



COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BODY LANGUAGE IN ADULT AND KIDS

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents a variety of different body language aspects in adults and children. which is a fascinating field that examines how non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, gestures, posture, and movements, communicate emotions, thoughts, and intentions. While the basic principles of body language remain the same across age groups, there are distinct differences in how body language is used and interpreted between adults and children.



KEYWORDS: *body language, cultures, eye contact.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a part of culture and plays a very important role in it. It can be seen as a keystone of culture. Yet language is not the only way to express our ideas and feelings. Body movement, eye contact, gesture, and facial expression can also convey messages. We call this nonverbal communication body language. Body language is as much a part of our culture as our verbal language. Despite our failure to realize it, we communicate by much more than words when the conversation takes place. By using facial expressions, gestures, and other body movements, we send messages to those around us. Different cultures have different ways of making nonverbal communication and different people have different gestures of conveying their expressions.

The study of body language in adults and children is a fascinating field that examines how non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, gestures, posture, and movements, communicate emotions, thoughts, and intentions. While the basic principles of body language remain the same across age groups, there are distinct differences in how body language is used and interpreted between adults and children. Below is a breakdown of the key aspects:

1. Developmental Differences:

Children:

- Non-Verbal Communication Development:** In infants and young children, body language is one of the primary ways to communicate before verbal language develops. Babies use gestures such as pointing, waving, and facial expressions to express needs or desires.
- Motor Skills:** As children grow, they refine their motor skills, which impacts how they use body language. A toddler might use exaggerated movements, while older children will start adopting more sophisticated body language, such as mirroring or mimicking adults.
- Facial Expressions:** Children's facial expressions are often more exaggerated compared to adults. They may smile or frown with much broader intensity, making it easier to interpret their emotions.

4. **Imitation:** Children often learn body language by observing adults and peers, which helps them understand social norms and emotional expressions.

Adults:

1. **Complexity and Subtlety:** Adult body language tends to be more subtle and complex. As adults are more adept at regulating their emotions, they may intentionally hide or alter their body language to manage impressions.
2. **Cultural Influences:** Adults are more influenced by societal and cultural norms, which may modify their body language to fit social expectations.
3. **Defensive Postures:** Adults may display defensive body language (e.g., crossing arms, leaning back) more frequently due to stress, anxiety, or the desire to protect themselves from perceived threats.

2. Emotional Expression:

Children:

1. **Spontaneous and Honest:** Children's body language is often more direct and spontaneous. For example, a child may stamp their feet when angry or hug someone when happy. Their emotional expression is usually unfiltered, making it easier to understand their feelings.
2. **Fear and Anxiety:** Children might display anxiety or fear through body language like clinging to a parent, hiding behind objects, or becoming physically stiff.

Adults:

1. **Social Masking:** Adults often mask emotions due to social expectations. For instance, an adult may smile to appear happy when they're actually feeling sad or frustrated. This makes it harder to read their body language accurately without careful attention to subtle cues like eye movements or posture.
2. **Body Language and Stress:** When stressed or anxious, adults may exhibit more complex body language such as clenched fists, shallow breathing, or avoidance behaviors.

3. Common Body Language Cues:

Facial Expressions:

Children: Tend to express emotions more visibly and openly on their faces. For instance, they might show excitement with wide eyes or show distress with a furrowed brow and pouting lips.

Adults: May mask their facial expressions or control them, making it harder to gauge their true feelings. Adults might smile to convey politeness, even if they are not genuinely happy.

Posture:

Children: More likely to display open, expansive postures (e.g., running around, jumping) as a sign of confidence or excitement. When scared, children might shrink or curl up.

Adults: Posture is often more controlled and restrained. Adults tend to use posture to convey authority or submission. Crossed arms or legs can indicate discomfort or defensiveness, while leaning forward can show interest or engagement.

Gestures:

Children: Use exaggerated and often spontaneous gestures (e.g., pointing, waving, jumping). A child might use more broad movements to express themselves.

Adults: Tend to use more controlled and refined gestures. For example, adults may gesture more subtly with their hands while speaking or nod to signal agreement. Cultural factors also influence gesture interpretation.

4. Eye Contact

Children:

1. **Eager Attention:** Young children often maintain direct eye contact when interested or engaging with someone. Eye contact may also indicate curiosity or a desire for attention.
2. **Lack of Eye Contact:** Children who are shy or anxious may avoid eye contact. However, this behavior may diminish as they develop social confidence.

Adults:

1. **Complex Eye Contact:** Adults typically regulate eye contact based on social norms. In many cultures, prolonged eye contact can indicate assertiveness or interest, while avoiding eye contact can be a sign of discomfort, dishonesty, or social anxiety.
2. **Gaze Patterns:** Adults may display gaze patterns such as shifting their eyes away when feeling uncomfortable or looking to the side when lost in thought.

5. Space and Proxemics:

Children:

1. **Closer Proximity:** Children often feel comfortable in close physical proximity to their caregivers or peers, as they are in the process of learning social boundaries.
2. **Personal Space:** As children grow, they gradually learn about personal space and may start to show discomfort if others invade their space.

Adults:

1. **Personal Boundaries:** Adults are more conscious of their personal space. The use of proxemics (the study of personal space) varies depending on cultural context. For example, some cultures favor close proximity in conversations, while others maintain more distance.
2. **Intimacy and Power Dynamics:** In adult interactions, body language can indicate closeness (e.g., intimate touch, leaning in) or power dynamics (e.g., physical distance in hierarchical relationships).

6. Interpretation and Social Context:

Children:

Literal Interpretation: Children may interpret body language more literally and may not fully grasp the subtleties or hidden meanings behind certain gestures or postures. For example, if someone is shaking their head, a child may simply think the person is indicating that they "don't want something" rather than understanding it as a more complex social signal.

Adults:

Context-Dependent Understanding: Adults interpret body language based on the social context, cultural background, and prior knowledge of the person's usual behavior. They also rely on context to understand contradictory body language, like when someone smiles but seems angry.

7. Cultural Differences:

Both children and adults can be influenced by cultural norms when it comes to body language, but adults are more likely to be aware of these differences. For example, in some cultures, eye contact is seen as a sign of respect, while in others, it might be viewed as confrontational. Children, however, may not yet fully understand these distinctions.

CONCLUSION:

While both adults and children use body language to convey emotions, intentions, and desires, children are often more spontaneous and transparent in their non-verbal communication, whereas adults have a greater ability to mask or regulate their body language according to social norms and

contexts. The study of body language across these age groups provides valuable insight into developmental psychology, communication, and human behavior.

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