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Review of Major Learning Theories: A Mindtool for Understanding and Applying Theoretical Concepts

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Abstracts

Theoretical works base ideological concepts on human beings as recipients of learned behaviors. Psychoanalysis alone was frail in understanding and changing the individual perception and thought. Without the first theoretical frameworks of psychoanalysis and behaviorism, one would not be able to continue creating ways of intervention and empowerment. Researchers contend that this manifestation comes through desires or past experiences occurring from the social environment. Such analysis leads to further exploration in applying understanding of this conscious thought. Although behavior can sometimes be predicted based on attitudes expressed, opinions expressed do not always result in the expected behavior. Bourdieu's concept of habitus, field, and praxis work to increase understanding of social competence from a philosophical perspective. Theoretical review brings the issue of conformity, obedience, and social influence in retrospect with social competence through learning and relationships. Compliance entails a willingness or unwillingness to accept another's views, which requires the conscious choice in the decision-making practices extending to social influences, which are relative to learning behaviors. Ultimately, if one chooses disconformities, then exclusion is apparent. This review analysis shares the major elements of (a) communication, (b) interaction, (c) play, and (d) imagination as integral forces to the learning process and achieving success. The analysis further indicates that lack of achievement is evident when a child cannot successfully work through the four vital elements; learning is a necessary product for succeeding in social settings. This work explores learning process by examining three major learning theories (social learning, cognitive development, social development) and their tenets.

Keywords: Children, Compliance, Theory, Cognitive development, MKD, ZPD

Introduction

Theorists such as Sigmund Freud viewed the psychological world through the concept of acceptance [1,2]. The interpretation is that the unstable environment has some connection with the unconscious thoughts of the individual. Further, theorists B. F. Skinner and Ivan Pavlov, founders of the behaviorism models, connected learning principles to the scientific laboratory; the focus of the learning was to modify behavior through classical and operant conditioning [3]. Individuals process and learn new acceptable behavior by repeating techniques through structured and manipulated strategies [4]. Also, was the existence that the idea of psychoanalysis alone was frail in understanding and changing the individual perception and thought [5,6]. Without the first theoretical frameworks of psychoanalysis and

behaviorism, one would not be able to continue creating ways of intervention and empowerment. Freud's concept of psycho-analysis of the id, ego, and superego, and Skinner and Pavlov's concept of operant and classical conditioning opened the doors furthering our understanding on the intrinsic elements of learning and competency in social settings or the lack thereof.

Theoretical works later based their ideological concepts on human beings as recipients of learned behaviors. The cognitive processes became complex through the social environments and modeled behavior, based on the interpretation of such responses. Herbert and Forman [3] and McLeod [6] further contend that this manifestation was through the desires or past experiences occurring from the social environment. Such analysis leads to further exploration in applying understanding [1] of this conscious thought. The issue of conformity, obedience, and social influence in retrospect connects with social competence through learning and relationships.

The elements of attitude and behavior exist in relationships, and these elements of relationships depend on the circumstances of internal and external forces [7,8]. Behavior can sometimes be predicted based on attitudes expressed. However, opinions expressed do not always result in the expected behavior. So, what is opinion, and how does the position affect behavior? Bordens et al. [9] shared a definition of attitude developed by Gordon Allport. According to Allport [10], belief comes from neural and mental processes of readiness resulting in behavior. The work of Claiborne & Sirgy [11] on self-image congruence and the research by Neubert & Halbesleben [12] relative to satisfaction and commitment, supports this position. However, research indicates that behavior cannot be concluded solely based on attitude and social influences [13,14]. For example, Petry [14] conducted research focusing on peer interactions with students experiencing disabilities, indicating the level of social interaction and influence depends on the types of disabilities and student self-attitude.

Furthermore, Bordens and Horowitz [9] discussed the components of conformity, obedience, and social influences. Thus, compliance entails a willingness or unwillingness as the case may be, to accept another's views to get along; this requires the conscious choice of the individual [15-17]. These components are factors in the decision-making process and extend to social influences. In further addressing conformity and obedience, social forces are relative to learning behaviors; if one chooses disconformities, then exclusion [15] is apparent. Researchers [18-20] examined the social competence and emotion of children, indicating a connection to learning theories. Building on this knowledge is the inclusion of a reference to learning

pertinent to children in the development of social competence. The analysis also addresses the social learning theory, cognitive theory, and social development theory in addressing a child's success or lack of progress in social settings.

Social Learning: Tenets Described

The tenets of the social learning theory connect the fundamental elements of observation and imitation resulting from modeling and vicarious reinforcement [5,21]. Bandura [22] developed the social learning theory, wherein he describes modeled behavior as conducted by watching others. Additionally, the tenets of social learning theory provide an overview of the contextual impact that competence and mastery have on self and society [23]. Scholars such as Akers and Lee [24] and Deaton [25] declare that social learning results from modeling the behaviors observed by others. Deviant or positive behavior learned through social interaction is a resultant factor through the number of reinforcements obtained over the number of consequences received. Social learning is distinct from classical and operant conditioning in that Bandura placed significance on knowledge and the consciousness rather than on performance alone [5,6]. One of the essential components of this theory is Bandura's self-efficacy, which entails confidence and persistence [7,26]. For example, a child who believes in his or herself their opportunity of success is more significant.

Conversely, a child who lacks confidence will experience more challenges in meeting levels of success. Further, the social learning theory focuses on how children learn from modeling and imitating behaviors of others from reinforcements [27]. Ashford et al. [7] inform that positive persistence and engagement are motivators for succeeding in social settings.

The historical context of the social learning theory has delivered positive results to substantiate the theoretical basis concerning social competence [24]. Collins [28] extends the application of social learning as examined from symbolic interactions. Upon reviewing the gamut of symbolic interactions and its concepts, two points come to mind - philosophical thinking and critical thinking [28]. Rational and critical thinking seem to be benefactors of the educational arena [4]. For example, education does not only comprise of textual knowledge but also knowledge obtained through social learning and social order. Social learning and social order have to deal with the ability to grasp a conceptual framework into many aspects of thinking [29]. On a child's developmental level of learning, viewed is the engagement and reasoning, which are tenets of social learning. The level of commitment and thinking rests then with different thoughts. Gibson [30] declares that looking at issues from diverse stand points is necessary for gaining social competence, such as found in rounded thinking.

Rounded thinking allows children to be non judgmental, unbiased, and reflexive in thinking. Moreover, when given one thought, the child must be able to expand that thought into a more substantial composite. Acquired is the use of language and skill through this thinking, indicative of rounded thinking and the ability to limit negative results. Such adverse effects include (a) lack of self-control, (b) limited ideas, and references, and (c) the inability to present the self with openness. Children sometimes display inappropriate behaviors and tendencies resulting in the splitting of the person and the deception of the unconscious; dramaturgical analysis and symbolic interactionism show reference to this [31]. Both work in unison within the individual and the social arena [28]. The more positive the impression given to the social sphere, the more satisfied the community becomes. This reaction expands on Lagattuta, Nucci, and Bosacki [32], convey that when children can express themselves, the more significant opportunity there is for them to gain acceptance and understanding, which leads to social competence.

In further understanding, the social learning theory and social the concept of habitus and field expands this discussion. Ignatow [33] explains that Bourdieu's concept of Habitus, Field, and Praxis work to increase understanding of social competence from a philosophical perspective. Habitus is the "cognitive structures through which people deal with the social world" [34]. Children have choices in how they view and perceive what happens in and around their social world [34]. Part of developing the human personality has to deal with the way one chooses to address issues in the social environment. Ignatow [33] further postulates that social learning and behavior resonates from the judgment of self and others. Conscious efforts to respond to stimuli, even though unaware of the automatic responses, corresponding to the behavioral theory of operant conditioning [5]. Correspondence does not imply that humans are mechanical beings, and Bourdieu contends that the habitus is not entirely automated [34-36]. Concisely, social learning stems from the process of efficacy and reflection [5]. Reflecting then is a point to which the social structure and the relationships manifests.

The field is the social structure or environment in which relationships occur [34]. According to this conceptual definition, there is a constant interplay of forces at work in each child's life. The present forces affect the human mind and functioning roles. The field is the most important in determining the hierarchy of power wherein meaning, value, and sense are constructed [28]. This construction builds on the concept of praxis, or the interchange between habitus and field. Within the praxis, habitus and field unite to the point of realization [34,37]. Bridging the ground and the cognitive mind creates the ability to learn, process, and grow. Praxis, in a nonprofessional's view, could be about practicing how to think and receive the most out of each situation, opportunity, and social achievement, resulting in social competency. Equally, the social learning of children entails the cultural aspect.

Culture has an impact on the view of social competence and success in social settings [9]. When presenting children with consistently modeled behaviors, the tendency to repeat such actions can become increased [38]. Culture defines everyday interaction within the environmental context. According to Bandura [38], people are products of their environment. Bradbery [39] and Pagnotta [40] further support this by sharing that social learning occurs through a relational pattern. Social learning theory provides a foundational component for assistance in understanding the connection among the child, interactions, and the social environment. The association made from Bandura's social learning increases understanding from a theoretical perspective [23]. The concepts of social learning theories lead to a brief discussion of cognitive development theory that includes a description connecting the social competency of children and factors of their success in social settings.

Cognitive Development Theory: Tenets Described

Piaget, the founder of cognitive development theory, worked on the concepts of equilibrium and the emergence of knowing [5]. The idea of individualization directed the theory of cognitive development [41]. In other words, cognitive behaviorism is implicit of internal activities of the mind and the influence of behavior [5]. Hutchison [23] elaborates on this statement suggesting that schematic rationality exists through cognitive theory. Calm presence indicates that if there is a definite connection with one's goals and cognitive processing, then a healthy relationship is present. Hoglund, Lalonde, and Leadbeater [42] assert that cognitive processing evolves across time through experiences with peers and being able to interpret behavior and responses. Therefore, social competence occurs through the interaction process and the child's ability to construct accurate and rational cognitive thoughts into patterns of behavior [23]. The environment helps children to apply cognitive reasoning in working toward social competency. Ashford et al. [7] assert that an environment involving peer interaction is a strong determinant in developing communicative competence due to the process of exchange and reasoning.

The cultural context of cognitive theory reveals that individuals are limited in their ability to apply social reasoning if their opportunity to apply familial moral reasoning has been void [32]. The logic indicates that familial and moral rationale derives from the opportunity to know right from wrong. Karp and Frank [43] contend that social competence, as applied from the tenets of cognitive theory, rises from Kohlberg's concept of moral reasoning. Reasonably, if an unconditioned child is unaware of discriminating the differences between right and wrong, their ability to reason is limited [44]. Additionally, the cognitive theory provides a sensitive approach to children's perspectives based on the culture to which they are exposed. Construction of moral reasoning is by recognition of established rules and norms of culture and society [32]. Ignatow [33] posits that moral action refers back to the model of habitus, field, and praxis; as previously addressed, there is a conscious action present in the decision-making process. Further, cognitive theory Hoglund et al. [42] implies existing constructs of emotional and mental states when interacting with others and of the self.

In an expansion on this declaration, Broeren and Muris [45] conducted a quantitative study to examine the phenomena of anxiety and cognitive development; examined were the constructs of fear, anxiety, and behavioral inhibition. According to the study's findings, the aspects of stress for the children revealed maturation as a significant component of fear. However, this study did not indicate any connections to behavioral inhibitions. Furthermore, there was another quantitative study completed by Hoglund et al. [42] on cognitive processing, which showed a positive correlation between emotional and behavioral problems. Moreover, this study suggested that cognitive competence improves a child's application ability for controlling negative behaviors such as aggression and anxiety. Both quantitative studies addressing children and acquired competency support the tenets of the cognitive theory. In aligning the social competence of children, it is relevant to suggest there is an essential degree present of rational cognitive processing and moral reasoning. In looking at social capability in social settings, the theory of social development provides further enlightenment of children's success or lack of progress in social settings.

Social Development Theory: Tenets Described

Discussion, to this point, has leaned to the social learning theory, which contends that the way individuals choose to think about things shapes behavior [42]. Additionally, the discussion addresses the cognitive theory and tenets, which explain how individuals perceive and interpret life experiences, which can fundamentally shape their thoughts and behavior [9]. Now, the third dominant theory for topic discussion is Vygotsky's social development theory. Au [46] asserts that the social development theory built upon the conceptualization of two significant themes: zone of proximal development (ZPD) and more knowledge other (MKO).

Ashford et al. [7] share that play is an instrumental tenet of Vygotsky's social development. For children, imaginary play and self-talk build the tenacity for gathering information about themselves and the social environment. ZPD indicates a relationship between present and possible learning domains [47]. In the further understanding of ZPD, the guidance children receive inevitably encourages the development of higher-order learning. Developing a connection that imagination and reality exist in unison is integral in emphasizing the ability to thrive in two spheres accordingly [48]. Briefly, a child's ability to think creatively raises the level of interpretation [49]. Also, Hutchison [23] posits that ZPD allows children the potential to interact through developmental gains. Concerning the instruments of play and self-talk, consider a child playing with a doll. The child is imagining caring for and talking to the baby. The child also talks to him or herself about the reality of their imaginary world. In this process, the child is learning the concept of pretense and reality.

In further explanation of this concept, from a different perspective,

a child who experiences a family connection cognitively processes the language leading to feelings of security. On the other hand, take a young child who has experienced family neglect; the child handles the expression on his or her cognitive level leading to feelings of insecurity. The theme of language that is inherent in Vygotsky's theory, then indicates that information is processed and stored; this follows how the child interprets the knowledge gained about themselves and the social environment. In summary, the ZPD of the social development theory gives a clear connection to the interaction necessary for developing cognitive structures and gaining social competence or the lack thereof.

The MKO theme of social development indicates cooperation between children and others. For example, those who have a higher level of understanding assist children with task completion, processing, and conceptualization skills [5]. Vygotsky's social development theory contends that there is a link between objective reality and the conscious mind [50]. Additionally, Vygotsky [51] postulates, as reported in Louis [52], that the elements of (a) culture, (b) language, and (c) social interaction are essential in cognitive development and social learning [5]. In further addressing these elements, Pass [53] provides that Vygotsky supported the interaction of teacher and learner. Additionally, Au [46] asserts that children receive instruction through guidance and collaboration, working to acknowledge and embrace the conscious awareness of decision-making. Vygotsky's scientific conceptualizations reflect the preceding thought shared of social learning and cognitive processing.

For instance, the element of culture gives way to the differences that exist among families, peers, and groups. The language element allows the opportunity to connect conscious thoughts and ideas when processing information. The aspect of social interaction of children with family, peers, and others develops from the conceptual ideas represented with all facets of the exchange. An additional example of the MKO theme presents a child who lacks the concept of coloring. A peer collaborates with the child, applying the coloring concept by identifying with the child the colors and the process of coloring a picture. The task is continued and completed by the child through an exchange of information from the peer. The transfer occurring is a collaborative process of positive attitudinal learning.

Another example is a second child who also lacks the concept of coloring. The child is unable to grasp the idea and is not capable of proceeding without guidance. The exchange process does not exist in this case and presents potential behavioral issues. The nonexistence of the cooperative element leaves the child with a lack of object reality and conscious mind. As interpreted, the ZPD and MKO themes help with children's abilities for success or understanding the lack of their success in social settings. The social development theory entails the tenets, which embrace the identified constructs mentioned and indicates that children, unable to participate in the ZPD and MKO processes, stand to experience challenges in meeting levels of success. Vygotsky's idea was indicative of children's learning beginning at an early age even before they can carry a conversation. The dynamics are influential in understanding the learning process of social development. Conceivably, the constructs of attitude and behavior are contributing factors in the dynamics of learning.

Further Analysis: Children's Success or Lack of Success in Social Settings

Attitudes and behaviors of others are influential on children because of the powerful impact that individuals and groups have [54]. In the building of such power, Kohlberg's moral development indicates the intrinsic teaching of principled conditioning and behavior [55]. Continuing, Boulton-Lewis et al. [55] contend that parents, role models, and society influence the actions of children. Influence indicates another line of reference raising the issue of obedience. The expectation is for children to obey and comply with rules, and after

a matter of time, their actions and behaviors begin expulsion of automatic responses [15]. In the learning process, children need to avoid destructive obedience. Bordens and Horrowitz [9] indicate destructive willingness as self-sacrifice in conforming to others. Damaging conformity is a presence in the social world [15]. Consequently, children are accepting less than appropriate behavior leading to determinants of authority breaking.

Future implications extend awareness of the presence of children's vulnerabilities in unstable environments because unstable living environments result in the escalation of social problems [56]. Children model the behavior of their caretakers. If separated from their caretakers, children experience additional issues outside of physical dislocation [57]. For example, a child's removal from their home and separation from their caretakers results in added emotional and behavioral problems due to the unstable environment [54]. Harper [54] further extends that competence and control have significant connections to emotional and behavioral issues. In elaboration, emotional upset such as separation anxiety leads to a loss of familiarity [29]. This separation indicates that although the termination is in the best interest of the child, internalization of self-blame and disconnection is possible.

Shaped by experiences are attitudes that children gain through associations [9]. For instance, a child exposed to positive environments with acceptance of others experiences positivity no matter what their situation may be. Later the same person may begin associations within environments that refuse to accept others unless they meet specific criteria. Exposure to both ends of the spectrum will have a response. Whether positive or negative, the reaction may necessarily be dependent on where the child is presently or where the child is relative to personal growth and cognitive development. Patton [58] and Morris et al. [59] further suggest that children need time to interact to express their feelings and emotions; otherwise, they may not learn positive socialization.

Bordens and Horowitz [9] reintroduced the powers of operant and classical conditioning, associated with the behavior. The kind of response received or perceived as the case may be reinforcing the behavior. Shown in the following is an example of attitude and behavior working in unison. A child's mindset and behavior are caring with expressed concern for progress, and the established goals display an internal connection. Therefore, the child's behavior shows respect and desire to work hard to progress in their goals.

On the other hand, if this same child associates with others who do not express the same care and concern behave negatively toward progression in the social environment, the child may begin to show the same negativity. Bordens and Horowitz [9] further discussed the mindlessness of behavior. Society continues to roll at a fast rate, and children become involved in the race to meet acceptance [60]. This rapid pace reverts to personal lives as well as the social living. As shared by Harper [54], thoughtless acting consumes children. Ultimately, this leads to conclude that the decision-making process rests upon involvement and unity of attitude and behaviors.

Attitude and behaviors are powerful constructs [9,54]. One must have a certain level of conviction as they develop personal growth. Children externally express their internal beliefs to make a stand or share a voice for what they are compelled to do [23]. The level of a child's conviction associated with the behavior reflects their hierarchal needs. Maslow's theory of self-actualization, suggests that human motivation arises from unsatisfied needs and that before the higher needs can be satisfied, the lower needs must be attained [2,61].

Additionally, theories of motivation suggest that internal and external desires drive children's motivational capital [5,62]. Jarvis [63] contends that relationships between learning and behavioral change are acquired through one's motivation levels. Each of the theories bases the hierarchical framework on depicting that individual needs, thereby embed priorities within their social system [5]. In essence, when demands lack sufficient attention, there is a loss of energy from other needs such as physical, emotional, and mental; every aspect of the hierarchy is dependent on the other for survival. Pertinent to the subject of children, Schriver [64] along with Muenks et al. [65], declare that as long as humans can satisfy their needs and desires, there is an increase of gratification leading to the issue of success in social settings.

Bordens and Horowitz [9] postulate that the ethological theory of human behavior has the natural tendency to react in survival mode. With this said, human reaction to diverse issues and situations is the base of several components. Instinct is one such component wherein natural survival tendency reactions occur. Individual responses may be conscious or subconscious. Frustration is a human reaction that sometimes occurs spontaneously without being aware that the tendency is dominant until it has transpired. For example, [9] express that frustration-aggression can take place in a child's environment when tension is high. Likewise, the experience of calmness resides in low tense situations.

In exploring further, suppose one child is quiet, and the other is outgoing. The outgoing child continually talks about doing things better, and places blame on the quiet child. Then on a regular school day, the robust child inadvertently makes an innocent remark about the role functions of the quiet child. The quiet child becomes frustrated and speaks out, which is totally out of the expected character. The unexpected response from the quiet child erases the context, and few understand the reason for speaking out against the innocent remark. What has occurred is the emotional drain from the other negative comments from the past. Bordens and Horowitz [9] refer to this aspect as the sleeper effect wherein; the past meets the present. The frustrated child feels guilty, and if the child continues to hold resentment, this same process could retake place, resulting in displaced aggression [66]. A child's success or lack of progress in social settings is dependent upon the internal and external forces within and around the child. Three major learning theories discussed point to relating factors for the achievement or lack of performance toward goals.

Conclusion

This work applied discussion and analysis of three major theoretical frameworks focused on learning and children. Included was the acquisition of social competence through discovering, as utilized from theories of social learning, cognitive development, and social development. An exploration of a child's success or lack of progress in social settings provided a foundational reference for future approaches in studying issues of social competence and success relative to children in the educational, social, and home environments. Analysis shared that elements of (a) communication, (b) interaction, (c) play, and (d) imagination are integral to the learning process and success. The analysis indicated that lack of achievement is evident when a child cannot successfully work through the four elements; learning is a necessary product for succeeding in social settings.

The embarkment on Maslow's hierarchy of needs explored the complexities of habitus, field, and praxis. As discussed, cognitive processes become complex through the social environments and the modeled behavior based on the interpretation of such performances being either internal or external processing. The description and analysis presented that learning theories provide core information for understanding children relative to their development of social competency. Specifically, Bandura's social learning theory poses the essential tenets of observation, imitation, and modeling, noting the reinforcements and consequences of children's behavior associated with stimuli and symbolic interaction.

Additionally, Piaget's cognitive development theory discussed the tenets of equilibrium and the emergence of knowing. The rationality

of schematic evidence further provided vital information on a child's ability or lack of ability to acquire success in social settings. Finally, Vygotsky's social development theory delivered information entailing the concepts of ZPD and MKO; the theory's tenets embrace the importance of play and self-talk. Specifics reported that children gain the opportunity of succeeding in the social environment through guidance and collaboration. Contrarily, children who lack the engaging prospects experience achievement challenges in their social settings.

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