

EFFECT OF ROLE PLAY ON SOCIAL SKILLS AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN

Sonia Chopra*

ABSTRACT

Present study is focused on the effect of role play on social skills among school children. A sample of fifteen children comprising both boys and girls from fifth grade was selected to study social skills. For the enactment of roles and reversed roles, a total of ten sessions for a period of fifteen days was conducted individually for 30-35 minutes duration each. It has been found that role play training has significant effect on social skills among school children. Suggestions for further research have been given.

Introduction

Each day, children and adolescents are required to handle a wide range of challenging social situations. Successful management of the social world requires a sophisticated repertoire of social skills and an inter-personal problem solving capacity. Success in social interactions is determined by many factors relating to the individual, the response of others and the social context. Social skills represent the ability to perform those behaviours that are important in enabling a person to achieve social competence (McFall, 1982; Spence, 1995). These skills include a range of verbal and non-verbal responses that influence the perception and response of other people during social interactions. It is important that individuals are able to adjust the quantity and quality of non-verbal responses such as eye-contact, facial expression, posture, social distance and use of gesture, according to the demands of different social situations. Similarly, verbal qualities such as tone of voice, volume, rate and clarity of speech significantly influence the impression we make upon others and their reactions to us. These micro-level aspects of social skills are highly important in determining the success of social interactions. One way to establish motivation and to inject social interaction in the learning process is to ask students to role play a

* Research Fellow, Department of Education, Panjab University, Chandigarh

situation in which the identified skill is lacking. Role playing is a very helpful technique for engaging student interest and providing opportunities for practice and feedback. Role playing allows students to take on roles, provide feedback to one another, and practice new skills. It enables students to simulate a wide range of school, community, and workplace interactions.

Wilson (2006) examined a number of different ways for teachers to incorporate role-play in their classrooms to make student learning more participatory, stimulating, and imaginative; helping in building strong social relations and found role-play works with students of all ages. While younger learners and beginners may need support, especially in early stages of participating in role plays, they will still benefit and become more independent and confident with practice which may lead to their improvement in social skills. For example, use role play to teach beginning functions such as greetings, giving compliments, and common expressions with one another in a group.

Role Play

Role playing is a way of practicing basic social skills (Brown, 1981). Role-play is a teaching technique that puts students in positions they have never experienced before and allows them to interact, communicate and negotiate with others in certain roles under given circumstances (Yardley-Matwiejczuk, 1997). In doing so, they look at occurrences from different perspectives as well as experience and understand problem situations from a different point of view. They learn something about the specific person and/or situation through imitation, observation, feedback, analysis and conceptualisation (Steinwachs & Sugar, 1990).

Role-plays are student-centred and as such can motivate students to practice various types of behavioural modes. Role-plays provide rapid feedback on students' learning and develop the students' ability to interact (Ladousse, 1987). However, they also may be time consuming and contain the risk of dominating up to the exclusion of solid theory and facts (Ments, 1994). Thus, role-play is an effective learning strategy in which students act the part of another character, thereby gaining an appreciation for others' points of view as well an understanding of the complexity of resolving issues and problems in the real world.

Benefits of Role Play

The following are the benefits of role play as suggested by Richard-Amato (1996):

- They help to prepare students for real-life communication by simulating reality—in situations, in unpredictability, and in the various roles individuals must play in their own lives.
- They can be used for assessment and feedback purposes at the end of a textbook unit. They can be used to help you determine the degree of mastery attained.
- They can consolidate learning and allow students the opportunity to discover their own level of mastery over specific language content.
- They heighten students' self-esteem and improve their ability to work cooperatively.
- They offer good listening practice and allow students to express who they are, their sense of humor, and their own personal communication style.
- They provide an opportunity for practicing the rules of social behavior and the various sociolinguistic elements of communication (as determined by roles, ages, topic, or situation).
- They engage the learner physically. This involves the learner more fully and can be an aid in language retention.
- They provide a context for understanding attitudes, expectations, and behaviors related to the target culture.
 - They may be used as a stimulus to discussion and problem solving.
- They can be extensions of more controlled practice using dialogues. After practicing a dialogue, for example, you might develop role plays based on a parallel situation. A dialogue about buying a shirt could lead into a role play about buying a pair of shoes.

Social Skills

Social skills are not the same thing as behavior. Rather, they are components of behavior that help an individual understand and adapt across a variety of social settings. Walker (1983) defines social skills as “a set of competencies that a) allow an individual to initiate and maintain positive social relationships, b) contribute to peer acceptance and to a satisfactory school adjustment, and c) allow an individual to cope effectively with the larger social environment”. Also, social skills form the basis for social competence. Gresham, Sugai, and Horner (2001) define five dimensions of social skills: (a) peer relational skills, (b) self-management skills, (c) academic skills, (d) compliance skills, and (e) assertion skills. 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 (Zins, Weissbert, Wang & Walberg, 2004). With this understanding, researchers and educators seek to evaluate and build students' social skills within a variety of social contexts.

Research on effective social skills instruction can provide guidance when trying to help children build social skills (Quinn, Osher, Warger, Hanley, Bader & Hoffman, 2000; Sainato & Carta, 1992; Honig & Wittmer, 1996; Zirpoli & Melloy, 1997). Researchers have also studied particular social skill interventions in a variety of settings, as well as for children of different age levels and abilities. According to Bellini (2006), effective programs follow a series of steps. Beginning with an assessment of a student's social functioning, educators distinguish between those deficits that can be successfully addressed and those that are unlikely to respond to intervention. Many social skills curricula provide lesson plans and guidance for both individual and group activities. Most involve modeling successful social skills through activities, games, and role-play, with teachers and peers providing the necessary feedback that allows the student to rehearse interactions (Luiselli, McCarty, Coniglio, Zorrila-Ramirez & Putnam, 2005). In this way, students practice and internalize skills within the classroom, which can often lead to transfer of certain skills to other settings, especially when direct support is provided to promote the transfer of skills.

Importance of Social Skills

Effective social problem solving requires reading one's own and others' feelings, and being able to accurately label and express those feelings. Such skills are aspects of social and emotional learning (Zins, Elias, Weissberg, Greenberg, Haynes & Frey, 1998). Well-developed social skills can help youth with disabilities develop strong and positive peer relationships, succeed in school, and begin to successfully explore adult roles such as employee, co-worker/colleague, and community member. Social skills also support the positive development of healthy adult relationships with family members and peers. Hair, Jager, and Garrett (2002) observe that adolescents, who have strong social skills, particularly in the areas of conflict resolution, emotional intimacy, and the use of pro-social behaviors, are more likely to be accepted by peers, develop friendships, maintain stronger relationships with parents and peers, be viewed as effective problem solvers, cultivate greater interest in school, and perform better academically. Adequate social skills need to be acquired while students are still enrolled in school and further supported and refined in postsecondary, community, and work settings.

Related Reviews

Li, Hestenes and Wang (2016) demonstrated positive associations of pretend role play with children's development. The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between different types of pretend role play and children's social skills. Twenty-eight children from high quality childcare centers in a southeast suburban area were observed during outdoor free play time. Using a reliable time sampling protocol, each child's play was observed and recorded for a total of 45 min to an hour over a 2-week time period. Lead teachers rated children's social skills in the areas of cooperation, self-control, and assertiveness. Results showed high amounts of pretend role play behavior overall, and differential relationships between the type of pretend play children engaged in and children's social skills. Surprisingly, these relationships were not associated with gender. Findings were discussed in light of the value of pretend role play to promote social skill development.

Gresham (2015) showed social skills interventions to be effective for children and youth with or at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders (EBDs). Meta-analytic reviews showed that about 65% of students with EBD will improve when given social skills interventions. Social skills function as academic enablers and contribute to higher academic achievement.

Jacqueline and Timothy (2015) estimated the possible longitudinal and reciprocal effects of social skills and achievement for kindergarten through eighth grade students. Data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study program were analyzed; teachers' ratings of students' social skills and students' standardized math and reading achievement performance were collected 4 and 5 times, respectively. Latent variable structural equation modeling was used to test a panel model of reciprocal, longitudinal effects of social skills and achievement. The results suggested that the effects of students' social skills and achievement are bi-directional, but the effects of students' achievement on their later social skills are stronger than the effects of social skills on achievement. These findings, further, suggested that the future social skills of students who struggle academically may be of particular concern to educators, and intervention and prevention efforts aimed to address both social and achievement skills may help remediate the other skill in the future.

Ruxandra, Loredana, Theodora, Banga, Viorel and Hivda (2015) studied how play and drama sessions can influence the level of resilience in children at risk who manifest school refusal, inability to focus on school tasks, aggressive behaviors, decrease of the school performances. To assess the level of resilience, play and drama sessions were built on the basic structure: the warm-up, main event and closure. The results revealed an increase in self-confidence and a reduction in disruptive behaviors.

Kaloyirou and Lindsay (2014) examined the use of role-play in order to investigate bullies' intentions, feelings and perceptions through identification and projection. The study was conducted with nine 12-year-old boys that presented high levels of bullying behaviour, according to their teachers and peers, from three state primary schools in Nicosia, Cyprus, with different social characteristics. The results were analysed in the light of social information processing. During the role-play activity, the boys appeared to project their personal experience either as bullies or as victims onto the characters presented. The results of this study suggested that role-play can be used as a means to explore boys' perceptions of bullies' intentions, feelings and perceptions and can contribute to a better understanding of bullying.

Cakici and Bayir (2012) investigated the effect of using role play (portraying a scientist's life story) on the children's views of the nature of science (NOS). The study was carried out at the Children's University of Trakya in Turkey during the summer of 2010. The participants consisted of 18 children, aged 10-11. They met for 10 days for approximately 3 h per day. All children completed the pre- and post-tests including 16 open-ended questions in order to reveal changes in their views of the NOS prior to and at the completion of the role-play activities. The results revealed that the children had more informed views of the target NOS aspects in comparison with their views prior to the role-play activities.

Mehrangiz, Mehravar, Fariba, Zahra and Nayereh (2012) determined the effect of group role play therapy on separation anxiety disorder in 7-9 years old children in Tehran. Sampling was purposeful in which 20 children, who were diagnosed as separation anxiety disorder, were selected, and randomly divided into two experimental and control groups (10 subjects each). Experimental group received 9 sessions of group role play therapy once a week. The results of

covariance analysis showed the significant effect of group role play therapy on reduction of separation anxiety disorder in children in post test and follow up stage ($p < 0.05$).

Kouvava, Antonopoulou, Zioga and Karali (2011) examined whether musical games and role-play activities can enhance children's self-concept and ameliorate peer relationships. Participants, 11 boys and 9 girls, between 7 and 8 years, attending the second grade at an inclusive primary mainstream school of a suburb of Athens were taken in the sample. These children were selected because they presented poor interpersonal skills and relationship difficulties with peers. The project lasted 8 weeks and involved three teachers of the school. The results revealed that these activities cultivated children's social skills.

Ratto, Turner-Brown, Rupp, Mesibov and Penn (2011) piloted a role play assessment of conversational skills for adolescents and young adults with high-functioning autism/Asperger syndrome (HFA/AS). Participants completed two semi-structured role plays, in which social context was manipulated by changing the confederate's level of interest in the conversation. Participants' social behavior was rated via a behavioral coding system, and performance was compared across contexts and groups. An interaction effect was found for several items, whereby control participants showed significant change across context, while participants with HFA/AS showed little or no change. The findings were discussed in terms of the potential utility of the CASS in the evaluation of social skill.

Grant and Mistry (2010) investigated role-play activities and how they can be used within learning for English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupils in a Key Stage 2 setting in England. Through observations, results showed effective role-play activities can be beneficial to EAL pupils, allowing them to practice words and phrases in a relaxed atmosphere supported by peers, teachers or bilingual assistants. Recommendations included the use of role-play by teachers and the provision of additional support, thereby enabling staff to feel confident when incorporating role-play.

Laugeson, Frankel, Mogil and Dillon (2009) examined the efficacy of a manualized parent-assisted social skills intervention in comparison with a matched Delayed Treatment Control

group to improve friendship quality and social skills among teens 13-17 years of age with autism spectrum disorders. Targeted skills included conversational skills, peer entry and exiting skills, developing friendship networks, good sportsmanship, good host behavior during get-togethers, changing bad reputations, and handling teasing, bullying, and arguments. Results revealed, in comparison with the control group, that the treatment group significantly improved their knowledge of social skills, increased frequency of hosted get-togethers, and improved overall social skills as reported by parents. Future research should provide follow-up data to test the durability of treatment.

Seevers and Jones-Blank (2008) explored the effects of social skills training on social skill development and on student behavior. It was hypothesized that using instructional strategies for teaching social skills such as modeling, role playing, positive reinforcement, practice/rehearsal, incidental teaching, prompting, and coaching would help students initiate and develop positive social relationships with others, cope effectively with the behavioral demands and expectations of specific settings, and appropriately communicate and assert one's needs, desires, and preferences. The eight children with special needs who were identified as at-risk for social adjustment problems showed a significant improvement following the intervention.

Yun (2008) examined children's role-play within the framework of language socialization, as well as the relations between (a) utterances made by young bilingual Korean children within the role-play frame and (b) metacommunicative utterances about the play. Results indicated that bilingual children socialize themselves and jointly construct their identities through role-play in the communities of practice using specific features of language such as metacommunicative verbs, deictics, and code-switching.

Bellack, Brown and Thomas-Lohrman (2006) examined the psychometric characteristics of a representative role-play measure: the Maryland Assessment of Social Competence (MASC). Data from 5 large schizophrenia studies that included the MASC were examined: a study of victimization in women who abuse drugs, a study of health care among people with diabetes, a study of vocational outcomes, a study of social skill among drug abusers, and a clinical trial comparing two antipsychotic medications. Data were examined in terms of five questions: (1)

Can the role-play scenes rated reliably? (2) How role-play ratings distributed across populations? (3) How many and which behaviors should be rated? (4) How many role-play scenes required? (5) Is role-play behavior temporally stable? Overall, the data suggested that the MASC, and by implication other similar role-play procedures, does have good psychometric properties.

Objectives

- To assess social skills before role play among school children.
- To administer remedial role play sessions (10) among school children.
- To study effect of role play on social skills among school children.

Operational Definitions

Role Play: Role play refers to enactment of roles and reversed roles in various situations identified from child's familiar environment.

Social Skills: A score on Social Skills Rating System-Child Version (SSRS-C) by Gresham and Elliott (1990) will assess social skills.

Hypothesis

There will be significant effect of role play on social skills among school children.

Delimitations

- Data will be collected from children of 5th grade of Government schools of Chandigarh only.
- The study will be limited with respect to the size of sample i.e. 15.

Method and Procedure

Design

Experimental Method was used for the present study.

Sample

A sample of 15 children of 5th grade was selected from Government Model Senior Secondary School, Sector 19-C of Chandigarh only. Both boys and girls form part of the sample. To collect the data from all the members of population, random sampling was used.

Tool Used

- Social Skills Rating System-Child Version (SSRS-C) (Gresham & Elliott, 1990)

Procedure

The data was collected from the children of 5th grade of Government Model Senior Secondary School, Sector 19-C of Chandigarh only. Study was conducted in three phases: Pre-Test, Intervention Technique and Post-Test. Pre-Test: Social Skills Rating System- Child Version by Gresham and Elliott (1990) was administered to the students of 5th grade. Raw scores form the pre-test scores. Intervention Technique: For the enactment of roles and reversed roles, a total of ten sessions for a period of fifteen days was conducted individually for 30-35 minutes duration each. A child was asked to enact the role of a mother, father, best friend, teacher, favorite actor/actress and doctor to the remaining members of the group. Whereever required, the session was repeated. Post-Test: Post test was conducted on children after the intervention technique i.e. remedial role play sessions. In this phase, same Social Skills Rating System- Child Version by Gresham and Elliott (1990) was given to the students which form the post-test scores.

Statistical Techniques Used

t-test was used to analyze the data.

Results

t-ratio for pre-test and post-test mean scores on social skills was 0.62 which is statistically significant at .01 level of significance ($t=0.62, p < .01$). This indicates that role play training have improved the social skills among children. Hence, the hypothesis “There will be significant effect of role play on social skills among school children.” is accepted. The results of the present study are in line with the study done by (Mehrangiz, Mehravar, Fariba, Zahra & Nayereh, 2012; Seevers & Jones-Blank, 2008; Yun, 2008; Bellack, Brown and Thomas-Lohrman, 2006).

Conclusions

Present research presents the following conclusions:

- There is significant difference in mean score of social skills in pre-test score and post test score of 5th grade children.

- The intervention technique yields higher mean score on social skills among school children.
- The intervention technique has been significantly effective in improving social skills among 5th grade children.

Suggestions for Further Research

- A study should be conducted with more sessions in remediation of role play among school children.
- The present study has been conducted on grade 5th children only. The same investigation can be conducted on other grade children also.
- The present study's sample size was limited to 15 children only. The same study can be conducted on large sample.
- The effect of role play can be studied on certain other variables.
- The present study was restricted to the Government schools of Chandigarh only. The same study can be extended to other schools in other cities also.
-

References

- Bellack, A. S., Brown, C. H., & Thomas-Lohrman, S. (2006). Psychometric Characteristics of Role-Play Assessments of Social Skill in Schizophrenia. *Behavior Therapy*, 37 (4), 339-352.
- Bellini, S. (2006). *Building social relationships: A systematic approach to teaching social interaction skills to children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders and other social disorders*. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing.
- Brown, D. (1981). *Role Playing Helps Develop Social Skills*. Retrieved on 18th December, 2015 from <http://www.ldonline.org/article/10141/>
- Cakici, Y., & Bayir, E. (2012). Developing Children's Views of the Nature of Science through Role Play. *International Journal of Science Education*, 34 (7), 1075-1091.
- Grant, K., & Mistry, M. (2010) English as an Additional Language: Assumptions and Challenges. *Management in Education*, 24(3), 111-114.

- Gresham, F. M., & Elliott, S. N. (1990). *Social Skills Rating System*. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.
- Gresham, F. (2015). Evidence-Based Social Skills Interventions for Students at Risk for EBD. *Remedial and Special Education, 36* (2), 100-104.
- Gresham, F. M., Sugai, G., & Horner, R. H. (2001). Interpreting outcomes of social skills training for students with high-incidence disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 67*(3), 331-344.
- Hair, E. C., Jager, J., & Garrett, S. B. (2002). *Helping teens develop healthy social skills and relationships: What research shows about navigating adolescence*. Retrieved on 15th January, 2016 from http://www.ncset.org/publications/info/NCSETInfoBrief_3.5.pdf
- Honig, A., & Wittmer, D. (1996). Helping children become more prosocial: Ideas for classrooms, families, schools, and communities. *Young Children, 51*(2), 62–70.
- Jacqueline, M. C., & Timothy, Z. K. (2015). Longitudinal, reciprocal effects of social skills and achievement from kindergarten to eighth grade. *Journal of School Psychology, 53* (4), 265-281.
- Kaloyirou, C., & Lindsay, G. (2014). Understanding Bullying: Using Role-Play with 12-Year-Old Boys in Cyprus. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 29* (2), 153-166.
- Kouvava, S., Antonopoulou, K., Zioga, S., & Karali, C. (2011). The influence of musical games and role-play activities upon primary school children's self-concept and peer relationships. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 29*, 1660-1667.
- Ladousse, G. P. (1987). *Role-play*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Laugeson, E. A., Frankel, F., Mogil, C., & Dillon, A. R. (2009). Parent-Assisted Social Skills Training to Improve Friendships in Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 39* (4), 596-606.
- Li, J., Hestenes, L. L.; Wang, Y. C. (2016). *Links between Preschool Children's Social Skills and Observed Pretend Play in Outdoor Childcare Environments*. Retrieved on 15th January, 2016 from http://eric.ed.gov/?q=role+play+social+skills&ff1=dtyIn_2016&id=EJ1087058

- Luiselli, J.K., McCarty, J.C., Coniglio, J., Zorilla-Ramirez, C., & Putnam, R.F. (2005). Social skills assessment and intervention: Review and recommendations for school practitioners. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 21*, 21-38.
- McFall, R. M. (1982). A review and reformulation of the concept of social skills. *Behavioral Assessment, 8*, 3–10.
- Mehrangiz, S., Mehravar, M. J., Fariba, E. T., Zahra, S. R., & Nayereh, G. (2012). The Effect of Group Play Therapy on Reduction of Separation Anxiety Disorder in Primitive School Children. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 69*, 95-103.
- Ments, M. (1994). *The effective use of role-play*. London: Kogan Page.
- Quinn, M., Osher, D., Warger, C., Hanley, T., Bader, B., T., & Hoffman, C. (2000). *Educational strategies for children with emotional and behavioral problems*. Retrieved on 20th January, 2016 from http://www.parentcenterhub.org/wp-content/uploads/repo_items/e-socialskills.pdf
- Ratto, A.B., Turner-Brown, L., Rupp, B. M., Mesibov, G. B., & Penn, D.L. (2011). Development of the Contextual Assessment of Social Skills (CASS): A Role Play Measure of Social Skill for Individuals with High-Functioning Autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 41* (9), 1277-1286.
- Richard-Amato, P. (1996). *Making It Happen: Interaction in the Second Language Classroom, from Practice to Theory*. White Plains, NY: Addison-Wesley.
- Ruxandra, F., Loredana, T., Theodora, M., Banga, E., Viorel, A., & Hivda, H. (2015). Using Play and Drama in Developing Resilience in Children at Risk. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 197*, 2362-2368.
- Sainato, D., & Carta, J. (1992). Classroom influences on the development of social competence in young children with disabilities. In W.H. Brown, S.L. Odom, & S.R. McConnell (Eds.), *Social competence in young children with disabilities* (pp. 93-109). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- Seevers, R. L., & Jones-Blank, M. (2008). Exploring the Effects of Social Skills Training on Social Skill Development on Student Behavior. *National Forum of Special Education Journal, 19* (1), 223-229.

- Spence, S. H. (1995). *Social skills training: Enhancing social competence and children and adolescents*. Windsor, UK: The Nfer-Nelson Publishing Company Ltd.
- Steinwachs, B., & Sugar, S. (1990). Get results from simulation and role play. In M.R.Callahan (Ed.), *Info-line: practical guidelines for training and development professionals*. Alexandria: American Society for Training and Development.
- Timochko, M. (2011). The Effectiveness of the Skillsstreaming Social Skills Program for Students with Learning and Language Disabilities. *ProQuest LLC*, Psy.D. Dissertation, Fairleigh Dickinson University. Retrieved on 21st December, 2015 from <http://www.proquest.com/en-US/products/dissertations/individuals.shtml>.
- Walker, H.M. (1983). *The ACCESS program: Adolescent curriculum for communication and effective social skills: Student study guide*. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.
- Wilson, A. (2006). Using Role Play in Middle-School and Secondary Classes. *Educational Perspectives*, 39 (2), 23-26.
- Yardley-Matwiejczuk, K. M. (1997). *Role play: theory and practice*. London: Sage Publication.
- Yun, S. (2008). Role-Play and Language Socialization among Bilingual Korean Children in the United States. *Simulation & Gaming*, 39 (2), 240-252.
- Zins, J. E., Elias, M. J., Weissberg, R. P., Greenberg, M. T., Haynes, N. M., & Frey, K. S. (1998). Enhancing learning through social and emotional education. *Think: The Journal of Creative and Critical Thinking*, 9, 18-20.
- Zins, J., Weissbert, R., Wang, M., & Walberg, H. (2004). *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* New York: Teachers College Press.
- Zirpoli, T., & Melloy, K. (1997). *Behavior management: Applications for teachers and partners* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.