

THE IMPACT OF VIDEO-WATCHING ACTIVITIES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN CHILDREN

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Abstract: *Social behavior refers to children's abilities of forming social functional relationships with other children or adults from their lives. In other words, the formation of these abilities aims at facilitating positive interactions adequate to social norms, understanding appropriate behavior in groups, caring for other people's needs, developing social skills and learning how to manage one's feelings. Children learn through direct and indirect observation, through verbalization that each social context has certain rules whose role is to prevent the appearance of some problems of behavior in society. In general terms, prosocial behavior refers to voluntary actions that are intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals. As such, prosocial behaviors are presented in terms of their intended consequences for others. The paper aims to study the impact on the formation and the development of prosocial behavior through the video-watching method in children from kindergarten and primary school. The video-watching activities are developed within the following disciplines: education for society (man and society development area) for kindergarten and personal development (counseling and orientation curricular area) and civic education (man and society curricular area) for primary school. By general definition, the common element of all these disciplines is the formation and development of prosocial behavior. The video-watching activities offer the basis for conversations, case studies, detailed explanations, debates, personal reflections etc. The study proposes a series of items based on specific literature, included in a questionnaire applied to a sample of one hundred kindergarten and primary school teachers. The data obtained are processed using the SPSS analysis. The results of the research can be of use to teachers who want to improve the process of prosocial behavior development in their students.*

Keywords: *prosocial behavior; positive interactions; video-watching activities*

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of video in classrooms has been a common feature in the didactic activity for many years as it allows students a look at situations far beyond their classrooms. Through video-watching the spatial and temporal barriers of communication have been overcome as our understanding is not limited anymore by the necessity of physical presence in the places in which the events observed occur (Thompson, 2001:43). Video-watching activities support the effort of learning by making more accessible the content of lessons, facilitating their understanding and receptivity, by intensifying the rhythm and volume of acquisitions etc. The instructional aspects of the video-watching activities are doubled by their formative value seen in prosocial behavior modeling as they ensure a diversity of didactic expressions, give the possibility of witnessing new experiences, of illustrating good / bad behavior and drawing conclusions and morals.

In general terms, prosocial behavior is presented in terms of their intended consequences for others, as it refers to voluntary actions that are intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals. Prosocial behaviors represent important resources we aim to develop in our children in order to ensure their adjustment to life in society. Preschool and primary school ages have an important relevance in developing prosocial behavior as the child is exposed to the first formal contexts in which they learn the social rules. Their later adjustment to the social environment and social integration depends to a great extent upon this period. In order to have a desirable prosocial behavior the child needs practice. Activities based on video-watching aim to exemplify good/bad behavior in society allowing conversations among children and peers or children and teacher, detailed explanations, case studies, role play, debates, personal reflections etc. All these provide the children with the basic information about the meaning and the development of prosocial behavior.

2. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 Literature review. Each human activity, however simple it may be, implies rules that must be obeyed in order to have things done. As well, communication develops according to some norms which ensure proper understanding. Children must learn these norms since early ages, as basis for their prosocial behavior. Ethics in communication targets such behaviors as: listening actively to the interlocutor's message without interrupting him/her, avoiding interfering in others' conversation, be they adults or children, approaching certain topics in the right contexts, speaking in a normal voice, not too loud or too low so as not to burden the listener, avoiding assuming complete control of the conversation etc.

Non-aggressive behavior allows children to maintain functional social relationships based on understanding, tolerance, affection, cooperation. All these result into a solid educational climate in which direct, open communication; mutual trust will have positive effects on learning (Anghel, 2003). Important steps in learning behaviors valued by society are describing facts, teaching children to talk about behavior and not about the person, teaching children to avoid labeling and blaming as these acts start and amplify a conflict. At the same time, verbalizing negative feelings is crucial for the child's emotional relief and makes less probable the use of aggressive behavior. Children need to be aware and exercise every step in order to learn to manage aggressive tendencies in future similar situations. As they learn strategies to deal with conflictual situations, the frequency of aggressive behaviors decreases, replaced by non-aggressive interaction (Petrovai *et al.*, 2012:62).

Cooperation represents the ability of working together with other persons to reach a common goal. In the didactic activity cooperation is essential for a good relationship among children. It refers to sharing means of work, availability to do what is required, coordination of the events in order to reach a goal, accepting the ideas of the group members, negotiation and compromising within the group. Cooperation involves explaining and understanding. Sometimes children may refuse to cooperate as an activity may not be perceived as interesting. In such cases, the teacher must intervene creatively, integrating the task into something pleasant, interesting for the child. In the environments where cooperation is laid emphasis on, children feel relaxed and self-confident as they need support and recognition of any form of

progress. Promoting cooperation reduces problematical behavior, stimulates the development of positive social contacts, increases the acceptance of individual differences, decreases marginalization of some children and offers children the opportunity of developing and exercising social academic abilities (Ştefan, Kallay, 2007:28).

In a broad sense, altruism is synonymous with caring for others, generosity, kindness. Altruism involves the desire to help others, to give support when asked for or just needed. This behavior is done voluntarily without any material gain. Children's need for help means the recognition of proper limits, of insufficient development of some abilities. In cases where the help is asked from peers, the possibility of cooperation and formation of friendly relationships increases. In such situations it is important for the teacher to talk to children about altruism and explain its consequences. In order to encourage children to help, it is useful to play roles by means of which they develop a sense of responsibility. It is also useful to do specific activities such as donating clothing, food, things done by themselves to other children in need. Such activities can be done for over a long period of time until children acquire this behavior. The teacher could also make a list with the names of all the children who do things/ tasks to help others. The adults' encouragement and appreciation support the manifestation of altruism in children's behavior (Petrovai *et al.*, 2012:81).

Obedying a code of conduct is a very efficient tool of teaching prosocial behavior. Rules have the role of preventing the appearance of behavior disorder as they are the verbal expressions of the relationships among antecedent, behavior and consequences (Botiş & Mihalca, 2007:64). Rules guide children's behavior in different social situations. They learn best certain social behavior when limits and rules are clearly set. Adults should repeat the rules constantly and monitor their observance. As soon as children start integrating adults' requests and explanations into their own language, they themselves adjust their own behavior. In classroom the frequency of prosocial behavior manifestations (asking for and offering help, using polite words, waiting turns etc.) can be increased through observation, constant repetition, a system of reward etc.

Emotions are the results of someone's interpretation of a certain event. Emotional abilities make reference to understanding, expressing, adjusting emotions (Botiş & Mihalca, 2007:23). Children's emotional abilities development is

important as it contributes to the formation and the maintenance of the relationships with the others, it helps children adjust to kindergarten and school, it prevents emotional and behavior disorders. Social adjustment implies that children should be able to identify their own emotions and the others' in various situations, to identify the emotions associated to a specific context, to recognize emotions based on nonverbal elements such as facial expressions, posture etc., to express empathy towards other persons, to find solutions to comfort themselves when they are angry, to consider an upsetting situation from other points of view etc. In classroom all these can be easily exercised, commented upon, discussed, recognized by means of video watching activities as they provide a large range of authentic situations to which children could not have access otherwise.

Politeness represents behavior characterized through respect, amiability, kindness in relation to the others. It facilitates human relationships and adds certain aesthetics in any civilized stage of a society (Paleologu, 2009). Politeness involves rules and social conventions which children learn in their family and in school, at first through imitation and later through deliberate manifestation. Certain examples of politeness can be greeting formulas, adequate addressing formulas with peers, grown-ups, waiting turns etc. Through video-watching activities children can perceive manifestations of politeness in different contexts, can discuss the consequences of rude / polite behavior, can draw conclusions and learn lessons which they can use later to adjust their own behavior.

Punctuality is generally defined as rigorous fulfillment of some obligations on regular basis or on deadlines. Punctuality is a proof of respect we show to the others. Time is a precious resource that is why it must be learnt about at early ages. On the other hand, children's punctuality is influenced by their ability of reading the clock, which makes the young ones dependent upon their parents.

2.2 Methodology of Research. The research objectives. Our research objectives are:

a) to identify the elements of prosocial behavior developed through video-watching activities in children from kindergarten and primary school. The identification of such elements was based on theoretical background and focus-group discussions. The video-watching activities held within the disciplines education for society (area of development / domain human and society) for kindergarten and personal development (curricular area counseling and

orientation) and civic education (curricular area human and society) for primary school.

b) to realize descriptive analyses of the selected items to determine a hierarchy in the two school levels, kindergarten and primary school.

The sample for research was made of 100 teachers from Vrancea County, Romania, 50 from kindergarten and 50 from primary school. They possess ten to thirty years of experience in the educational system. They were involved in the research on a voluntary basis. The main method of research was the questionnaire-based investigation. The questionnaire was conceived based on specific literature and focus-group discussions with teachers from the two school levels. This procedure allowed the identification of a series of elements which describe prosocial behavior: politeness, punctuality, ethics of communication, obeying a code of conduct, cooperation, altruism, adequate expression of emotions, non-aggressive behavior. The respondents had to choose one of the following options of a five-step scale: (1) to a very low extent, (2) to a low extent, (3) to an average extent, (4) to a large extent, (5) to a very large extent. These steps were meant to show the impact of video-watching activities on the development of prosocial behavior in children.

2.3 Findings and results. For the descriptive analyses, we used SPSS software, the t-test for the independent samples.

Table 1. Means and standard deviation of prosocial behavior items

Items	Kindergarten Mean (Std. dev.)	Primary school Mean (Std. dev.)
Politeness	4.58 (0.548)	4.36 (0.891)
Punctuality	2.90 (0.990)	2.94 (0.577)
Ethics of communication	4.16 (0.661)	3.98 (1.003)
Obeying a code of conduct	4.52 (1.446)	4.70 (1.132)
Cooperation	4.42 (1.311)	4.62 (1.086)
Altruism	4.38 (0.668)	4.04 (0.925)
Adequate expression of emotions	3.80 (0.735)	4.32 (0.780)
Non-aggressive behavior	4.26 (0.564)	4.02 (0.781)

Based on these means we established a hierarchy of prosocial behavior items for the two school levels. As such, the indicator ranked 1 was considered highly relevant in terms of impact of video-watching activities on the development of

prosocial behavior in children, whereas the indicator ranked 8 was less appreciated in this respect.

Table 2. Descriptive of hierarchy of the prosocial behavior items

Rank	Kindergarten	Primary school
1.	Politeness	Obeying a code of conduct
2.	Obeying a code of conduct	Cooperation
3.	Cooperation	Politeness
4.	Altruism	Adequate expression of emotions
5.	Non-aggressive behavior	Altruism
6.	Ethics of communication	Non-aggressive behavior
7.	Adequate expression of emotions	Ethics of communication
8.	Punctuality	Punctuality

The registered means were between 4.58 and 2.90 for kindergarten and between 4.70 and 2.94 for primary school. There were six items which registered means above 4 in kindergarten: politeness, ethics in communication, obeying a code of conduct, cooperation, altruism, non-aggressive behavior and seven items which registered 4 or close to 4 (3.98) in primary school: politeness, obeying a code of conduct, cooperation, altruism, adequate expression of emotions, non-aggressive behavior, ethics of communication. These high means demonstrate that teachers consider video-watching activities to have a significant impact on the development of prosocial behavior in children.

The items with the highest means were politeness for kindergarten and obeying a code of conduct for primary school. The lowest means were registered for punctuality with 2.90 in kindergarten and with 2.94 in primary school. These lowest means show that video-watching activities have minor impact on the development of politeness as prosocial behavior in children. On the one hand, children till the age of 5-6 do not know all numbers, which makes reading the clock difficult. In their case punctuality, understood as the effort of being on time or starting an activity on time, depends upon adults, either parents or teachers. On the other hand, children in primary school perceive punctuality more clearly as they can read the clock and feel the pressure of being on time. They are aware that they should be in time

for school, at least five minutes before the classes begin, so that they have a short interval to prepare for the classes. However, their being in time is still conditioned by their parents who overtake the responsibility of punctuality. What children can do by themselves is to be seated in their desks at least one minute before the class begins during break time. Practice shows that they fail to do so, even if they know the rule.

At both school levels, only one item was ranked in the same order by the teachers: 8th rank for punctuality. This similar hierarchy demonstrates convergence of opinion on the impact of video-watching activities on the development of these prosocial behaviors.

We used the T test for the independent groups in order to determine the differences in teachers' opinions regarding the impact of video-watching activities on the development of prosocial behavior in children. The significance level was set to 0.05. Two items recorded a statistically significant difference: altruism and adequate expression of emotions. At kindergarten altruism was ranked the 4th in the hierarchy, with a mean of 4.38, and at the primary school it was ranked the 5th in the hierarchy with a mean of 4.04. The higher mean recorded in the kindergarten level for altruism indicates that the impact of video-watching activities on the development of this behavior is appreciated as being more important at this school level. In kindergarten, altruism is much easier to manifest, as there are many more joint activities involving cooperation, goodwill and help. Even when they play, children can show altruism and help others. By comparison, teachers believe that at primary school, the moments when children display altruism are significantly less than in kindergarten, although this kind of behavior is highly promoted in school activities, especially in civic education lessons. The other item with statistically significant difference was adequate expression of emotions which ranked the 7th in kindergarten hierarchy, with a mean of 3.80, whereas and at primary school it ranked the 5th in the hierarchy with a mean of 4.04. This significant difference demonstrates that teachers consider video-watching activities to have a more important impact on the development of adequate expression of emotions as prosocial behavior for primary school children. In kindergarten, children express more easily their emotions, sometimes in excessive ways: they cry more often, they cry or laugh loudly and imitate gestures which are often exaggerated. Primary school children adjust the expressions of

their emotions much better to the context, they recognize them more easily in others.

Statistically insignificant differences were registered for six items, which indicates convergence of opinions of the teachers from the two school levels.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The intellectual, moral, civic or aesthetic education of children has registered a qualitative leap in the recent years. The modern school, preoccupied by the quality and the efficiency of its actions, ensures a diversity of learning resources for the student. Video watching seems to be one of the best choices as a method of modeling social behavior because it offers the possibility of getting out of the limited context of the classroom, of ensuring variety in exemplification, of discussing these behaviors and drawing conclusions related to the necessity of manifesting them in society.

Video watching activities display a large range of instructional and formative aspects. Our study showed that video watching activities have a significance impact in forming and developing prosocial behaviors in children from kindergarten and primary school for seven of the social components selected in our study. The research

could be extended to other school levels where we expect a different hierarchy due to age differences, social experience and independence in action.

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