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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary world, in which individuals lack relationships and well-being, social Intelligence is a vital aspect to all ages. Bandura's social cognitive theory plays a vital role in modifying and shaping the behaviour of individuals. The focus of the article is based on Erik Erikson stages of psycho social development in children. The article speaks about fostering self-esteem and emotional growth in children and also about the psycho social development among adolescents through an illustration. The importance of maintaining good familial relationship and prompt parenting style are also discussed. The article ends with highlighting various social skills to develop in children and adolescents as an initiation to develop competence.

Key Words: Social Intelligence, Children, Adolescents and Social Sills

Introduction

In today's interconnected world, where success often hinges on collaboration, communication, and understanding others, nurturing social intelligence in children and adolescents is more critical than ever. Imagine a world where every child possesses the ability to navigate friendships, resolve conflicts peacefully, and empathise with others' perspectives. It's a world where individuals thrive not only academically and professionally but also in their personal relationships and overall well-being. This vision underscores the importance of intentional efforts to cultivate social intelligence from an early age.

Bandura's **Social cognitive theory** emphasises the dynamic interaction between cognitive processes, behaviour, and the environment in shaping human behaviour. It underscores the importance of cognitive processes, observational learning, and self-efficacy in understanding human behaviour and development.

How do fashions spread so quickly? **Observational learning** is one aspect of fashion. People who adopt them notice how people they see in real life or in the media present themselves, and this influences them to adopt the same style of dress or grooming. The trends change, but the process at work-observational learning-remains the same. Bandura proposed that people learn by observing others, especially models who demonstrate behaviour and it's consequences. This process also known as modelling, allows individuals to acquire new skills and behaviours without direct reinforcement. For example, Rita learns to tie her shoes by carefully paying attention watching her parents tie their shoes by paying close attention to the steps involved and the sequence of movements. Rita remembers the steps she observed and attempts to reproduce the observed actions. Rita experiences a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction when she successfully ties her shoe laces and in turn reinforces her motivation to repeat the behaviour in future.

Central to Bandura's theory is the concept of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to achieve desired outcomes in specific situations. Higher self efficacy leads to greater motivation, persistence, and resilience in the face of challenges, while low self efficacy can result in avoidance or giving up prematurely. For instance, a child who feels confident in their social skills may initiate conversations, make new friends, and resolve conflicts peacefully.

Psychosocial Development in Children

Psychosocial development in children refers to the progressive integration of psychological and social dimensions as they grow and mature. This concept was popularised by Erik Erikson, who proposed a

theory of psychosocial development that encompasses eight stages spanning from infancy to adulthood.

Self-Esteem: During the Industry vs Inferiority stage, which occurs during middle childhood (ages 6 to 12), children begin to develop a sense of *competence* and *mastery* in various areas of life. Self-esteem plays a major role during this stage, as it reflects children's belief about their own worth and abilities. Children who have successful social interactions and maintain positive relationships with peers are likely to experience higher self-esteem in social situations. For example, a child who is well liked by their classmates, participates in group activities, and resolves conflicts effectively may feel confident in their social skills and interpersonal relationships.

Positive feedback, encouragement, and recognition from parents, teachers, peers, and other significant adults also play a crucial role in shaping children's self esteem. Do they like and care about the child? Do they treat the child as a person who matters and has valuable things to say? A major contributor to self esteem in children is their sense of competence and mastery in different areas of life. When children feel capable and successful in activities such as academics, social interactions, sports, hobbies, and personal achievements, it bolsters their self esteem.

Emotional growth: By age 7 or 8, children become more aware of their emotions and those of others, leading to increased empathy and social awareness. They learn to regulate their emotions more effectively, using strategies such as deep breathing, positive talk, and seeking support from others. Peer relationships become increasingly important, providing opportunities for emotional expression, conflict resolution, and social support.

Controlling negative emotions is an important aspect of emotional awareness. It teaches children to recognise and label their emotions accurately. Encouraging them to identify and name their feelings, whether it's anger, frustration, anxiety, or sadness. Using books, games, or role-playing activities to explore different emotions and their triggers. .

Psychosocial development in Adolescents

In this stage, adolescents focus on the challenges and tasks associated with forming a coherent sense of self and establishing a stable identity. This typically occurs between the ages of 12 and 18 years. Adolescents grapple with questions of personal identity, values, beliefs, and aspirations as they strive to answer the fundamental question: "Who am I?" They explore different roles and identities in various domains, including relationships, career aspirations, cultural affiliations, and personal values.

Ryan, Maya, Alex, and Sarah are all about to graduate from High school. Ryan, right from his childhood was very much interested in nature and soil and started exploring much more to quench his curiosity. He decided to pursue a career in environmental science. He's passionate about sustainability and has volunteered with several environmental organisations. He has a clear sense of his values, interests, and goals. He feels confident in his decision to pursue this career path. Maya is unsure about her major and future career path. She's taking a variety of courses in different subjects, participating in internships, and volunteering to gain exposure to different fields. While she hasn't made any firm commitments yet, she's actively exploring her interests and opinions. Alex comes from a family of lawyers, and from a young age, his parents have encouraged him to follow in their footsteps. Without exploring other options, Alex has decided to pursue a law degree and join the family practice. He hasn't considered other career options or explored his own interests outside of law. Sarah hasn't explored her interests or future plans much. She often feels uncertain about what she wants to do after graduation and hasn't made any concrete plans. She tends to go along with whatever her friends are doing and hasn't given much thought to her own values or goals.

According to Marcia's types of Identity status, Ryan has successfully explored different identity options and made firm commitments based on their own values and aspirations. (**Identity Achievement**) He has a clear sense of self and direction in life. Maya is actively exploring different identity options but have not yet made firm commitments. (**Moratorium**) She may experiment with different roles, values, and beliefs as she searches for her true identity. Alex have made commitments to certain roles, beliefs, or values without exploring alternatives. (**Identity Foreclosure**) His identity is often based on expectations or values imposed by others. Sarah has not yet explored different identity options, nor have she committed to a particular identity (**Identity Diffusion**). She may seem apathetic or confused about their future goals and values.

Relationship with Family, Friends, and Peers: They experience a shift in their relationship with family members, characterised by increasing independence and autonomy. Conflict with parents may arise as adolescents assert their individuality and challenge parental authority. However, family relationships continue to provide a crucial source of support, guidance, and emotional connection during this period of change.

Friendships become increasingly important as peers become primary sources of social support, companionship, and identity formation. Adolescents may form close friendships based on shared interests, values, and experiences, providing opportunities for emotional intimacy and self disclosure. Friendships may also experience fluctuations and conflicts as adolescents navigate changing social dynamics, peer pressure, and conflicts of interest.

Peer groups often serve as platforms for experimentation, self-expression, and the development of social skills, including communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Peer relationships can also provide emotional support and validation, helping adolescents cope with stress, navigate challenges, and develop resilience.

Parenting style for Nurturing Social Intelligence

Parenting styles play a pivotal role in shaping a child's social intelligence, influencing their ability to navigate and thrive in social settings. The way parents interact with and guide their children greatly impacts the development of social skills, emotional understanding, and interpersonal relationships.

Authoritative Parenting: This style of parenting helps to foster social intelligence. This approach combines warmth and responsiveness with clear expectations and boundaries. Authoritative parents provide emotional support, encourage open communication, and offer guidance while allowing their children the autonomy to make age-appropriate decisions. This balanced approach helps children develop a strong sense of self, empathy, and effective communication skills, all of which are crucial components of social intelligence.

Authoritarian Parenting: Conversely, this style of parenting characterized by strict rules and a lack of warmth, can hinder the development of social intelligence. Children raised in such environments may struggle with social interactions, as they may lack the skills to navigate relationships with peers and authority figures due to a limited exposure to decision-making and problem-solving opportunities.

Permissive Parenting: This style is marked by high warmth but low demands and structure. This may also impact social intelligence negatively. Children in permissive households may struggle with self-discipline and find it challenging to understand boundaries, potentially leading to difficulties in forming healthy relationships.

Neglectful/Uninvolved Parenting: In this style, parents are disengaged and emotionally distant which in turn have severe consequences for social intelligence. Children raised in such environments may experience feelings of abandonment, struggle with emotional regulation, and face challenges in building meaningful connections with others.

To nurture social intelligence, parents can adopt strategies that encourage **emotional awareness** and **social competence**. Active listening is a fundamental skill that authoritative parents often employ, creating an environment where children feel heard and valued. This, in turn, enhances a child's ability to understand and respond empathetically to the emotions of others.

Modelling appropriate social behaviour is another key aspect of fostering social intelligence. Parents who demonstrate effective communication, empathy, and conflict resolution provide valuable examples for their children. Children often learn by observing, and having positive role models at home significantly contributes to the development of healthy social skills.

Encouraging collaborative play and social interactions is essential for enhancing a child's social intelligence. Group activities, team sports, and cooperative games provide opportunities for children to learn about teamwork, sharing, and compromise. These experiences contribute to the development of essential social skills that are crucial in various aspects of life.

Social Skills Programs for Social competence in Children and Adolescents

Social skills programs play a vital role in fostering social competence among children and adolescents. These programs aim to equip young individuals with the necessary skills to navigate social interactions, build meaningful relationships, and thrive in various social contexts. We will explore the programs, their components and the impact they have on the overall development of children and adolescents.

Social competence: It is a multifaceted construct encompassing effective communication, empathy, conflict resolution, and the ability to cooperate with others. These programs provide a structured framework to address these components systematically. By offering a curriculum that focuses on interpersonal skills, these programs empower young individuals to understand, interpret, and respond appropriately to social cues.

Social Thinking: This program is developed by Michelle Garcia Winner. Social Thinking program focuses on teaching children and adolescents to better understand and respond to social cues. It emphasizes perspective-taking, social problem-solving, and self-awareness. Concepts like "expected" and "unexpected" behaviours are central to the program. This program is suitable for students with various social learning challenges, including those with autism spectrum disorders.

Second Step: Second Step is a program designed to enhance social-emotional learning (SEL) skills in students. It covers topics such as empathy, emotion management, and problem solving. Lessons are often interactive, using role-playing and group activities. This is widely used in schools, and it spans various grade levels and is tailored to meet the developmental needs of the students.

PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies): PATHS is an SEL curriculum that targets the development of emotional intelligence and social competence in children. It incorporates activities and lessons to enhance self-control, emotional understanding, and interpersonal skills. Emphasis is placed on fostering a positive classroom environment. This program is suited for elementary school students, PATHS aim to prevent behavioural problems and promote a positive social atmosphere.

Each of these programs adopts a structured approach to teach and reinforce social skills, contributing to the overall social and emotional well-being of students. The choice of program may depend on factors such as the specific needs of the students and the grade levels involved.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Nurturing social intelligence in adolescents and children is crucial for their overall development. Through positive role modelling, empathy-building activities, and encouraging open communication, we can help them navigate social complexities, develop strong interpersonal skills, and foster healthy

relationships. This investment in social intelligence equips them with the tools needed for successful interactions in various aspects of life.

Model Social Skills: Demonstrate positive social behaviour, empathy, and effective communication to serve as a role model.

Encourage Peer Interaction: Create opportunities for children to engage with peers, fostering teamwork, cooperation, and conflict resolution.

Teach Emotional literacy: Help children recognise and express emotions, as well as understand the feelings of others, promoting empathy and self awareness.

Practice Active Listening: Encourage attentive listening skills, teaching them to understand others' perspectives and respond appropriately.

Promote Inclusive Play: Support activities that include all children, fostering a sense of belonging and teaching the importance of diversity.

Problem Solving Activities: Engage them in activities that require collaboration and problem-solving, enhancing their ability to work with others.

Set clear expectations: Establish clear social expectations and rules, providing a framework for appropriate behaviour in various situations.

Role-Playing: Use role-playing scenarios to help children practice social interactions, build confidence, and refine communication skills.

Teach Conflict Resolution: Equip them with strategies to resolve conflicts peacefully, emphasising compromise and understanding.

Encourage Perspective taking: Help children see situations from different viewpoints, enhancing their ability to understand and relate to others.

Provide feedback: Offer constructive feedback on their social interactions, highlighting positive behaviours and suggesting improvements when necessary.

Cultivate empathy through Literature: Introduce books that explore diverse experiences, fostering empathy by allowing children to step into the shoes of fictional characters. Consistency and patience are key when nurturing social intelligence in children.

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