

Development of Self-Awareness in Preschool Children

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Abstract: The article analyzes the problem of studying the self-awareness of preschoolers. The work of psychological scientists conducting research in this field is also analyzed, and the features of self-awareness of preschoolers are studied.

Keywords: preschool age, child, self-awareness, psychology, consciousness, “I”, cognition, assessment, management, problem.



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INTRODUCTION

Currently, the problem of teaching self-awareness to preschool children is very relevant. Preschool age is the initial period when self-awareness begins to form. It is during this period that a child becomes aware of themselves, their motives, and needs within the world of human relationships. Therefore, it is necessary to lay the foundation for the formation of self-awareness during this period. This enables the child to correctly evaluate themselves and their capabilities. In fact, "self-awareness" is one of the most complex terms, lacking a precise definition. However, self-awareness is often considered as a system of a person's representations about themselves.

"Preschool age is the main period for the formation of a child's personality in physical, psychological, and social aspects."

Based on emotional experiences and interests, a child develops the ability to learn, understand, and identify various activities, comprehend and express different emotions, differentiate them with adult support, assess and control their own emotional state, and form an emotionally positive attitude toward the world, others, and themselves. As a result, the child feels free in a group, communicates with others, and builds relationships, widening the conditions for creative potential. Simply put, through self-awareness, a child begins to express themselves.

In psychology, self-awareness is understood as a mental phenomenon — the individual's consciousness of themselves as a subject of activity, whereby representations about oneself form into a mental "I-image." A child does not immediately recognize themselves as "I"; in the first years, they call themselves by name — as others call them; the child believes they exist primarily for themselves, as an object for others, rather than an independent subject relative to others.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychological study of self-awareness is closely connected with the investigation of the individual's real self-awareness as a subject in the process of self-awareness development as part of personality genesis.

S.L. Rubinstein believed that the source and driving force of self-awareness development is the growing independence of the individual. He stated that consciousness does not arise from self-awareness, but self-awareness arises during the development of human consciousness.

Structurally, self-realization consists of three aspects — cognitive (self-awareness), emotional-evaluative (attitude), and volitional control (self-control).

In foreign psychology, more attention has been paid to the practical study of self-awareness. Researchers such as W. James, C. Rogers, and Rosenberg identified various forms of self-representation (e.g., "social self," "family self," "real self," "ideal self," etc.).

A personality-oriented approach to studying features of self-awareness focuses primarily on the personality-motivational direction of self-image and self-esteem changes. For example, studies by A.I. Obozny and B.N. Katarsky in middle and senior school students showed that the level of their demands depends on the adolescent's self-esteem rather than the actual task performance or experimental evaluation. E.I. Sovonko's studies indicate that the relationship between others' evaluation and orientation toward self-esteem depends on age.

It is known that self-awareness begins to form during preschool age and is a central new formation of the preschooler. Therefore, the most important condition for its formation is the timely identification of psychological conditions for optimal self-awareness development and consideration of undesirable causes of deviations in children.

CONSCIOUSNESS

Consciousness is the highest level of mental development, unique to humans — this is how it is defined in specialized dictionaries, but this definition does not capture its full diversity.

Of course, there are more complex and difficult definitions of this term that highlight important features of consciousness. For example, Russian philosopher and psychologist A.G. Spirkin defined consciousness as “the highest brain function unique to humans, related to speech, the initial mental construction of actions, and the anticipation of their results.”

METHODS AND RESULTS

Self-awareness forms by the end of preschool age due to intensive intellectual and personal development, which is usually the preschooler's central problem. Self-esteem arises in the second half of this period, based on an initial purely emotional self-assessment ("I am okay") and rational evaluation of others' behavior. The child first learns to evaluate the actions of other children, then their own actions, moral qualities, and skills. Their self-esteem almost always coincides with external evaluation, especially that of a close adult.

Thus, at preschool age, a child develops a form of self-awareness such as pride in achievements. The child's self-esteem at this stage depends on their success in mastering the objective world and adult evaluation. Therefore, it is very important at this age to have competent and wise adult guidance, help in joint activities, support for the child's initiative and growing independence, and positive evaluation of achieved successes.

An important aspect of studying self-awareness is the characterization of its features in preschool children. The main factor for the emergence and development of self-awareness in the first seven years is the development of interpersonal relationships, including communication with adults.

Studying the features of preschoolers' self-awareness is relevant as self-awareness at this age is a very important developmental achievement affecting further personality formation and development.

N. Kartashova claims that self-awareness is not genetically inherited at birth; it develops with age and experience. Moreover, the beginnings of consciousness appear in infancy, and awareness of the "I" emerges at the end of the third year of preschool age.

It is at this time that the child performs various object-related actions without adult help. Key achievements of this age include standing independently, speech, object-manipulative activity, and feelings of pride and shame. By the end of this period, the child first begins to assert themselves as a personality. The preschooler begins to compare themselves with adults, desires to resemble adults, and tries to behave like an adult. The child develops willfulness, striving for independence and opposing their desires to those of adults. This period marks the early age crisis, characterized by difficulties in communication with adults, stubbornness, negativism, assertion of their own will, mood dissatisfaction, devaluation of adults, and tendencies toward despotism. L.S. Vygotsky called this phenomenon the "seven stars of symptoms."

CONCLUSION

Thus, we conclude that self-awareness begins forming already in preschool age, so for the child's optimal development, it is necessary to timely identify psychological conditions and study this phenomenon to prevent undesirable deviations. Different ages are characterized by specific stages of self-awareness development.

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