

SOCIAL SKILLS: THEIR IMPACT ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND OTHER ASPECTS OF LIFE

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Abstract Although the concept of social skills is not very new, many scholars have just started to realize their importance life and have begun to study their role in the different aspects of life of an individual. This paper presents an overview of the importance of social skills in academic achievement and in every stage of life. Social skills are important because they allow an individual to interact in a well acceptable way in the society. This enhances the quality of life by making relationships very strong and close, which in turn leads to sound psychological and physical health, that helps children in better adjustments in schools and in their peer groups. Social skills are very necessary for good professional life too. Strong social skills help in facilitating interpersonal interactions which lead to efficient job outcomes. Social skills are the basic need of an individual's personality traits and determine his/her success in life to a large extent.

Key Words: Social Skills, Academic Achievement, Success, Behaviour.

Introduction:

We live in the society. A child is born in a society and also grows up in the society. People initially learn something independently and eventually, that learning is modified through communicating with the other members of the society. The goals and achievements of a person's life are affected by his behaviour in the society. How a person behaves with others in the society depends on his social development. Social development depends on factors such as peer relations, good social adjustment with others, emotional intelligence, family structure, social skills, etc. (Namka, 2009). Out of these factors, social skills form the backbone of an individual's success. Social skills help in holding conversations with others, starting and maintaining relationships and friendships. Basically Social skills are behaviors that promote positive interaction with others (Lynch and Simpson 2010). A person's good behaviour helps in establishing good relations with others, which in turn helps him in acquiring new experiences and developing his true potentials to improve his performance in various fields. Good social skills are very important for an individual for successful functioning in life, by learning these skills a person comes to know how to make good decisions, good choices and how to behave in diverse situations. Social skills help to prepare young people to be mature and succeed in their adult roles with the family, workplace and community. Social skills help people in their academic, personal and future professional activities and to adjust in their social life.

What are Social Skills?

Socialization means becoming a member of the society and learning the rules, attitudes and beliefs of the society. Social rules and regulations are created, communicated and changed in verbal and nonverbal ways. To know, the proper way of following these rules is known as social skills. A child develops such qualities of behavior by observing people and the environment around him/her. It is very easy for the

individual who has adequate social skills to establish and maintain relationships in his / her life (Kabasakal and Çelik, 2010). Social skills are the skills facilitating interaction and communication with the society i.e. the people of the society through the use of appropriate language, eye contact, and relevant questions. Social skills have an important role in establishing and maintaining good relationships with other people and obeying social rules. Basically, social skills are the components of behaviour that help us to adapt across the variety of social settings and enable us to get adjusted in the society. In the words of **Walker (1983)**, social skills are the set of competencies that allow us to initiate and maintain positive social relationships, contribute to peer acceptance and to a satisfactory school adjustment, and allow us to cope effectively with social environment. Good social skills are very important for proper functioning in life. These skills help us to know how to make good decisions in life, what to say to others, how to ask others for help how to maintain good relationships in the society. Social Skills enable an individual to behave in diverse situations. The academic performance, involvement in co-curricular activities, social relationships, behavior, and family relationships are based on the extent to which an individual possess good social skills. [VITAL, vol. 2, no.4, 2007]. www.nasponline.org. According to Zins, Weissbert, Wang, & Walberg, 2004, “Social skills can also be defined within the context of social and emotional learning - recognizing and managing our emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically”. Social skills help in navigating everyday interactions e.g. exchanging information, holding conversation, making new friends, maintaining the friendship, asking for help from others and giving instructions. **Social skills are the abilities to interact and behave socially and effectively, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, making responsible decisions and handling challenging situations confidently with appropriate self control.** An individual having good social skills has the ability to make social choices that strengthen their relationships with others and facilitate success in their life. Social skills are necessary for an individual to behave in the society according to their culture. There are many important social skills for an individual to acquire for successful functioning in life; these can be organized into particular areas to make it easier to understand them. These are known as components of social skills e.g. conversation skills (verbal and non-verbal), relationship skills, self control and mannerisms.

- **Conversation skills-** To adjust in the society we need to interact with others. With the help of conversation skills we are able to communicate with others in appropriate ways according to our culture and situations. Without good conversation skills there can't be effective communication. A message can be converted into an error and can be misinterpreted. This can lead to misunderstanding and frustration. Conversation skills are the abilities to express oneself in verbal and nonverbal ways. We are able to express our desires, needs and opinions etc. effectively with good conversation skills. Good conversations skills are a set of keys to get success in life and work and to maintain good relationships.
- **Relationship skills-** Relationship skills constitute the behaviour that is performed by an individual for the sake of maintaining healthy relationship with others. An individual should care about needs and feelings of the other people for maintaining successful and positive relations with others. Relationship skills help to establish rewarding, healthy and positive relations with the people we interact with. These relationships skills constitute the skills of preserving and managing relations, resolving conflicts, seeking help at needed time and co-operation. All these are important to maintain friendly relations.
- **Self control** – Self control is the ability in the individuals to control the emotions in the particular situation and acting in appropriate ways. Self control helps to check levels of stress by changing the environment and responding to the emotions like anger, sadness etc. appropriately. The person

having self control is able to communicate effectively with others and make positive and healthy relationships in the society.

- **Mannerism-** Mannerism means acting appropriately in socially acceptable ways and to display respect and consideration for others. Good manners help to maintain better relationships with others. Everybody wants to have relationship with the person having good manners. This includes table etiquettes, basic etiquettes etc. Examples of such skills are: being polite and showing respect to the others and following the general rules while behaving.

Being a social person, an individual needs to interact and to maintain positive and healthy relationships with other members of the society. To interact or communicate properly, he needs good conversation skills i.e. verbal and non verbal. For the sake of maintaining positive and healthy relationship an individual should be good mannered and should have good self control over his emotions and stress levels. The person having these abilities can establish good relationships and is able to react positively even in the challenging situations.

Impact of Social Skills on academic achievement and adjustment in schools:

The process of Education takes place in the society. Learning is ultimately a social process (Bandura, 1986; Dewey, 1916; Vygotsky, 1978). People initially learn something independently and eventually that learning is modified through interaction with others. It is very important for a child to have good social skills to learn meaningfully while interacting with the members of the society. Social skills are important for preparing young people (children) to mature and succeed in their adult roles within the family, workplace and community (Ten Dam & Volman, 2007).

Social development is represented best after birth. The process of social consciousness begins when the child realizes the necessity of his / her mother to satisfy all the needs. At age 3 to 4 months the baby responds to environmental factors and tries to communicate with pleasant emotions like joy and laughter. In the second year child expresses his / her feelings and show desires easily to be able to develop independence and self reliance (Jalali, 2005). The pre-school years are considered as the sensitive period for children's social development. During this period young brains develop rapidly and the children are having their first social interactions outside of the home (Sigelman & Rider, 2006). The most important factor in successful social development of the child is a strong and healthy relationship between home and school (Brooks-Gunn, et al. 2000), for the sake of maintaining such relationships they need to have good social skills and this is the perfect time to teach the little children good social skills. As the children grow up they have to face a new environment at school and have new experiences with new peer groups, teachers and other persons at school or neighborhood. They need to adjust with everybody. Social skills are the ability of establishing healthy and effective communication with other people (Bacanli, 1999; Kabasakal and Çelik, 2010; Segrin, 2001). Good social skills enable them to get adjusted with the challenging situations in life.

How a child behaves in the society affects his educational goals and ultimately his school achievement too. His good behaviour helps in establishing good relations with others, which in turn help him in acquiring new experiences and developing his true potentials to improve his school achievement. Social skills help children to adjust in their social life as well as get succeed in their academic activities. Children's school performance behaviour and involvement in co-curricular activities are influenced by the extent to which they possess good social skills. (Walker 1983) defines social skills as "a set of competencies that contribute to peer acceptance and to a satisfactory school adjustment". Social skills help in navigating everyday interactions e.g. exchanging information, holding conversation, making new friends, maintaining the friendship, asking for help from others and giving instructions. The child having

good social skills behaves properly in his peer group and easily gets adjusted in the group, which helps him in satisfactory school adjustment and improving his school achievement. Possessing good social skills helps a child not only to relate well with the peer groups but also in maintaining good relationships with the teachers. A child having good social skills can cope effectively with the social environment as well as the school environment. Children's school performance, behaviour, social and family relationships and involvement in co-curricular activities are influenced by the extent to which they possess good social skills.

Social skills help in developing caring and concern for others, taking responsible decisions and effectively handling challenging situations. (Zins, Weissbert, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Possessing good social skills helps an individual child not only to relate well with the peer groups but also in maintaining good relationships with the teachers. A child having good social skills can cope effectively with the social environment as well as the school environment. "The development of social skills lays a critical foundation for later academic achievement as well as work-related skills" (McClelland & Morrison, 2003). Social skills encourage positive interactions and avoid negative interactions with others. (Flowers, 2008).

Some researchers conducted studies to see the effect of social skills on academic achievement and school adjustment. **Gilliam & Shahar (2006)** conducted a study on Behavior problems as meaningful predictors (during the preschool years) of continued behavior problems i.e. poor peer standing, and academic difficulties during Kindergarten. The research has documented that children without adequate social skills are at risk to face difficulties as peer rejection, behaviour problems, and poor academic achievement. (**Masten et al., 2005**) found that interpersonal skills are important for peer acceptance and social adjustment throughout childhood and adolescence. (**Joseph A. Durlak, 2011**) reported in "Study Finds Social-Skills Teaching Boosts Academics" that students who took part in social and emotional learning of SEL program improved in grades and standardized test. On the basis of the review of the researches mentioned above it can be concluded that Social Skills play an important role in the academic achievement and adjustment in school among children.

Importance of Social Skills in other aspects of life

Social skills are important for human beings throughout their life because they allow them to understand others and to be understood by others in a right way. Social skills help people to express their positive and negative feelings in interpersonal situations (Herson & Bellack, 1977). Social skills play an important role in every situation whether it may be for the children in the age of their schooling or for the adults in their career.

Social skills help children to adjust well with their peer group and to maintain good relationships with teachers and other adult members of the society. Social skills play a very important role in adolescents also. Adolescence is the period in which transition from childhood to adulthood takes place. Rapid physiological and psychological changes occur in the children in this stage. Now, children begin to mature and they extend their relationships beyond their family. They face identity crises in this age and are in the need to make their own identity. They need to have better social skills to develop good relationships and make their identity. Social skills help people to succeed in their personal, academic, social and future professional activities (Elias et al. (1997).

After adolescence period it is the time to be independent for an adult. Social skills form an important factor of employee success (Beheshtifar and Noroy, 2013), so an individual also needs to have good social skills to be successful in his professional life. Strong social skills help in facilitating interpersonal

interactions which lead to efficient job outcomes. Social skills allow an individual to face every situation confidently without losing social reinforcement. Social skill enhances people's performance (Hogan & Shelton, 1998). Basically for having good performance in one's professional life, a person should have good social skills which include what is said by an individual during the conversation and how it is said. While communicating with others a firm and good voice tone, good expressions on face, body language, eye contact etc play an important role and all these qualities are related with having good social skills. People who are sociable early in life are more likely to get the jobs (Borghans, Weel and Weinberg, 2006).

Social skills tend to enhance personal development, better understanding, productivity, employability and career success. Everybody wants to have good, strong and close relationships in their life; it increases quality of their life. Social skills are the basic need of good relationships and better understandings. This leads to their good psychological and physical health. If a person is capable of establishing and maintaining positive and healthy relationships with others, he is often free from psychological disorders like depression, anxiety, loneliness, frustration and his self identity, self esteem and autonomy start to increase (Johnsons and Johansons, 1999).

Conclusion:

Since we live in the society, it is very essential for a person to obey all rules and beliefs of the society. Social skills, as the components of behavior, allow us to interact with others and maintain healthy relationships in the society. Social skills are the abilities to interact and behave socially and effectively, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, making responsible decisions and handling challenging situations confidently with appropriate self control. In each stage of life an individual needs to have good social skills to behave in diverse situations for better adjustment. A child having good social skills is able to perform better in academic achievement in school, behave positively and establish and maintain relationships with others effectively. As he is able to seek the cooperation of others, he can handle every situation confidently. Social skills help child to attain his educational goals and also enable a person to be a responsible member of the society. Social skills help an individual to enhance academic achievement, personal development, better understanding, productivity, employability and career success.

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