

TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS TO CHILDREN THROUGH PUPPETRY (CASE STUDY OF INSTITUTE FOR THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS, FOUMAN, IRAN, 2014)

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ABSTRACT

No one can deny the influence of a good show particularly a puppet show on children. When a word, advice, or recommendation is expressed indirectly by a puppet, children accept it better. With a strong sense of responsibility, sagacious educators seek more successful effective pedagogical methods for these children. Such training would create the conditions to have children having understanding, knowledge and confidence. The purpose of this study is to teach social skills to children through puppet show. This is an experimental study using a pretest-posttest with control group and regarding the goal is an applied study. The participants of this study include female members (young and adult) of Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, Fouman branch. To confirm or reject the hypotheses, the collected data were analyzed by the analysis of covariance through SPSS software. The results of this study revealed that the mean scores of the experimental group show a significant difference before and after the treatment. Having interviewed the participants' parents, the findings of the research were also confirmed. Training social skills including self-awareness, communication, interpersonal relationships, companionship and empathy to children through puppet show were also confirmed in this study.

Keywords: *Puppet Show, Social Skills, Self-Awareness, Interpersonal Relationships, Companionship and Empathy*

INTRODUCTION

Since, today, children have more interaction than ever before, considering social skills are a necessity. A preventive program is regarded globally, is teaching social skills to children. The plasticity of the brain in this period gives them readiness to accept any kind of impact (Zadeh, 2014). In the case of education or pedagogy, lots of efforts have been undertaken in training at an early age. Children's personalities change more and are more flexible than adults', and are easily changed by the experience of the show. Puppet show has the potential solely to afford and influence children deeply and fundamentally and provide them a healthy, purposeful and joyful life. Hence, using drama and theater in education, can positively change and improve these children (Vafadary *et al.*, 2009). The impact of puppet show on children' is amazing, because it allows the children to recognize his strength and ability also plays an important role in connecting with the community. It serves as a means to express self-assertiveness, physical balance, and ability to communicate with others and help them contribute to the psychological development. Due to the vast world of imagination for children and adolescents, show in children and adolescents is performed with a variety of styles. Having created a new and innovative outlook to this art, the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults has been an important and pioneering organization in this regard (Wood, 2007). Puppet show is the strongly-formed game with high capabilities that can make a person easily adapt him with different features and situations. Children easily adjust them to the animals or puppet and their challenges. Therefore, their contribution can be achieved through appropriate strategies to problem solving, thinking and recommendations by children. The puppet show, is a real life lesson, when the puppet show is finished, the child is able to apply it in his/her life. Therefore, given the importance of puppet show on effective communication and social skills, author intends to embark on this realm.

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Statement of the Problem

Basically, humans are social creatures and are constantly interacting with other people, finding that being in a group or living in an ever interacting community help him overcome the problems and challenges. Thus, the significance and necessity of training the social skills come into being. Since the cause of lots of resentment, anxiety and anger emanate from our relationships with others; it seems that training social skills may set grounds for life satisfaction. Genius and prominent people in every society, as leaders, scientists, managers and future leaders of society should be highly social and have communication skills in order that they can be able to communicate easily with others and can achieve their goals. Social skills are a set of capabilities that help people to succeed in the social life. To have a successful life, every individual in the society needs personal skills and other skills called social skills. Due to the vast world of imagination for children and adolescents, show in children and adolescents is performed with a variety of styles. An effective means to humanize the social environment, show is the easiest and simplest way to enter the world of animal characters and imagination and teaching concepts such as truth, ugly, lying, laziness, etc (Wiulla, 2010). Children's theater has all factors to prepare children for the future, to start and maintain a healthy social life. Unfortunately, this domain has not been seriously and deeply addressed in Iran. In this study, puppetry has been considered as an independent variable and social skill as the dependent variable. Specifically, this study intends to investigate social skills training to children through the Children's Puppet Show (young and adult) at the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, Fouman, Guilan province. It is intended to examine the positive impact of using puppet show on children social skills.

Significance of the Study

This study is of great significance and importance, since it tackles social skills training to children through puppet show. The rationale to select children as the target population, they are learning their first experience of life. It is imperative to familiarize children with social skills in an appropriate manner, to pave the way to flourish. Adolescents who acquire negative social behavior over time, even up to adulthood, are incapable of attracting the attention of others. On the other hand, such studies can be theoretically important and prioritized because the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults is one the organizations intends to enhance these skills. These artistic and cultural organizations or foundations are Children's Forum. A large number of children are members of these organizations or foundations. The role of social skills in people's lives is obvious for everyone. All forms of theater in children and adolescents can be effective in children's attitude to recognize their own. The first step in the pedagogy is of self- understanding. A knowledgeable instructor knows how to use the puppet show to instigate sympathy in children, and consequently to prepare them for all good events in the world. The key point is to know, practice, and apply these skills. Practically, this study has many benefits. This study can investigate teaching social skills to children through puppet show. This research could lead to ways and strategies to help children pedagogically. With a wisely and sagacious view, it can help children flourish their latent talents, if implements fully through, corroboration and emphasis for children as social capitals, can assist managers and policy makers for a better decision-making for children's social skills training.

Review of the Literature

Puppet Show: The art of puppet theater play has been common for thousands of years. In primary societies, puppets were used for religious purposes. Puppet show is a series of activities which the trainer shares with other members by using the tools, based on a text-based play providing appropriate context to acquire cultural, educational and pedagogical concepts and also learning and creativity. Puppet play is an artistic endeavor, in which the actors also learn teamwork and interpersonal skills through puppets communicate with the audience or spectators, and express his/her aims (Shikhnasr, 2009).

Children's Play and Theatre: Children's theater and play due to the extensive and creative spirit and imagination of the children is the theatre performed in harmony with children's themes and in accordance with specific criteria. To foster and promote children's abilities and capabilities and to optimize their behavior continually, theatre and play are viewed as the strongest forms of art by pedagogical experts.

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Due to the close relationship with children's imagination and childhood tales and stories (literature) the puppet theater play very effective role in children' pedagogy (Halimi, 2006). Sympathy is also the important features of children's theater. Children mirror themselves in the position of characters in theater. As an inevitable impact of theatre on children, assimilation is the initial stage of this procedure.

Social skills: social skills are a set of capabilities which help individuals succeed in their social life. To have a successful life, every individual in the society needs personal skills and other skills called social skills. To adjust themselves to the society they live, children should learn social skills.

Social skills can be trained by short movies, puppet show, teamwork activities and giving feedback in these activities. By social skills training, it means using a variety of interpersonal skills that can lead to management control and confirmation of communicative behaviors.

Learning these skills can be effective in human relationships with others. Among these skills are the skills of empathy, self-awareness and self-control in interpersonal relationships that can be emerged in different social situations (Zargar *et al.*, 2014).

Background of the Study

Hashemi *et al.*, (2014) did a study entitled “the effect puppet show on reducing aggression in female students”. On a pretest-posttest study with control group, 50 girls randomly selected in one of the elementary schools in Tehran.

There was a significant difference between mean scores of experimental and control groups after the puppet show. The difference between the mean scores denotes the effect of puppet show on reducing aggression in children.

In an experimental pretest-posttest with control group Zargar (2014) did a Study entitled "comparison the effect of group teaching social skills on reducing anxiety among students". The population size of the study included undergraduate students at Chamran University.

Ten percents of students were selected by cluster sampling, 45 people having a high score on the Social Anxiety Questionnaire were selected. Results indicated in comparison to control group, social skills training group is effective in reducing social anxiety. In a study, Martin *et al.*, (2009) examined the perception of emotions in preschool children who clinically suffered from emotional and behavioral problems by using puppet show. The results were indicative of reducing negative symptoms and behavioral problems in children. In a study, entitled” play as a means to improve social interaction of mentally retarded and normal students” Miller *et al.*, (1993) argued that in the context of theatre and play a positive social interactions occur that theatre corroborate efficacy, self-confidence, and socialization.

Objectives of the Study

The overall goal of this research: Teaching social skills to children through puppet show on girls at the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults was done by examining the behavior of the participants before and after the show. To confirm the findings through interviews with parents and community members about the behavior of their members in acquiring skills were also analyzed.

Specific Objectives

1. The effect of Puppet Theater in interpersonal relations
2. The effect of the puppet show solidarity and empathy
3. The effect of self-awareness puppet show

Research Hypotheses

The main hypothesis:

There is a significant relationship between puppet show and social skills training in children.

Secondary hypothesis:

- 1 – There is a significant relationship between the puppet show and its impact on individual members and interpersonal relationship.
2. There is a significant relationship between the puppet show and its impact on empathy and companionship of the members.

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3- There is a significant relationship between the puppet show and its impact on self-awareness the members.

Conceptual Model

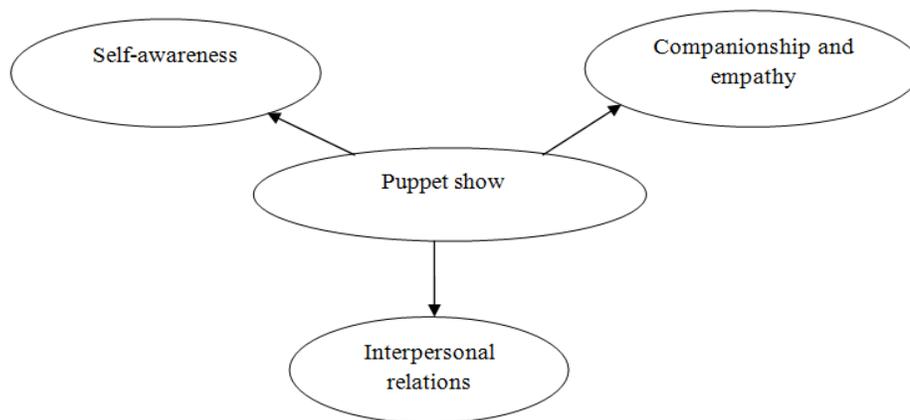


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the research

Methods of Teaching Social Skills

Method of role play: In this way, under the guidance of instructor, children perform the play (show) in the real or imaginary situations.

Pattern Practicing Method: This method is based on imitation. Therefore, it should be noted that the model or pattern is chosen to train should be in accordance with them in terms of age, socio-economical status, that pattern should children’s favorite and also respectful for children (Ghavam, 1995).

Companionship and Empathy: A social skills, empathy (Empathy) through which a person can put himself in the position of others is influenced by emotions; identify his/her feelings ranging from sadness or joy and analyze their feelings. Getting together, working together are all forms of empathy and companionship. The prerequisite to cooperation, collaboration and synergy is anticipating the collective excitement, tension and eventual control of emotions. Various studies have shown that culprits or criminals either have not acquired the ability to empathize with others or conceive it weakly (Seif, 1993). Empathy is to understand others; except that the listener should try to understand other people’s feelings. Empathy provides the ability to an individual to establish a real connection with his friends. Empathy improves social relations and creates a supportive and receptive behavior towards other humans. This skill makes them love and respect for others; draw their attention and love others and to close each other by creating social relationships (www.hamshahrionline.ir).

Self-Awareness: Self-awareness or self-discovery is one of the most important skills which children require to be familiar with these concepts in the childhood. When people do not have any accurate understanding of their ego and self-discovery, they face difficulty in the decision-making and on the correct path of life. Identifying weaknesses, talents and what people like or detest it makes people choose their targets correctly. They are attracted to environments that are compatible with their talents and spirits, and refrain to expose and connect with people who divert them from reaching their main targets (Akram nia, 2012).

Communication and Interpersonal Relationships: The ability to communicate effectively with others, to express ones needs and desires and to understand the needs of other people are unanimously skills involved in social life which will also contribute to boosting morale, and create positive and effective interpersonal relationships with other humans. Achieving and using a sense of collaboration, trust in social groups, recognizing the s between interpersonal boundaries and private boundaries identification are vital elements of communication skills, if you are unable to use these skills, you will be vulnerable in

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society. For example, a teenager who acquired no- telling skills and know how to maintain personal boundaries along with skills independence, tends to decline the proposition of smoking or drugs by the peer groups without endangering the interpersonal relations (Kianian, 2009).

Method of the Study

In terms of purpose, this is an applied study aiming to provide guidance on effective teaching of social skills to children through puppet show. In terms of methodology and procedure this is an experimental study with a pretest-posttest control group.

Participants

The participants of this study include the female members of youth and adults at the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, Fouman, Guilan province in 2104.

Sample and the Sample Size

Due to access to all the members in Fouman, the data collected from the census method. This is an experimental pretest-posttest study with control group. In order to collect data, 42 questionnaires were given to members of social skills. Of the 42 questionnaires 28 questionnaires were related to adults and 14 of the questionnaires youth. Having collected the questionnaires, 10 members who had higher scores on the test, were assigned to experimental group and 32 of them were assigned to the control group.

Data Collection Method and Procedure

To collect data for the literature and background of the study library research were used. To collect data from control and experimental group, puppet show was run in seven consecutive sessions (35-45 mins) on experimental group.

To perform a puppet show based on the story by way of a bar, at first three dolls were selected Mama bird, Sefidak, and siahak. One story was selected for each. First Story: Joining other activities and ongoing activities. Second story: calm tone of indignation. Third story: turning down (declining) requests from others in a polite manner. Fourth story: leaving the scene. Fifth story: ignoring the behavior of others. Sixth Story: The use of combined sentences. Seventh story: remembering the usefulness and benefits of good behaviors (Seidi, 2006). At the end, the members asked questions and they were asked to talk about similar experiences. During the show, it was found that kids matched perfectly with the characters and the story mirroring them in the light of characters. When they were asked about similar situations that happened to them, they mistakenly used Sefidak and Siahak in replace of their brothers and sisters. The post-test Siahak was performed 15 days after the last session. Data were analyzed by analysis of covariance. Due to The comparison of data in experimental, their parents were also asked the members sill improvement.

The Reliability and Validity of the Research

As a form of validity, content validity is one of the forms of validity in questionnaire, guarantees that a sufficient number of questions in order to measure the concept or trait were use. The initial assessment and pilot study of questionnaire was conducted by the comments and views of experts and colleagues. The final questionnaire was developed after the use of their comments.

Reliability or trustworthiness, as the measurement tool (questionnaire), deals with to what extent obtained results can be repeated in the similar condition. To determine the reliability, first a questionnaire developed consisting 15 questions, and then it was used as a pre-test. If you are using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, if alpha is 0.7 or more; then it can be said the questionnaire has the appropriate reliability.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha coefficient

International relations	companionship	Self-awareness	Puppet show
90.1	85.8	80.4	89.9

The Results of Descriptive Statistics

- 1) The results revealed that 67 percent of members were adult and 33 percent of them were youth.
- 2) According to results, 19% of the members of were the first grade, 24 percent of them were second grade of elementary schools, 24 percents third-grade, 14 percents of fourth grade, and 19 percents were fifth grade elementary school students .

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3) In term of membership in the Institute, 5.1 percent of the adult had, 82.1 percents had membership for a period less than 1-2years, and 12.8 percents had membership about 3-2 years. 5.1 percent of the adult had, 82.1 percents had membership for a period less than 1-2years, and in the age group of youth, 16.7%, had membership period about 1-2 years, 25% had membership period about 2-3years, and 58.3% of the members had a long-term membership more than 3 years.

The Results of Inferential Statistics

The analysis was conducted by SPSS software. To test the hypotheses, analysis of covariance (ANOVA) was used. The results in table 2 showed that the impact of the pre-test on the dependent variable is not significant ($P > 0.05$). In other words, the results taken from pre- test in the experimental and control groups were not statistically different. The results of this study revealed that the mean scores of the experimental group show a significant difference before and after the treatment. Having interviewed the participants’ parents, the findings of the research were also confirmed. Training social skills including self-awareness, communication, interpersonal relationships, companionship and empathy to children through puppet show were also confirmed in this study.

Table 2: ANCOVA results for the comparison of social skills in both control and experimental groups

Social skills	Group	Pretest		posttest		Amount of probability	
		Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	pretest	Puppet show
Self-awareness	experimental	3.7	1.27	3.7	1.42	0.077	<0.001
	control	4.3	1.37	1.6	1.55		
Companionship	experimental	13.4	1.67	13.1	1.92	0.091	<0.001
	control	12.8	1.80	10.3	2.51		
Communication	experimental	49.3	11.43	48.7	11.77	0.201	<0.001
	control	49.1	9.22	41.9	8.82		
Total skill	experimental	70.1	12.00	69.3	12.82	0.874	<0.001
	control	70.1	8.88	56.4	9.13		

Recommendations

With regard to results taken, it is recommended that:

- 1) More researches should be done on how to use the puppet show in different groups of members at the Institute.
- 2) To establish a committee at the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults composed of experts and specialists in drama and theater education for children and planning to use of Puppet Theater at the Institute.
- 3) Allocating the necessary funds or budget to achieve its preplanned programs developed at the cultural and arts institutes.
- 4) Puppet show and specialized training courses for interested trainers of the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults and encouraging youth and adults to use of these courses.

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- 5) It is recommended that use puppet show to teach (train) other concepts or reduce some child behavior problems in all branches of the Institute.
- 6) The play should be used as a tool for teaching social skills to children.

Limitations of the Study

As an inevitable constituent of any study, every researcher in the course of data collection, encountered with the difficulties and limitations. Unsurprisingly, there were several limitations in study as follow:

- 1) Due to the multiplicity of social skills, just three variables have been targeted.
- 2) This study is limited to members of girls and just two age groups, adult and youth. Hence, care must be taken to generalize the result of this study.
- 3) It was not possible to control some variables, such as family members and the motivation of members.

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