Efficacy of Philosophy Training for Children on the Social Responsibility and Ethical Intelligence of 9-12-Year-Old Children

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Extended Abstract

Aim

Childhood is a critical stage in life where a person's personality is established and shaped. Most behavioral disorders and inconsistencies that emerge later in life stem from a lack of attention during this sensitive period, leading to improper growth and development. Such neglect can result in difficulties with adaptation to the environment, causing various developmental issues across multiple domains (Kwok et al., 2017). The elementary school years are particularly important for diagnosing and addressing emotional, social, and behavioral problems in children. Accurate diagnosis and early intervention are crucial for shaping children's future in terms of family life, social interactions, academics, and career success (Qu et al., 2020). The primary school stage holds unique importance as it lays the foundation for children's intellectual and mental development, allowing them to grasp various concepts and develop physical, social, cognitive, and psychological skills. In essence, this period serves as the cornerstone for future educational endeavors (Whalen et al., 2017). During this stage, children learn social skills and become more aware of environmental factors, which fosters a sense of social responsibility (Jalaei et al., 2019). Conversely, a lack of sensitivity to social responsibility can lead to negligence (Siddiqui et al., 2019). Social responsibility is defined as the ability to meet one's own needs while respecting others' ability to meet theirs (Fathi et al., 2018). Enhancing social responsibility helps children perform better in moral domains such as moral intelligence. Strengthening moral intelligence in children is an optimal way to guide them toward not just thinking correctly, but also acting in alignment with those thoughts (Torbatinezgad et al., 2022). Based on this, the current study investigates the effectiveness of philosophy education for children on social responsibility and ethical intelligence in children aged 9–12.

Methodology

The present study was quasi-experimental with pretest, posttest and control group design method. Additionally, a two-month follow-up period was implemented. The statistical population of the study consisted of children aged 9–11 in Tehran during the 2021-2022 academic year. Thirty-two children (all female) exhibiting low social responsibility and ethical intelligence were selected using purposive sampling and randomly assigned to either the experimental group (17 children) or the control group (15 children). The experimental group received philosophy education for children (Fathi Azar et al., 2020) across 8 sessions, each lasting 60 minutes, while the control group did not receive any interventions. The study utilized the Social Responsibility Questionnaire (SAQ) (Kurdlo, 2008) and the Ethical Intelligence Questionnaire (EIQ) (Amini Moghadam et al., 2018) for data collection. The data were analyzed using mixed ANOVA and Bonferroni tests via SPSS 23 software. The mixed variance analysis was chosen because both experimental and control groups were measured at three stages: pre-test, post-test, and follow-up.

Findings

The results revealed that philosophy education for children had a significant effect on both social responsibility (F=36.30, Eta=0.55, P<0.001) and ethical intelligence (F=55, Eta=0.64, P<0.001). This

intervention led to a significant increase in the average scores for both social responsibility and ethical intelligence. These improvements were sustained in the follow-up phase. The results indicate that philosophy education for children significantly influenced social responsibility and ethical intelligence during both the post-test and follow-up stages.

Conclusion
Based on the findings, it can be concluded that philosophy education for children is an effective method for enhancing social responsibility and ethical intelligence by fostering deep conversation and empowering the child internally. By teaching thinking and reasoning skills, children engage in deeper reflections on social processes, gaining more social knowledge (Lam, 2022). This increased awareness makes them more sensitive to the social and environmental events around them, helping them to become more responsible. In this approach, the educational environment becomes a space for children to explore their mental questions and test their beliefs. Teaching philosophy to children transforms the classroom into a space for philosophical inquiry, promoting democracy, intellectual independence, and social sensitivity (Humberto et al., 2022). The philosophy education program encourages children to make connections between various social issues, develop cooperation and thinking skills, and enhance their reasoning and abstract thinking abilities, thus taking on more communication and social responsibility. Children taught philosophy gain new perspectives on themselves and the world, allowing them to consider ideas they hadn't previously encountered (Malboeuf-Hurtubise et al., 2021). Philosophy, therefore, is not just about learning philosophical theories; it enables children to apply mental concepts in practical ways. Additionally, the philosophy education program helps children develop rationality (Isiklar & Ozturk, 2021), allowing them to solve problems and become more aware of their thinking processes. This program fosters greater sensitivity toward their moral and mental processes, promoting more moral behavior through reasoning, critical thinking, and reflection on their actions. This approach also correlates with improvements in moral intelligence.

Keywords: Ethical Intelligence, Social Responsibility, Training Philosophy for Children.

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