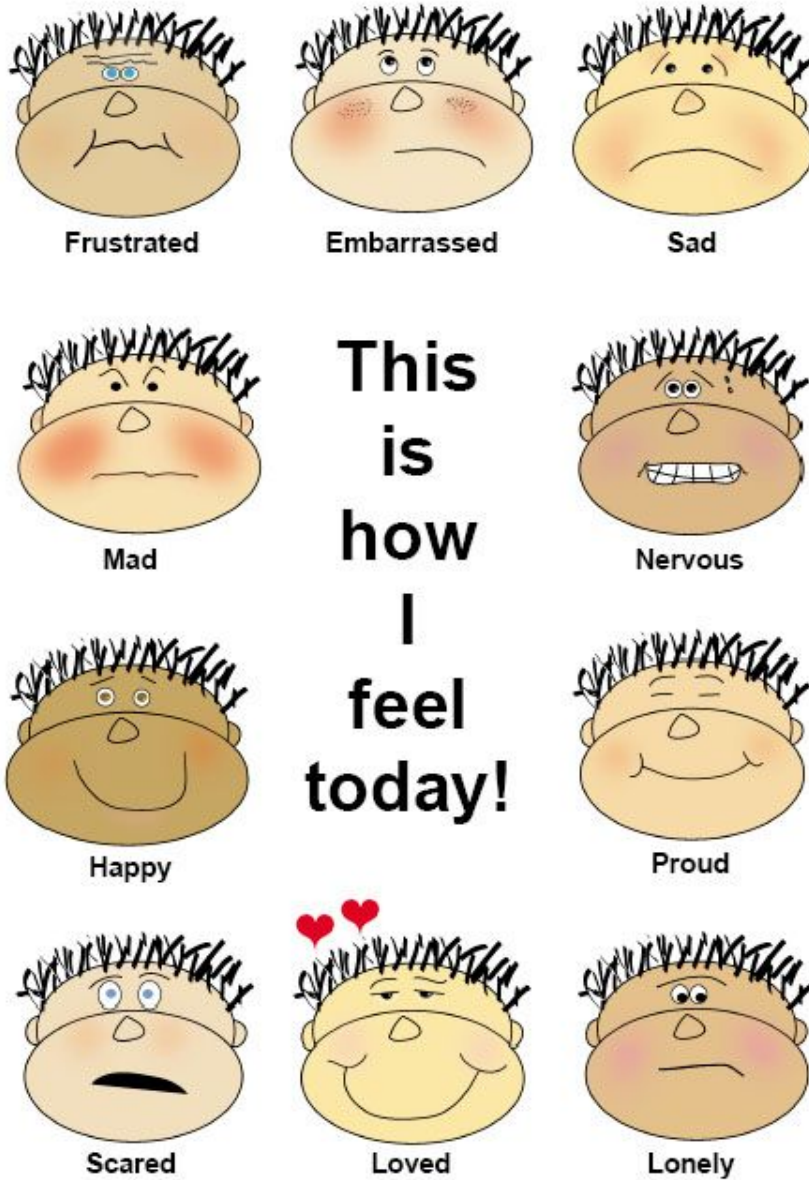
Appendix B

The book used at the workshop



Appendix C

The emotional chart used



Appendix D

A similar stuffed animal was used at the workshop



Appendix E

Learning Outcomes Written Questionnaire

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NCeLQ2dBtQoscK_h3_NejoHDM-VD0UgUJ9Vlzzk2QVw/edit?usp=sharing

Appendix F

Presentation from Capstone Festival

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