

**SOCIAL COMPETENCE AS A PREDICTOR
FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL INTEGRATION**

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Abstract

Social competence is defined as "the characteristic of people capable of producing a desirable social influence on others" (Marcus S., 1999), a type of behaviour leading to social performance (Chelcea, 2013)", an empathic aptitude and the ability to develop social relationships. The following explanatory paradigm has been considered: the formation and development of social competences are conditioned by a series of intentional factors specific to each person (personality, capacity, social skills) and external factors specific to the external environment (group sentiment, group social processes).

Keywords: *social competence; empathy; attitudes; abilities; social behaviours.*

Introduction

According to the functioning theory (Parsons, 1954, 46), social integration described as, “*a type of relationship between the elements of a system through which they act together*”. As a process, social integration is conditional on the presence of social consensus.

At the individual level, socio-emotional skills are acquired skills through a complex process in which the behavioral model plays a decisive role. Social skills fall into the category of life skills, indispensable to a person necessary for social integration. The formation and development of social skills is conditioned by the strategies of modeling and development of the personality of the individual during primary and secondary socialization, emotional intelligence, internal and extrinsic factors that facilitate the formation and development of social skills. The individual inability to develop interpersonal relationships creates difficulties in regulating emotions and behaviors, limiting in understanding social risks. Social integration is achieved in the context of the need of developing skills such as interpersonal communication, listening, desirable, accepted and recognized social attitudes and behaviors.

The training and development of social skills is identified in the context of meeting the need for adaptation and social integration, communication, and collaboration.

Social competence -conceptual boundaries

At the level of common sense, the concept of 'competence' is defined by correlation with the effectiveness of the action taken by the individual with a view to achieving a certain goal and achieving the expected results (Anghel, 2017). The explanation can also be placed in the direction of aspects related to "skill, science, knowledge" by the individual in correctly managing different individual or collective contexts to satisfy a need or solve problems. The concept of "competence" is associated with "performance", with actions such as: "know", "to be an expert", "to be talented", "to be able" in a particular field or several fields. Psychology, Economics, Sociology, Psycholinguistics, Education, and other fields that use the human resource for the purpose of labor productivity, give extensive explanations to this concept, focusing on its structural compositions and relations between them.

The researchers for competence's structure (White, 1959) have revealed that not every time there is a strong link between 'motivation' and 'performance'. Social psychology research states that "performance" is influenced by individual personality, competence, social and emotional intelligence. Structurally, social competence is described in the context of consideration: knowledge related to the environment of existence (habitat and cohabitation conditions, social identity, individual and collective values), recognition and acceptance of social norms and social values unanimously accepted by society.

As a process, competence is the totality of mental operations that support the conscious realization of actions and favors achieving performance (knowledge – skills – attitudes) "Knowing how to act", "being able to act", "wanting to act". We can analyze the definition of 'social competence' in the context of considering the process of active, selective, and intelligent reflection of previously acquired knowledge that supports the formation and development of social behaviors. In this respect, from a sociological perspective we can appreciate that at group level, social competence is "the result of the implementation by a person in a given context of a diverse but resource-coordinated whole; this implementation shall be based on the selection, mobilization and organization of these resources and on the relevant actions, which enable the person to successfully deal with this situation" (Jonnaert, Ph.; Barrette, J.; Boufrahi, S.; Masciotra, 2005). Other competence definition (Spencer & Spencer, apud Andronache, 2014, p. 35) points out that 'it is a specific and lasting characteristic of an individual which results in achieving superior performance in the performance of professional tasks'. The cognitive, emotional, psychomotor and age characteristics of the individual guide the person's behavior. Social competence cannot be formed and expressed outside a motivational context and can only be manifested in a social context (through the interaction of the individual with others). Other studies (OECD, 2000) describe competence in the context of autonomous and reflexive action (interaction with the physical and social environment, decision-making, elaboration of individual projects, etc.); the ability to use interactive tools and means (language, knowledge models, technical tools, etc.); ability to participate and function in heterogeneous social groups (development of interpersonal, social relations, etc.).

Social competence is described within the individual skills that support the process of social integration supported by: communication, empathy, assertiveness, problem solving.

Other explanations of social competence: the ability of a person/group of persons to mobilise and coordinate individual and specific own resources of a social context; is reflected in the

event of success; is the result of a temporal, complex, dynamic, dialectical and constructive process of treating the situation; depends on the actions of the person/group of persons, how they perceived the situation, the resources at their disposal, the constraints and obstacles encountered in the treatment of the situation, the individual baggage of experience (Jonnaert (2011, p. 33).

Social competence is the ability of the individual to adapt to a social context and develop desirable social behaviours in situations of social interaction with the aim of achieving social performance capable of producing change at individual and group level.

English psychologist Argyle (1983) identifies seven social, essential competences for the interpersonal success of the individual: assertiveness, gratification and support, nonverbal communication, verbal communication, empathy, cooperation and attention given to others, knowledge and problem solving, self-presentation (apud Robu, 2011, 26).

Rubin și Krasnor define social competence as the ability to achieve personal goals in social interaction, while maintaining positive relationships with others over time, regardless of the situation (1992, 4).

Social skills refer to the ability to engage in social interactions and interpersonal relationships successfully, including the ability to interpret and express verbal and nonverbal language (Larson et al., 2007, 136).

Any social behaviour is the result of a process of learning what is valued by society. Such behaviors are understood to be appropriate, their manifestation being encouraged, and thus repeated in similar situations.

Emotional intelligence and social competences

The quality of interpersonal relationships is directly influenced by each person's emotional intelligence in effectively managing the situation of social interaction.

In 1920, Edward Thorndike characterized intelligence as the ability to interact with others. He recognizes a different kind of intelligence, in addition to academic and social intelligence. It is considered that social intelligence is the ability of the individual to understand the inner states of himself and others, motivations, behaviors, the ability to act optimally based on the information received (apud Salovey, Mayer, Caruso, 2011, 101-125).

Wayne Leon Payn (1985) appreciates that emotional intelligence is that ability aimed at a "creative relationship with states of fear, pain and desire"(apud Roco, 2001, 139).

Howard Gardner, in 1983, in his book, „*Frame of minds*” and, later, in 1993 in „*Multiple intelligence*”, presented several types of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, kinesthetic, musical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, naturalistic.

In Howard Gardner's view, social intelligence is also part of emotional intelligence, calling it personal intelligence and being divided into intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence is that ability to understand others, and intrapersonal intelligence is a person's ability to know oneself, one's own emotions and to change his or her own needs, behavior. Reuven Bar-On has made an important contribution to defining emotional intelligence by defining it as "a series of non-cognitive abilities and abilities that influence an individual's skills needed to cope with environmental demands" (Stein, Book, 2007, 14). In 1992, Reuven Bar-On identified five areas that components of emotional intelligence:

intrapersonal field, interpersonal field, adaptability, stress control and general mood (Roco, 2001, 140).

In Goleman's view (2008, 62), emotional intelligence is, *"the ability of the individual to be able to motivate and persevere in the face of frustrations; to master their impulses and to postpone satisfactions; to adjust sterile spirits and prevent troubles from darkening their thinking; to be persistent and to hope"*.

Social success is also influenced by social intelligence understood as a way of expressing personality and individual behavior in which people are supposed to know themselves and the social world in which they live and develop interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal skills are the skills to understand, influence, convince or motivate other people. In Golleman's view (2007, p.102), ,, elements of social intelligence can be grouped into two broad categories: the social consciousness- what we see about others and the social unconstraint". The same author points out that the dimension of "social consciousness" is included: "empathy, emotional resonance, empathic precision, social cognition and the dimension of "social disinvolvement"- non-verbal interaction, self-image, shaping the outcome of social interactions, considering the needs of others" (ibidem)

It is appreciated that emotional intelligence can be strongly shaped by environmental influences. This facilitates intervention to train and develop emotional and social skills at different stages of human development. The efficient use of emotionally charged information plays a special role in the process of adaptation and in achieving personal emotional comfort. Socio-emotional development starts from birth. The safety and health of the development environment, the quality of relations within family, the education of the child's family and the ability of adults to develop healthy parental roles directly influence the development of emotional intelligence.

The formative framework of children's socio-emotional development is conditioned by: training and development of interpersonal interaction skills, acceptance and respect for diversity, formation of prosocial behaviors, recognition, expression and self-control of emotions, self-esteem.

Socio-emotional skills correlate with the level of development of socio-emotional intelligence. Among the factors that influence the development of socio-emotional skills we mention the emotional reactivity seen as intensity at the physiological level with which a person responds emotionally to the surrounding stimuli. In children, emotional reactivity is most visible. In the same situation / context, two children may react emotionally differently. A situation of a person with a strong emotional reactivity requires a greater effort to regulate emotions.

In the case of children, this fact can be observed most frequently in the preschool stage when they are frequently involved in holding celebrations or activities with their parents. The following hypostases can often be identified: the hypostasis of the emotional child (hides behind loved ones, begins to cry, is agitated, forgets his poetry) and the hypostasis of the "brave" child of the child who "has no emotions". For those in the first category, adults begin to adopt different strategies to calm them down. Restoring emotional balance is achieved under the conditions of adult support and the child's ability to be aware of the absence of "danger". It is often found that those children who show increased emotional reactivity need more effort to inhibit their behavior when asked. In this situation the child will want to postpone the moment. In the case of children who show a lower emotional reactivity, there is an increased

concentration and greater attention in performing the task. Low ability to inhibit can predispose to the development of undesirable behaviors and difficulty in the harmonious development of interpersonal relationships. In this case, repeating the rules can be a solution in reducing emotional resilience. Emotional skills refer to emotional expressiveness, emotional knowledge or understanding, emotional regulation (Denham et al, 2003, 239-240).

Emotional and social development is influenced by the level of cognitive development. Language acquisition and attention regulation directly influence the child's socio-emotional development. The reflection of feelings is closely related to the acquisition of language. Children can express emotions through words. Attention plays an important role in shaping emotions. People who can more easily focus on a task are more difficult to distract from the stimuli around them. They can better adjust their emotional state. The regulation of negative emotions leads to maintaining in the interpersonal relationship. Frequent manifestation of negative emotions in an inappropriate way such as physical aggression (hitting, pushing) or verbal (raising the voice, labeling, insulting) leads to rejection of a person.

In the case of children, the period of preschool and schooling lays the foundations for the formation and development of emotional and social intelligence. In this context, the learning activity is directly influenced by the child's well-being. The socio-emotional development of the child will successfully contribute to social adaptation and integration. Children need to be taught to recognize how they feel, to talk about the emotions they feel, to learn how to distinguish between internal feelings and external expression, to learn to identify a person's emotion from their external expression, to be able to in this way, to respond accordingly.

In children, the most important factors in the development of socio-emotional skills are the most diverse social contexts and learning opportunities. These include: appropriate responses from adults, parents and educators, exemplifying how emotions can be expressed, social or emotional issues can be resolved, using rules to guide children's behavior in a social situation, providing opportunities to practice social skills cooperation, waiting for the turn, effective resolution of conflicts with others, sharing materials can contribute to the development of desirable social attitudes and behaviors such as: cooperation, collaboration, solidarity, prosocial behavior. All these strategies can help increase compliance with rules and shape emotional behavior.

Findings

The development of social skills is correlated with the development of emotional and social intelligence. Development of socio-emotional intelligence can be achieved in the context of implementing strategies that allow the observation of socialization processes and the manifestation of sociability as a personality trait. The formation and development of social skills influences the quality of interpersonal relationships. Socio-emotional skills target those components of the personality that help the individual to adapt their social behavior, to communicate effectively in different environments, to be tolerant, to approach useful strategies in different situations etc.

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