Social Learning Theory and its Role in Reducing Behavioral Problems in Children

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Abstract

Children suffer from many behavioral problems that arise and require solutions. These problems may be academic, familial, or social, requiring training programs. These problems include aggressive behavior, lying, and other negative behaviors. Hence, the current study aims to test the effectiveness of social learning theory in reducing behavioral problems among some children. The study sample consisted of 60 children, who were randomly divided into two groups: an experimental group consisting of 30 children (who received guidance through the theory) and a control group consisting of 30 children (who did not receive the guidance). The study tools consisted of the Social Innovative Thinking Scale (Dodge, 1986), modified and re-standardized by Hesham Mohamed (2019), the Behavioral Problems Scale, and a guidance program based on social learning theory to reduce behavioral problems in children. The psychometric determinants of the study tools were calculated, and the results showed that there were statistically significant differences at the level of (0.001) between the average scores of children with some behavioral problems in the experimental and control groups after applying the program on the social innovation scale and its dimensions (fluency, flexibility, originality, total score) in favor of the experimental group. There were statistically significant differences at the level of (0.001) between the average scores of children with some behavioral problems in the experimental group in the pre- and post-measurement on the social innovation scale and its dimensions (fluency, flexibility, originality, total score) in favor of the post-application. There were no statistically significant differences between the average scores of children with some behavioral problems in the post- and follow-up measurements on the social innovation scale and its dimensions (fluency, flexibility, originality, total score) after a month of applying the program. The proposed theory contributes by a percentage ranging between (0.916) to (0.946), which indicates the effective impact of the theory on children's behavioral problems.

Keywords: Social Learning Theory, Behavioral Problems, Children, Impact.

Introduction

Childhood is a crucial foundational stage in shaping a child's personality. This is when children are highly influenced by their environment, acquiring life skills, knowledge, values, and habits.

One of the most important theories addressing this stage is social learning theory, which focuses on the influence of society on children's learning through observation, imitation, and being influenced by reward and punishment, which gives education an educational and social character. The life cycle that a person goes through during his or her childhood is one of the most important stages. This cycle is characterized by the development of child, which accompanies the child until independence. It is characterized by the development of child's personality and character, which is subject to the influence of the surrounding environment, whether physical, social, academic, cognitive, or emotional (Abdullah, 2017). The school cycle is characterized by the child's attainment of a new level of development by the end of which the child gains a new level of development.

The period of a child's enrollment in school is characterized by changes and development. The physical, psychological, social, and mental complexes that are rapidly changing and leading to undesirable behaviors are often overlooked (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2018). Of course, the social, family, and school environments play an important role in shaping child's personality, as they provide child with the opportunity to adapt to the changing environment.

Frequent negative behaviors can lead to a variety of problems, especially those with learning difficulties, such as learning disabilities and behavioral problems (Hassan, 2015). Learning difficulties are not unique to each child, but rather are not specific to a particular society, country, or culture. Rather, they are rather a complex and diverse set of problems that exist in a diverse society (Idris, 2017). These difficulties can be described as a generalization that refers to the specific causes that lead to a difference in the level of knowledge or understanding, especially among children (Yari, Rad, Rahimi & Fathi, 2013). Even if the learning difficulties are not related to the academic aspect of a child, the behavioral characteristics that these children suffer from affect all their problems, especially during the first stage of their academic life (Idris, 2017).

Therefore, the study aims to provide a comprehensive theoretical overview of the concept of social learning theory andexplore its effectiveness in reducing behavioral problems in children; identify the role played by social learning theory through the strategies and methods it has developed for dealing with this group ofpeople and review the most ; .important methods and techniques used in designing training programs for this group

Problem Statement
Children's behavioral problems have been a major concern for researchers, authors and scientists, including linguists, educators, educational psychologists, pedagogical psychologists, sociologists, and medical practitioners (Idris, 2017). These behavioral problems have negatively and significantly affected children academically, and their effects extend to social and cognitive development.

Despite the significant developments in the field of social learning theory, there are many behavioral problems that arise among children and require solutions. These problems may be academic, familial, or social and require training programs. Therefore, this paper seeks to explore the theoretical and applied foundations that can enhance the effectiveness of these programs under social learning theory.

The current study attempts to explain why teachers need to seek the help of social learning theory in reducing children's behavioral challenges in the society. The chaos and complexity, in addition to the repetition of the most important findings of previous studies, have made it more difficult to arrive at a lasting solution on children's behavioral problems. The importance of educational system in laying foundations for Social Learning Theory and developing programs to reduce and overcome children's behavioral problems, thus creating a learning environment that is conducive for helping children to learn independently without challenges is indeed unarguable. Hence, the study's questions arise:

1- What is social learning theory concept?

2- What are the methods and strategies suitable for children's behavioral problems under the concept of social learning theory?

3- Is there any difference between social learning theory and all other previous programs and strategies being used to reduce, control, manage and eradicate children's behavioral problems?

Objectives of the Study
The current study aims to:

1. Provide a comprehensive theoretical overview of the concept of social learning theory and its relationship to reducing behavioral problems in children.

2. Identify the role played by social learning theory through the strategies and methods it has developed for dealing with this group of children.

3. Review the most important methods and techniques used in designing training programs for this group.

Importance of the Study
The importance of the study stems from the significant role played by social learning theory in diverse fields. Many researchers indicate that training in modeling, influence, and impact contribute to solving behavioral problems. Hence, there is need to design training programs based on scientific foundations and geared toward reducing behavioral problems for this group.

The focus of this study is on highlighting the role of social learning theory in reducing behavioral problems in children. The study demonstrated the importance of training and guidance programs based on social learning theory. It also highlighted the importance of including these programs in school curricula and implementing them regularly to ensure their continued positive impact on children's behavior. Itsimilarly identified the importance of activating the role of the family by providing workshops and training sessions for parents to enable them to support their children in this process.

Limitation of the Study

1- **Objective Limits:** The current study aims to identify the behavioral problems faced by primary school children in Jordan.

2- **Temporal Limits:** The study was conducted during the academic year 2025-2026.

3- **Spatial Limits:** Government primary school children with behavioral problems in the Amman, Jordan.

4- **Human Limits:** The study was restricted to children of government primary schools in the capital of Jordan.

Literature Review

Previous studies represent a cornerstone in understanding the development of scientific research related to the role of social learning theory and behavioral problems. These studies have contributed to providing scientific evidence on the effectiveness of training programs aimed at reducing behavioral problems in children and have established the theoretical and practical foundations for these programs. The following are the most prominent studies:

Zaki, et al. (2022) revealed the effectiveness of this training program in improving the levels and overall score of social responsibility, based on Sayed Othman's (1973) concept. The results of the study showed that the empathy-based training program was effective in improving the levels of social responsibility of participating students and their overall scores.

Rabia, Saada and Sufyan (2023) examined the impact of animated programs on children's social behaviors and habits. It focused on the extent to which these programs influence children's acquisition of immoral and violent behaviors, and whether watching animated programs leads to children's isolation from their families. The results demonstrated the validity of the hypotheses related to the effects of animated programs on children's social behavior. The study emphasized the importance of monitoring the television content children are exposed to, towards achieving a healthy and positive educational environment.

Rehab (2023), evaluated the effectiveness of a counseling program based on Bandura's social learning theory in developing social innovation in children with behavioral problems. The results indicated the program's effectiveness in improving social innovation in this group of children. The counseling program, which relied on Bandura's social learning theory, had a positive and effective impact.

Hamida (2021), revealed the effectiveness of a counseling program based on Bandura's social learning theory in developing social innovation in children with behavioral problems. By understanding the impact of counseling intervention programs on improving children's social behavior, especially those facing behavioral challenges, the study recommended the importance of using counseling programs based on social learning theory to improve children's social behavior, especially those facing behavioral challenges.

After reviewing previous studies related to behavioral problems, it could be observed that most of the available studies that researched on behavioral problem focused on different groups and none of them thoroughly concentrated on children with behavioral problems. In the light of this, there is a significant need to study the real causes of children's behavioral problems, evaluate the factors that contributed to its emergence and highlight recommendations to curb future and unforeseeable crisis through Social Learning Theory. Hence, the above previous studies showcase the role social learning theory could play in reducing children's behavioral problems. A number of educational counselling programs have been developed and used to support some of the variables that were identified in the previous studies.

Theoretical Background
The Concept of Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory emphasizes the inevitable, ongoing interaction of behavior, cognition, and environmental influences. It emphasizes that human behavior and its personal and environmental determinants constitute an intertwined system of reciprocal and interactive influences, with no single entity being given a privileged position. These reciprocal influences are evident through significant behavioral, cognitive aspects, and other internal events that can influence perceptions, actions and external environmental influences (Bandura, 1963).

Human behavior is not merely a reaction to external stimuli; it is also shaped by individual's active interaction with their environment. Humans do not merely respond to stimuli automatically; they use their mental capacities for thinking and creativity to analyze and influence environmental situations. Thus, individual becomes an active participant in shaping their behavior, not merely a passive recipient of environmental factors. Human behavior is not determined solely by direct external reinforcement; rather, it is shaped primarily by individuals' expectations derived from their previous experiences and their assessment of the expected consequences. Human behavior is built on expectations learned from previous experiences, not just immediate reinforcement (Andhra & Walters, 1959).

Behind social learning theory is the idea that individuals can acquire knowledge through observation, imitation, and modeling. This type of learning, known as observational learning, can be used to explain various behaviors, including those that cannot be explained by other theories. A common example is someone learning to cook by watching others cook, or a child learning how to eat properly by watching a sibling or friend do so.

This theory is considered the starting point for studying the influence of environment on human development and learning, and helps explain why some children succeed in certain environments while others fail. Social learning theory can also be used to teach people positive behaviors and to understand how positive role models can be used to encourage desired behaviors and support social change (Al-Sayed, 2021).

The importance of social learning theory stems from its flexibility in explaining differences in individual behavior or learning processes. This means that when a change occurs in an individual's environment, their behavior may change. It also helps guide teachers toward methods and approaches that are appropriate for teaching or learning variables. Therefore, social learning theory consists of four components such as:

1. **Attention:** When we want to learn, we must focus our thoughts and maintain concentration. Any lapse in concentration can negatively impact our ability to benefit from the learning process. It is essential to be alert and active to learn effectively. Our attention is often distracted by other stimuli.
2. **Retention:** The ability to retain memory refers to the ability to recall events and information that are considered important. This ability involves storing memories in the form of images or words, enabling us to use them later as needed. People particularly remember events that leave a lasting impression on them.
3. **Repetition:** After attention and retention, individual translates mental images or linguistic descriptions into actual behavior. Our ability to imitate will improve if we replicate what we

have observed with real actions. People cannot learn anything without practice. On the other hand, imagining ourselves manipulating a behavior increases the chances of repetition.

4- Motivation: A fundamental aspect of the learning process is that models are attractive and we have the ability to imitate them. However, we cannot learn anything unless we are motivated to imitate the behavior. Motivation must be effective. Bandura highlighted the importance of understanding why we are motivated, which lies in past reinforcement and the promise of reinforcement as an illusory reward (Al-Sayed, 2021)..

Internal reinforcement is a type of reward that comes from within, including feelings of pride, satisfaction, and accomplishment. It links learning theories and cognitive development by focusing on internal thoughts and perceptions. Although social learning theories and behavioral theories often overlap, Bandura distinguishes his approach as a "social cognitive approach to learning." When we self-observe, we can identify our behaviors and actions and try to determine whether those behaviors align with the values and standards we consider important. We can evaluate our behavior by comparing it to accepted social norms, such as moral codes and lifestyle. We can also use self-feedback to encourage ourselves when we are satisfied with our performance, or to punish ourselves when we are dissatisfied.

Behavioral Problems
The primary stage represents a crucial phase in shaping a child's personality and future, during which they acquire basic habits, values, and behaviors. This stage is characterized by children being more receptive to behavior modification and skill development programs, despite the prevalence of some behavioral problems such as aggression and stubbornness, and due to their inability to distinguish between normal and abnormal models. This highlights the importance of providing a positive learning environment and sound behavioral models during this critical stage (Abu Waakida, 2020).

Modeling is one of the most powerful learning strategies in terms of impact. Therefore, learning by modeling is a learning method used as an effective procedure for teaching new behaviors, in which the observer is the learner. Modeling is defined as an educational method that involves learning by example and demonstrating desired intelligent behavior to students through learning by example. The teacher demonstrates various steps, behaviors, and cognitive skills to students, accompanied by explanations provided by the teacher (Al-Jaafari, 2018).

Relationship between Social Learning Theory and Behavioral Problems
Social learning theory explains children's behavior through their observation and imitation of behavioral models in their school and social environment. For example, children's direct or indirect exposure to violence may lead to the development of aggressive behavior. This underscores the importance of promoting positive role models and managing the school environment effectively to reduce negative behaviors such as aggression among children (Al-Ubbadi, 2021).

Applications of Social Learning Theory
The role of teachers and peers in facilitating social learning is to guide learners and encourage them to imitate their behaviors to acquire new skills. This type of learning offers diverse opportunities in different settings and at multiple levels, and relies largely on motivation.

Learners need to understand the benefits associated with trying something new to apply skills and acquire lasting knowledge. Therefore, the use of positive reinforcement is an important educational support for them.

Social learning theory can be implemented in the classroom by changing teaching methods, using incentives to foster a desire to learn, strengthening relationships between learners, using peer assessment and mentoring, providing presentations and videos, recognizing and rewarding desired behavior from learners, conducting discussions, implementing role-plays and videos performed by learners, closely monitoring the use of social media, and creating structured work and learning environments.

Children can implement social learning in several ways. When social learning strategies are organically integrated into everyday life, they can be a more efficient way to learn. People who learn best in social settings can also benefit greatly from social learning, which is a bonus for children that want to implement this learning concept within their vicinity.

There are many options for integrating social learning into organizational learning, each requiring varying degrees of effort. Collaborative learning is a way to gain knowledge through the exchange of ideas and interaction. This can include comparing leadership styles, interacting via social media, web-based delivery, sharing social learning, knowledge management to achieve social learning, and sharing educational resources by considering how to build effective training programs using social learning theory, as social learning occurs anywhere through observing and paying attention to colleagues' actions and behaviors.

To use social learning theory as effectively as possible, it is important to encourage people to share their unique perspectives, concepts, stories, and experiences; Establishing a mentoring network within the community; Expanding knowledge by creating an avenue where children can talk and exchange ideas on a wide range of topics, and creating a vision for the future; Promoting early collaboration among individuals, supporting each other, fostering teamwork, and knowledge sharing; Solving problems immediately; Encouraging active listening when responding to inquiries; Mentoring new employees with experienced staff, and Promoting social learning by using Aha! Slides as an educational tool.

Applying social learning theory in the classroom contributes to achieving positive educational outcomes and teaching strategies, where teachers work to improve teaching methods used to maximize learners' benefit, and updating the classroom environment as an influential factor in improving learning outcomes by using Bandura's social learning theory in the classroom and its impact on learner behavior.

Social learning theory can be used to reinforce positive behaviors by providing incentive rewards and disincentives to support learners' commitment to correct behaviors, while punishment can be used to prevent negative behaviors. For example, if a learner is praised for participating in a problem, they are more likely to repeat that behavior. Their peers will mimic that behavior after seeing the positive results they achieve. Conversely, if a learner is punished for a negative behavior, the likelihood of repeating it decreases, as does the likelihood of their peers mimicking the behavior, as they seek to avoid the negative consequences of that behavior.

One of the key elements for successful observational learning is to direct the observer's attention toward understanding the behavior. It is important for the teacher to capture the learners' attention before presenting the information. It is advisable to make lessons engaging and relevant to maintain learners' attention. Storing behaviors in memory is essential for effective learning. Since learners' learning styles vary, we can help them achieve this by incorporating multiple activities during teaching. For example, visual aids can be used to enhance the retention of information during oral lessons.

In classrooms, learners can learn by observing their peers, in addition to observing the teacher. Therefore, participating in group activities has significant benefits. For example, a teacher can pair a high-achieving learner with a weaker learner to improve the weaker learner's performance, or place a sedentary learner with an enthusiastic learner to transfer enthusiasm to the sedentary learner. This strategy is effective and useful and is widely used in today's classrooms.

Educational games encourage interaction among learners and increase their engagement in the learning process. They also contribute to motivating learners to emulate strong and distinguished individuals, which enhances ultimate learning outcomes. A clear example of social learning theory occurs in a middle school classroom, where a teacher takes action to address bullying among students, based on the principles of this theory. The teacher begins by selecting students who demonstrate positive behavior and good conduct, making them role models for the rest of the students. He encourages them to participate in activities that highlight positive behavior and emphasizes the importance of kindness and compassion. The teacher focuses on reinforcing positive behavior by showing appreciation and awarding committed students. At the same time, the teacher punishes students who exhibit negative behaviors, so that the students understand the consequences of those behaviors and how they affect their peers. In a nutshell, students with negative behavior learn through observation, that negative behaviors have negative consequences, while positive behaviors bring benefits and rewards (Allan, 2017).

Training Program to Reduce Behavioral Problems
Applying social learning theory is an effective solution to address behavioral challenges in primary stage. The proposed program focuses on promoting positive behavior by presenting positive behavioral models, reinforcing social values, and developing interactive skills. This contributes to creating a positive school environment and reducing problems such as violence and academic failure (Saleh, Mu'maar & Suhaib, 2022).

Program Objectives
The program aims to:
1. Enhance students' understanding of positive and negative behaviors: The program aims to guide students to understand the difference between positive and negative behaviors and the impact of each on their personal and school lives.
2. Develop communication skills and constructive social problem-solving: By developing children's abilities to communicate effectively and solve problems constructively, and by activating interactive activities and practical exercises, children learn how to express their ideas clearly and respectfully and how to resolve conflicts in constructive and effective ways.

3. Encourage children to imitate positive role models and apply them in their daily lives: The program seeks to motivate children to adopt positive behaviors by showcasing positive role models from teachers, peers, and positive figures in the community. By guiding and encouraging children to imitate positive behaviors, they can transform positive behaviors into daily habits that improve their quality of life.

4. Enhance cooperation between schools and parents in addressing behavioral problems in children. The program aims to enhance cooperation and communication between schools and parents in identifying and addressing behavioral problems in children.

Training Program Components

1. Educational Sessions:

Designing effective educational sessions is a fundamental part of this program to improve positive behaviors and reduce negative behaviors in children. These sessions aim to provide the knowledge and concepts necessary to understand social learning theory and its practical applications in children's lives.

2. Motivational Educational Programs:

Motivational educational programs are an important part of the proposed program, as they aim to promote positive behaviors in children and encourage them to actively participate in educational activities.

First, a set of tangible and intangible rewards is identified that can motivate children to engage in the desired behaviors. For example, certificates of appreciation are presented to children who demonstrate positive behavior, and special events are organized to honor children with exemplary behavior.

Second, motivational competitions and activities are organized to increase children's positive participation. These competitions and activities include educational games, individual and group challenges, workshops, artistic and sports activities.

3. Workshops to Develop Social Coping Skills:

The workshops aim to develop children's social coping skills and enable them to interact effectively with their social environment. These workshops provide practical training aimed at enhancing communication skills, solving social problems, and applying constructive problem-solving strategies through: Organizing practical training on communication skills and solving social problems; and Presenting real-life scenarios related to social behavior problems that children may encounter in their daily lives, such as peer conflicts, communication problems, and social challenges at school.

4. Individual and Small Group Counseling:

Children with behavioral problems are provided with personalized support through individual sessions with specialists to analyze the causes and develop personalized solutions, in addition to group sessions that enable them to exchange experiences and provide mutual support.

5. Partnership with Parents:

Parental involvement is a fundamental pillar of the program's success, through workshops that enhance positive parenting skills and provide practical tools for dealing with negative behaviors, with the possibility of individual follow-up to support parents at home.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the critical importance of the role of social learning theory in training programs to reduce behavioral problems. It is not only a therapeutic measure, but rather a

long-term investment in improving a child's quality of life by enhancing their abilities and supporting them to achieve academic and social success.

The results from previous studies and practical experiences demonstrate that early intervention can contribute to achieving sustainable positive changes in a child's life. However, these programs must be designed to address each child's individual needs, requiring an individualized approach based on accurate diagnosis and continuous assessment. The theory proposes that behavior is influenced by reinforcement and its consequences, as well as by rational factors such as perception and reasoning. This theory uses behavioral and humanistic terms to explain psychological functions based on the continuous interaction between individual's characteristics and their environment.

Recommendations

From the foregoing, a set of recommendations can be made to help reduce behavioral problems in children.

- The researchers recommend intensifying efforts to implement training programs based on empathy values in schools to reduce behavioral problems and promote social responsibility in children. They also emphasize the importance of including these programs in school curricula and implementing them regularly to ensure their continued positive impact on children's behavior.
- The researchers recommended the adoption of more guidance programs based on Bandura's social learning theory in schools and educational institutions, and to intensify interventions to promote social innovation in children with behavioral problems. Future studies are also recommended to understand the long-term effects of these programs and their impact on children's social development.
- The role of family in providing workshops and training sessions for parents to enable them to support their children is also activated.

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