

Preschoolers' Understanding of Others' and Their Own Emotions

– Based on a Selection of Emotions and Verbal Reasoning –

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The purpose of the current study was to investigate the relevance of preschoolers' understanding of others' and their own emotions, along with how such an understanding of emotions develops. Preschoolers from the age of 3 to 6 (30 boys and 31 girls) were recruited. Events involving emotions used in the study consisted of situations that induced any of the following: happiness, sadness, or anger. After having each situation explained via a picture-card show, the participants were asked to select one of three expressive pictures representing these emotions, and were then asked the reason for their choice. The two experimental conditions were: the emotional states of others and one's own emotional state. The results showed no significant differences between the two emotional conditions for all ages. Further, it was indicated that preschoolers develop an understanding of emotions regarding both conditions at a comparable level. Through analyzing verbal reasoning, three levels of understanding regarding emotional development were found. Level 1: Children before the age of 4 failed to select the correct expression. Level 2: Children aged 4 to 5 were able to select the expression correctly, but could not explain the reason logically. Level 3: Children aged 5 to 6 or older were able to do well in both the selection of emotions and verbal reasoning.