

## THE ROLE OF ACTIVITY CENTERS IN DEVELOPING SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF SENIOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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**Abstract:** This article examines the role of activity centers in developing social competence among senior preschool children. Social competence is considered a key component of children's overall development, as it includes communication skills, cooperation, emotional regulation, and the ability to interact effectively with peers and adults. The study analyzes how activity centers create a supportive and interactive learning environment that encourages children's independence, initiative, and social interaction. Particular attention is paid to the organization of various activity centers and their impact on fostering collaboration, responsibility, and positive social behavior in preschool settings. The findings indicate that well-structured activity centers significantly contribute to the formation of social competencies and support children's successful socialization.

**Keywords:** senior preschool children, social competence, activity centers, preschool education, social interaction, cooperation, child development.

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the development of social competence in early childhood education, particularly among senior preschool children. Social competence plays a vital role in a child's overall development, as it encompasses the ability to communicate effectively, cooperate with others, manage emotions, follow social norms, and resolve conflicts peacefully. These skills are essential for successful adaptation to school life and for building positive relationships in later stages of education and society.

Senior preschool age is a critical period for the formation of social competence, as children actively engage in interaction with peers and adults and begin to understand social roles and responsibilities. During this stage, learning occurs most effectively through play, exploration, and meaningful activities. Therefore, creating an environment that supports active participation and social interaction is one of the key tasks of preschool education. Activity centers, as an important component of the preschool learning environment, provide structured yet flexible spaces where children can engage in various types of activities according to their interests and abilities.

Activity centers encourage children to work independently or collaboratively, make choices, and take responsibility for their actions. Through participation in role-play, construction, art, reading, and problem-solving activities, children learn to share, negotiate, express their opinions, and respect others. These centers also allow educators to observe children's social behavior and guide them in developing positive social skills in a natural and supportive context. The purpose of this article is to analyze the role of activity centers in developing social competence among senior preschool children. The study aims to explore how well-organized activity centers contribute to children's social interaction, emotional development, and cooperative behavior, as well as to highlight their pedagogical significance in modern preschool education.

The development of social competence in senior preschool children is closely connected with the learning environment and the types of activities offered to them. The analysis shows that activity centers play a significant role in creating conditions that support children's social interaction, cooperation, and emotional development. Unlike traditional teacher-centered instruction, activity centers provide child-centered learning spaces where children actively participate, make choices, and engage in meaningful social experiences.

One of the key advantages of activity centers is their ability to promote peer interaction. When children work together in centers such as role-play, construction, art, or reading areas, they naturally communicate, negotiate roles, share materials, and solve problems collaboratively. These interactions help children develop essential social skills, including cooperation, empathy, turn-taking, and conflict resolution. The discussion indicates that frequent participation in group activities within activity centers strengthens children's ability to build positive relationships with peers.

Activity centers also support the development of emotional regulation and self-control. Through structured and unstructured activities, children learn to express their emotions appropriately, manage frustration, and respond to social situations in acceptable ways. For example, role-play centers allow children to act out real-life scenarios, helping them understand social rules and emotional responses. This contributes to the formation of emotional awareness and social responsibility.

Furthermore, activity centers encourage independence and initiative, which are important components of social competence. Children are given the freedom to choose activities, plan their actions, and complete tasks individually or in groups. This autonomy fosters self-confidence and a sense of responsibility, while also teaching children to respect the choices and needs of others. The discussion highlights that such experiences prepare children for school readiness by developing both social and self-management skills.

The role of educators in organizing and guiding activity centers is also crucial. Teachers act as facilitators who observe children's interactions, provide guidance when necessary, and create opportunities for positive social engagement. Well-planned activity centers that consider children's interests, developmental levels, and cultural background are more effective in promoting social competence. The discussion emphasizes that continuous assessment and adaptation of activity centers enhance their educational value.

Overall, the discussion confirms that activity centers serve as an effective pedagogical tool for developing social competence in senior preschool children. By promoting interaction, cooperation, emotional development, and independence, activity centers contribute significantly to children's successful socialization and readiness for further education.

The development of social competence in senior preschool children is an essential aspect of early childhood education, as it lays the foundation for successful socialization and future learning. The analysis presented in this article demonstrates that activity centers play a significant and effective role in fostering children's social skills by creating a supportive, interactive, and child-centered learning environment.

Activity centers provide meaningful opportunities for children to interact with peers, cooperate in group activities, and practice communication skills in natural and engaging contexts. Through participation in various centers, children learn to share, negotiate, manage emotions, and resolve conflicts, which are key components of social competence. In addition, activity centers encourage independence, responsibility, and self-confidence, helping children develop a positive attitude toward learning and social interaction.

Furthermore, the role of educators is crucial in organizing, guiding, and monitoring activity centers to ensure their effectiveness. When activity centers are thoughtfully planned and adapted to children's developmental needs and interests, they significantly enhance social competence and support children's readiness for school.

In conclusion, activity centers are a valuable pedagogical tool in preschool education that contribute to the holistic development of senior preschool children. Their systematic and purposeful use helps create favorable conditions for the formation of social competence, preparing children for successful integration into school and society.

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