

Research on the Influence of Consistency of Parents' Education on Children's Social Development

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of parental education consistency on the social development of children from the vantage points of social cognition, social emotion, and social conduct. Based on these perspectives, it suggests effective targeting strategies, such as apt allocation of parental familial roles, implementing a democratic approach to family upbringing, emphasizing the nurturing method of education explicitly and tacitly, and adhering to strict and orderly familial regulations and laws. The consistency of parental education stands as a crucial factor that impacts the social development of offspring.

Keywords

PArental education consistency; Social development; Children's social behavior.

1. Introduction

Early childhood represents a critical phase of physical and mental transformation in an individual's life-long development. The rearing style employed by parents significantly shapes and molds the formation and development of a child's personality. In many facets such as speech, emotion, and behavior, young children engage and interact with their parents. Unconsciously, parents' expectations and outlooks influence the growth of their offspring. Children's social development comprises various tasks, including parent-child relationship, peer relationship, gender roles, prosocial behavior, and aggressive behavior, among others. The parenting style employed has a substantial impact on the development of these tasks, particularly regarding the consistency of parental education and its influence on the social development of children. The structure, quality, and speed of knowledge, social emotion, social behavior, social skills, self-concept, willpower, moral quality, and other attributes have a positive impact.

2. Core Concepts

2.1. Consistency of parental education

Chinese scholars have defined the concept of consistency in early childhood education as follows: according to Zhao Yanmei, education consistency pertains to the manner in which parents educate their children. Firstly, specific plans must be formulated and adhered to consistently, without casual changes. Secondly, elders must not quarrel in front of the children and maintain a warm, harmonious family atmosphere, where there is no favoritism towards one party over another. The education of children must remain consistent, and it is impermissible to focus solely on a child while the other is severely criticized [1]. Similarly, Hu Dan believes that consistency in family education involves family members working towards the same goals, attitudes, methods, and steps in the education of their children [2]. Finally,

Zheng Fuming argues that consistency in education is demonstrated through the educators' uniformity in their expectations, attitudes, and methods in educating children [3].

In summary, the author posits that family members who have a role in the education of young children within the family, including parents, grandparents, maternal grandparents, and other relatives, impact and interact with each other, influencing the overall family education process. However, in most families, parents are the primary family educators, and their educational attitudes have a direct impact on the development of young children. Different parenting styles by parents result in varying educational attitudes, which in turn have different effects on young children.

2.2. Children's social development

Chinese scholars have defined the concept of children's social development in the following manner: Lu Leshan elucidated the concept of sociality in the "Encyclopedia of Chinese Preschool Education" as, "Sociality pertains to an individual's ability to comprehend, command, and cultivate relationships with others through social activities. This is based on adherence to the social code of conduct and the further regulation and control of individual behavior [4]." Zhang Minghong explicated in the "Guidelines for Social Education and Activities of Preschool Children" that "Children's social development refers to their interaction with the social environment. They gradually master social norms and acquire social skills, acquaint themselves with social roles, develop social behaviors, enhance social adaptability, and engage in social interactions with others while exhibiting unique personalities. This transformation from a natural person to a social individual results in psychological characteristics that arise during the process of socialization [5]." Meng Qingyan believes that sociality, in a broader sense, refers to the reflection of an individual's behavior and psychological characteristics in social life, and in a narrower sense, sociality is a reflection of human physiological characteristics that are based on the ability to adapt to social life [6].

In conclusion, the author believes that "social development" encompasses two aspects: the process of acquiring the commonality of social members and the process of forming one's own personality. Three conditions should be met for children's social development, namely physiological conditions, social conditions, and social practice. The physiological conditions, which include the brain and other nerve centers, play a crucial role in the social development of young children. Social conditions encompass environmental factors such as resources, population, customs, economy, family, school, community, and partner groups. Social practice is an individual's internal and dynamic social factors. Individuals can only achieve the process of socialization through complete interaction with the social environment, participation in social practice activities, and engaging in social interactions [7].

3. The Impact of Parental Education Consistency on Children's Social Development

3.1. The impact on children's social cognition

There are numerous implications concerning social cognition. According to Flavel and Miller, social cognition regards individuals and human events as objects, focusing on people and their actions. Crucek and Linton propose that social cognition involves contemplating "psychological events and social relationships that happen to others and themselves." Some scholars in my country contend that social cognition pertains to the "recognition of other people's expressions, comprehension of their personalities, understanding of the relationships between individuals, awareness of the reasons for people's actions, and the process of making speculations and judgments on the psychological states, behavioral motivations, and wills of others." The author posits that the process of social cognition consists of two parts, with one referring to an

individual's cognition via past experience and relevant clues, and the other referring to cognition via thinking activities, including the processing of information.

The impact of the consistency of parental education on children's social cognition is manifested in various aspects. The influence of parents on children's social cognition is not only reflected in individual parents but also in both parents. Fathers possess extensive knowledge about nature and society, and through communication with them, children can learn extensively about nature, experience its infinite charm, improve their hands-on abilities, and develop their thirst for knowledge and curiosity. Children learn about moral behavior from their mothers, who can teach them basic moral qualities and shape their healthy spiritual character. Additionally, mothers can also teach children essential life skills, such as dressing and eating, which play a crucial role in children's daily life activities. Since fathers and mothers possess different personalities and abilities, the cognitions that children acquire from them are also different. Therefore, the cooperation between parents regarding children's social cognition is particularly crucial. When educating children, parents should prioritize the cultivation of their morality and subsequently enhance their scientific and cultural knowledge. Parents should form a tacit understanding and instill correct values in their children.

3.2. The impact on children's social emotions

Social emotion pertains to the psychological experience and sentiments that accompany the entire social psychological process, representing a unique facet of social psychology. In the field of understanding human behavior, emotion serves as the guide of cognition. Human emotions manifest externally, taking the form of visible expressions, while the emotional world lies behind these expressions. Social emotion, as defined by foreign scholars, encompasses emotional regulation and control, sensitivity, interpersonal relationships, and sympathy, among others [8]. According to the "Age and Developmental Progression: Social Emotion" (ASQ: SE) scale, social emotion consists of seven elements: self-regulation, compliance, communication, adaptability, self-discipline, affection, and interpersonal skills. Hence, it is evident that social-emotional competence plays a crucial role in regulating one's emotions, controlling their behavior, and engaging in effective communication with others. Social-emotional competence develops through individuals' interactions with society.

The impact of parental education consistency on children's social emotions manifests in various ways. Children enter the social environment from birth, beginning the process of socialization. Infants typically determine their reactions and behaviors based on their caregivers' expressions when they are 8 months old. This behavior is called emotional social referencing, which gradually develops during the later stages of growth. Therefore, both parents must monitor their emotional performance and interactions with their children closely. Fathers are usually courageous, decisive, enthusiastic, outgoing, and generous. Children interacting with their fathers inadvertently learn and imitate their behaviors. Fathers, as children's mentors, require their children to learn from them according to their wishes. On the other hand, mothers are typically emotionally delicate and careful and play an integral role in their young children's emotions and relationships. Since young children are influenced by their parents in various ways, parents must cooperate and employ the same parenting strategies to teach their children correct values and healthy personality traits. Parents must adopt appropriate educational methods based on their children's personalities. While appropriate kindness and strictness are beneficial, being too lenient or too strict can result in negative personality traits and bad habits. Therefore, when educating children, parents must take a united stance and avoid being too strict or too lenient, striving to compensate and cooperate with each other to provide the most favorable family education for their children.

3.3. The impact on children's social behavior

The "Dictionary of Psychology" defines social behavior as an individual's explicit or implicit response to social stimuli, which is manifested in various ways such as facial expressions, gestures, speech, tone, and activities. Pang Lijuan, a Chinese scholar, regards social behavior as people's attitudes, language, and behavioral responses towards others or events during social interaction. Social behavior encompasses three aspects: prosocial behavior, aggressive behavior, and social withdrawal behavior. Children's social behavior is exhibited differently across these aspects. Prosocial behavior in children is characterized by their willingness to help others and show humility, comfort, and generosity. On the other hand, aggressive behavior pertains to harmful or non-harmful actions towards others or events, and may include attack, resistance, or competition. Finally, social withdrawal behavior denotes a child's inability or unwillingness to communicate with peers, often exhibited through fear, tension, or panic.

Parental education consistency has far-reaching effects on children's social behavior. When fathers regularly participate in young children's play and daily activities, they can broaden their social horizons and expand their social skills. By playing a unique educational role in young children's games, fathers can influence their social interests and needs, and cultivate a sense of awareness of rules and behaviors, thus aiding the accumulation of social experience and skills in children. Mothers, on the other hand, largely influence children's social behavior in the moral aspect, such as promoting kindness and the value of sharing. Throughout the child's development, parents should remain mindful of their words and actions, and reach a consensus on their approach to educating their children, helping them to learn interpersonal relationships based on mutual aid and understanding.

4. Four Suggestions for Maintaining the Consistency of Parents' Education

4.1. Positioning the proper role of parents in the family

The family roles assumed by fathers have manifold impacts on young children. Fathers are the "paragons" and exemplars of children's development. They should take on the mantle of family leadership, establish and uphold a congenial family atmosphere, carve out their own reputation, and set correct fundamental principles for young children to learn responsibility for their actions. Additionally, fathers must attend to the well-being of mothers, foster stable familial relationships, and provide understanding and support. Fathers should control their emotions adroitly, maintain a robust and optimistic mental outlook, and cultivate a salubrious intellectual and ethical environment for young children, replete with a progressive spirit and a cordial and affable attitude toward life. Fathers must foster a democratic and equal relationship with young children, demonstrate tolerance toward them, and eschew any haughtiness that would deter them from approaching and confiding in him.

The family roles of mothers have sundry effects on young children. Mothers are the compass that guides children in their endeavors. They spend the most time with their children, and their actions and words become the objects of emulation for young children. Mothers must instruct children in essential life skills, focus on nurturing a healthy personality in them, and cultivate their moral character. Mothers can introduce children to housework from elementary school age, gradually increasing the workload as the children grow older, so that they can acquire rudimentary life skills through this process. In matters of morality, mothers should lead by example, instilling correct behavior through their own actions and promptly correcting misbehavior by the children. In short, we should utilize mothers' special brand of tolerance, sagacity, and charm to cultivate children's truthful personalities, kindness, humility, gentleness, and industry, enabling them to move from a natural state to one of civilization.

The role orientation of both parents in the family has diverse impacts on young children. Parents' influence on their children is constant. Parents should accurately control their role

assignment, collaborate with each other, and work together to find effective educational methods that are suitable for young children and guide them to grow up healthily. Parents should treat situations in the same manner. For example, if the child is caught stealing, the parents should give a unified education, and the father cannot merely instruct while the mother shields the child. Parents should take note of the child's mistakes and cooperate well in rectifying them.

4.2. Create a democratic family parenting style

Parents ought to maintain a sanguine, jocund, and magnanimous outlook towards life. Professor Martin Seligman, the founding father of positive psychology, ardently espoused "optimism" when expatiating on a person's character traits. In his estimation, modern life is frenetic and nerve-racking, engendering a "prevailing pessimism". That is precisely why optimism is all the more crucial. It is an emotional regulator, and it can assist individuals in sustaining a positive disposition in a fast-paced life. The attitudes, values, and sense of responsibility that parents uphold towards life, will all indelibly impact their children's attitudes towards life. A sanguine outlook imbues children with positive energy, whereas a morose perspective on life can sap their confidence. The optimism of parents can inculcate an enterprising and sanguine outlook in children towards life. Parents who conscientiously raise their children will not transmit negativity in life and work to their children. In summary, the optimistic and magnanimous outlook of parents nurtures a warm and harmonious family ambiance, which, in turn, assists children in growing up healthily and contentedly.

Parents ought to frequently communicate and converse with their children. When it comes to children's affairs, parents ought to prioritize their children's emotions and actively engage in dialogue with them. A family should show mutual concern for one another in life. Parents ought to set a laudable example. In the event of disagreements, they ought to be mindful of each other's perspective and view problems from the other's standpoint, to empathize. Fathers ought to avoid chauvinism and listen attentively. Mothers ought to avoid indulging their children and adhere to their word. Parents ought to learn to listen when communicating with young children. They ought to patiently listen to their children's views, then express their own opinions based on their children's ideas and promptly correct any misconceptions. Communication between parents and young children cannot be haphazard and improvised. It necessitates the correct timing. Parents ought to correctly discern the differences between their children and themselves in terms of perspectives and not act arbitrarily. They ought to continually reflect on their parenting approaches and discuss with their children the next steps and systems, so that children can acquire valuable social skills.

The family ought to hold regular democratic meetings. Families can regularly convene democratic life meetings, where parents and children can engage in self-criticism and constructive criticism, which is conducive to communication and conflict resolution. In conducting family democratic life meetings, parents ought to pre-plan the agenda, which can encompass four aspects: the family's virtues as perceived by others, the family's contributions, the direction for future efforts towards a harmonious family. Parents can guide their children to diverge their thinking on such topics. Both parents and children ought to speak the truth. If children highlight their parents' shortcomings, parents ought not to get irate. Instead, they should encourage their children's attitude and reflect on themselves in a timely manner. For young children's problems, parents should point them out immediately. If young children exhibit impatience, parents ought to teach them patiently and avoid scolding and indulging. Parents ought to communicate, adopt a consistent attitude towards educating children, and innovate in educating them.

4.3. Rendering the education method of moistening things and silently

Parents' principles and actions have a subtle influence on their children's growth. Currently, family education in society mainly focuses on verbal instruction. However, language instruction requires great skill, and if not handled carefully, it can have counterproductive effects. Our language is suggestive, and the language used in education is no exception. At times, we may unintentionally teach words that may lead to children developing bad habits. For example, parents may say "you will be eaten by your brother if you don't eat" when coaxing their children to eat. This type of language can unconsciously make children develop a disposition that lacks modesty and is stingy. Therefore, it is necessary to be cautious with the language used in education. The most powerful aspect of family education is the ability to subtly influence and nurture things silently, and the core of this ability is the power of leading by example. Unfortunately, many parents today often neglect the most important aspect of leading by example in education. Even when they are aware of the impact of leading by example, they may not be able to change their bad habits. This creates a contradiction in that parents have high expectations for their children but are unable to change themselves. If parents cannot change themselves, how can they ask their children to do so? Parents who wish to raise their children well must lead by example. Therefore, educating young children is primarily self-education for parents.

The overall quality of parents has a subtle influence on their children's growth. The level of education and culture of parents directly affects the success or failure of family education. Parents with a higher educational level are better equipped to scientifically and correctly handle their children's growth and development, from a modern children's perspective. They will be more rational when dealing with problems. The impact on young children cannot be ignored when there is a large difference in cultural quality between parents. The inconsistency in parents' educational attitudes and methods may lead to a "double-faced personality" in young children. Although parents with higher cultural literacy generally provide more scientific education for their children, it is not necessarily true that children's psychological development is healthy. Therefore, parents should enhance their overall quality. To improve their overall quality, parents should improve their moral quality, cultural quality, and physical and mental health. Parents should first firmly believe in the ideals and beliefs of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and establish a correct outlook on life, the world, and values. Faced with the endless wave of social thoughts, parents should learn more about red theory, and use it as a guide to strengthen their values. Secondly, parents should have a strong passion for learning. They should develop a good habit of loving reading and learning. Nowadays, many parents face a lot of daily work pressure and do not pay attention to their children's education, which may lead to their children adopting their parents' way of life and not loving learning. Finally, parents should actively encourage their children to engage in physical exercise. Cultivating children's habit of participating in physical exercise can help improve their physical fitness, promote the coordinated development of children's physical and mental health, and cultivate their strong and brave will, as well as an optimistic and sunny attitude towards life.

4.4. Abide by the well-spoken and orderly family precepts and family rules

Family maxims and household regulations embody the consistency of family upbringing and contain a wealth of wisdom in both daily life and affairs. Family maxims, which are a relatively comprehensive system of family education formulated by the family elders, help children and grandchildren establish correct values. They represent the ideological concepts and codes of conduct for family members, including respect, filial piety, genuine obedience, fostering friendly family relationships, as well as diligence and self-cultivation. Violators of these principles are subject to strict punishment, which imbues these values with strong ethical significance [9].

Establishing family training is essential. In our country's traditional culture, there are numerous family maxims, which embody the core values of a family. For instance, "Confucius's Family Instructions" states that "If you don't learn poetry, you can't speak; if you don't learn rituals, you can't stand." Similarly, "Yan's Family Instructions" states that "Living with good people is like entering a house of orchids, and it will bloom for a long time; living with wicked people is like entering an abalone house, and it will stink after a long time. People in the mountains don't believe that there are fish as big as trees, and people on the sea don't believe that there are trees as big as fish." These maxims not only possess beauty, but also encapsulate the best of virtues, such as respecting and caring for one's parents, cherishing fame and relationships, practicing filial piety, fostering fraternal relationships, and contributing to society. Family maxims are typically presented in strict and concise language. Parents should guide their children to actively learn about the family maxims from our country's excellent traditional culture, while integrating socialist core values, such as prosperity, democracy, civilization, and harmony; freedom, equality, justice, and the rule of law. Parents should remember these requirements, set an example in their hearts, start small, and seek help when necessary.

Formulating house rules is also essential. Our country's regulations are applicable in various aspects. "If you don't learn when you are young, what will you do when you are old?" (love of learning), "Every piece of Chinese food is the result of hard work" (diligence and thrift), "Discipline yourself carefully, and don't take others' kindness lightly" (self-discipline), "Freeze three feet, not a day cold" (persistence), and so on. In the process of formulating house rules, both parents should first have a full discussion and reach a consensus. The formulation of house rules can also involve children appropriately, with the primary purpose of helping children understand the concept of house rules, cultivating children's thinking ability, and creating a democratic family environment. Young children should realize that house rules represent the unanimous educational requirements of their parents and are resolutely implemented and cannot be broken at will. For example, one of the house rules could be that after nine o'clock, children cannot watch TV and must go to bed. Children who understand this house rule will follow it and develop the habit of regular work and rest.

5. Summary

The coherence of parental upbringing plays a pivotal role in the social cognition, social emotion, and social behavior of children. The father's distinct masculine behavioral attitude and gender role model constitute the fundamental basis and impetus for the development of children's gender roles. On the other hand, the mother has an unparalleled and unique role in shaping the child's gender identity. The mother steers the child's moral concepts and social behavior in all aspects, and both parents play an indispensable role. Hence, the roles of parents are complementary, and the absence of one party has a significant impact on the healthy growth of young children. Consistent parental attitude is a prerequisite of the era and the most reliable guarantee for the proper development of children's social abilities. Parents ought to participate in family education collectively, maintain open communication, leverage their individual strengths and characteristics to educate children, and work together to promote the harmonious development of children's mental and physical health.

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