

Example of research paper on social cognition and moral development

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Introduction

A lot of social psychology fields are greatly influenced by Albert Bandura's theory of social cognition. In 1968, Bandura made an advanced human functioning model that integrates vicarious, self-reflective, cognitive and self-regulatory methods. He then renamed his once "social learning" theory into social cognitive theory.

Social Cognition is the science of the processes undergone by people in analyzing social information that involves the retrieval, encoding, application and storage to social circumstances. It concentrates on the part of cognitive processes on how we interact with the society; the effect of our way of thinking plays a vital role to our everyday interactions as well as how we feel and think about the things that surround us.

Moral development on the other hand, concentrates on the understanding, emergence and change of morality from birth to maturity. Morality is explained as the ideologies on how individuals tend to interact with others that are based on their philosophies, concern on the other parties' rights and welfare. People interpret and comprehend morality in different aspects and are based on different things. Emotions, behaviors, beliefs and attitudes are determining factors for the understanding of morality. The study in moral development gives focus on the part of parents and peers in the development of moral behaviors of an individual.

Albert Bandura is certain that by reviewing both the cognitive and social factors, moral development can be comprehended. Self-control plays a significant role in understanding social factors relating it to moral development. Young adults, being vulnerable, are most likely to create their

own moral system of what is right or wrong. With the system they created, it becomes their basis on how they will act; if they deviate from this system, they tend to feel guilty about it. To avoid that feeling, young adults avoid deviating from what they believe in. young adults are more concerned with self-worth and satisfaction. In general, the theory proposes that people function based on the vigorous interaction of environmental influences, behavior and individual factors (Bandura, 1986).

Thought can be categorized on three categories: crossover, environmental and developmental. William Glasser's theory and Albert Bandura's theory are included in the crossover theory. It is based on the cognitive process related to analyzing choices on how to behave. Environmental theories on the other hand, involve that of Ivan Pavlov's and Edward Thorndike's classical conditioning and law of effect, respectively (Pajares, 2010). What determine behavior are the outside forces that include environmental inputs and genetic factors. Lastly, the developmental theories are based on Lawrence Kohlberg's moral development stages, Jean Piaget's cognitive development stages as well as Eric Erikson's psychological development stages. The developmental theories are based on introspective processes and that of cognitive ones.

Empirical Evaluation of the Theory

Cognitive theory can be best comprehended by dissecting the theory into four main points. These are the bases in evaluation the theory in an empirical sense since experiments were done to prove these bases. Albert Bandura once worked on the development of an aggressive behavior with

the integration of social learning. He studied behaviors of young adults who come from a family with parents that also exhibit the same kind of behavior. He then made that as a basis for his theories. First in the four is vicarious learning (Hyde, 2014). It explains that a person uses others behaviors to make his or her own rule on how to act. Bandura has this well-known Bobo doll experimentation wherein there was a demonstration that kids imitate and learn by just observing what other people do. He experimented by placing a doll in a room and instructed an adult to do different things to the doll. He then let a group of children watch what the adult is doing to the doll. One group was exposed to the adult who used a wooden mallet to hit the doll who also used violent words towards it. The other group of children was exposed to an adult who exhibit a non-aggressive behavior towards the doll. The last group was subjected to a room with no adult to show any interaction with the doll. The results from the experiment showed that those kids in the first group when made in contact with the same doll, also showed aggressive actions towards the doll. On the other hand, those in the second group, subjected to no violence, also showed aggression but in minimum intensity towards the doll. This process of learning through observation employs retention, motivation, attention and production. Retention is inclined on cognitive organization, cognitive skills, symbolic coding and rehearsal. With retention, observed behaviors can be repeated since the memory of that behavior is recollected. Motivation on the other hand, aids the determination of the behaviors, if they are based on the reinforcement nature. Reinforcement is generated by the behavior of a person and may vary among persons; reinforcement is also associated with outcome

expectancies. Outcome expectancies can be self-evaluative, physical or social and can also be either negative or positive (Bandura, 1986; 2001). Attention is greatly inclined with the model and the observer as well as the behavior projected. Lastly, production gives importance on the translation of representation of the behavior perceived into action. Production is greatly inclined on the corrective adjustment such as feedback and monitoring of actions as well as the representational guidance like guided enactments and production response. Also, the sub-skills related and capabilities of the observer greatly affect production.

Second in the four is self-efficacy. Albert Bandura contends that behaviors are not ratified upon unless and individual has self-efficacy (Caprara, Regelia and Bandura 2002). Self-efficacy philosophies are good interpreters of the endeavors of people compared to the previous skills, knowledge and attainments. These beliefs are connected with persistence, resilience and goal-related determinations as well as outcome anticipations. Self-efficacy aids in fostering the expected outcome of a person. A great self-efficacy helps in making people grab their chances when presented with it at any time. Self-assured people get ahead of successful results, while the opposite is those who lack confidence. Self-efficacy does not result in the production of proficient performance without the required skills. People who believe they can do a task and accomplish it in a very wonderful state, does not necessarily result to the best outcome. A strong self-efficacy is not an assurance that when a person has it, his or her behavior will be influenced. People, who believe that there are factors which can disallow them from attaining their anticipated outcomes, as well as those who have shortage of

resources to do a certain activity, most likely are the ones who much rely on self-efficacy without knowing it is not enough. It is very vital to take into account how principles influence the development of the behaviors. The most powerful source of information helping in the formation of self-efficacy beliefs is mastery experience. It is where material of self-efficacy philosophies is instinctive (Pastorelli, 2001). It only means that persons involved in accomplishments, deduce the outcomes of the behavior they are doing and then, their elucidations are used to improve beliefs approximately about their competence in engaging in succeeding activities. Those outcomes that are successful, helps in raising self-efficacy, while those that are not, lowers it. People measure self-efficacy by the emotional and physiological states of themselves which includes arousal, stress and anxiety. Strong emotional responses regarding a task or event, which may come in the form of fear or excitement, are responsible for signals roughly regarding the expected failure or success of the result.

Third in the four is human agency. It explains that people are individuals who participate actively in their personal improvement and employs a regulator to their actions, thoughts and feelings (Bandura, 1986). People may acquire anticipated results through proxy agency, wherein an additional person safeguards the welfare of an individual. Also, there is collective agency which is done by people who work closely together to attain their shared interests. Lastly, the individual agency is done when a person is influenced by the environment and how others function. Agency also involves four important properties that are the forethought, self-reflectiveness, self-reactiveness and intentionality (Pajares et al., 2000). Forethought is the ability of a person

being able to forestall the outcomes of their activities. Self-reflectiveness is when people contemplate on the things that they are capable of doing, the significance of their quests and dependability of their judgments. Self-reactiveness on the other hand, is the ability of a person to create and normalize the proper developments of action. Lastly, intentionality is explained by the engagement and creation of strategies and plans in which realizations made by the individual is predetermined by the purposes to do the act.

Last but not the least on the four is human capabilities. Individuals are able to represent things by constructing guides for action through gained knowledge. These pieces of knowledge are processed through reflective thought and are also related to their environment. Also, communication plays a vital role as well as storing knowledge, in the process of symbolizing things. The process of symbolizing things lets individuals to participate in forethought. It is done by an individual through planning and able to forecast the consequences that may happen after. Self-reflection is encouraged by the short and long period challenges and goals that individuals set in their minds. Short-period objectives offer enthusiasm to yield incremental stages which leads, as time goes on to the completion of long-period objectives. With self-regulation, individuals are able to regulate their behavior to be able to meet both the long-period and short-period objectives (Zimmerman, 2000).

Also, based on this, Bandura was able to conclude that in his theory of social cognition, modeling is very vital. He also stated that by direct condition or training, an individual can develop certain behaviors due to the fact that

people tend to mimic what they see and observe. There are patterns that greatly affect the behavior of individuals, especially those coming from their parents since the exposure is more often. One example to explain this conclusion based on Bandura's experiment is when a parent gives a punishment to his child because of his bad actions; he punishes the child by hitting him. The intended effect of this is to lessen the aggression of child; however, the child tends to imitate what he sees. The development of an individual's language abilities are also affected by modeling. To help in the development of a child's language skills, a parent uses language which equals the cognitive capabilities of their broods. In addition, a parent can increase his child's language development by using a dissimilar syntax compared to what their child's use. With a person's inevitable growth, he experiences a lot of activities in his daily life. With this fact, he encounters activities that are out of the context of what he knows, of what are the normal things for him. These kinds of events usually result to social sanctions which are defined as the preferment of behaviors that are based on cultural norms. Social sanctions are deemed to switch corporeal ones that are persuasive controllers for the behavior of individual in several situations. The parents are the ones who usually set their own rules to be strictly followed by their children. And as a child grows, he then realizes and distinguishes what conducts are to follow and not; Also, controlling their actions are easily done and are based on the expected outcomes of their actions.

Social cognitive theory is used by professionals to comprehend the situations of young adults in their schools. Managing groups for the characteristics of

students used the theory as a counseling model. The theory is said to be a broad science that can accommodate issues and support counseling programs and therapeutic services; it is used also as a tool for supervision. Perceptions like the self-efficacy and modeling are contributory in understanding the development and behavior of individuals (Bandura, 2008). Using the theory in counseling improves its effectiveness as a tool in supervising and studying the attitude of young adults. One experiment made teachers come face to face with their school consultant and had their students come with them; concepts including reciprocal determinism, efficacy and observational learning were accessible to the people involved in the face to face group. The students do mimic what their teachers ask them to do and how the teaches do it. Activities such as humor, singing, discussion were invigorated through the conference. With the help of the results of the study, it generalizes that the social cognitive theory can be best applied so as to incorporate it in understanding the behavior of the students. Also it can be applied in the programs of the school counseling scheme since the theory encompasses almost all the behavioral development of a child.

Applications of the Social Cognitive Theory and Limitations to Counseling

Beyond all the explanations and pieces of great information that can be obtained by analyzing and using social cognitive theories, it has also its strengths and weaknesses. The strong points of social cognitive theory involve its flexibility. It is open for changes, thus, a wider range of study. Also, it is concerned with the significant social behaviors of individuals. It also emphasizes the theoretical matters such as the part of the behavior's

stability and part of reward in gaining knowledge especially from experiences and environment. Finally, it is concerned with the implications on the social impact of the philosophy regarding the individuals. On the other hand, there are also limitations that jeopardize the importance of the theory. One is that it neglects the emotion, conflict and motivation parts of the behavior of individuals. It also has minimum focus on the changes that happens over the life as well as the maturation and individual undergoes. It is said to also lack an organized and systematized theory that results to difference in interpretation. There are also issues on some parts like if self-efficacy can be deemed as consequence expectancy and why this self-efficacy is vulnerable to speedy change. The social cognitive theory also are based too much on self-reports that somewhat makes it unreliable at times since it may greatly vary from person to person. One experiment is that due to environmental changes, the girl deeply varies her attitude to her brother. However, this environmental change does not necessarily change his brother's attitudes towards her. What affect the boy's actions are the actions done to her by his sister.

One specific point regarding the social cognitive theory is that for the educators, it gives some problems. Conditioning is widely used by many in the classroom set-up to facilitate the management of the said environment. Unfortunately, since the students are very diverse making the environment uncontrollable, hence, there is a need for teachers to build each and every of his student's self-efficacy. As stated on the earlier part of this paper, young adults are prone in mimicking what they observe from their environment, thus, more complications arise since there are a lot of own behaviors each

student exhibits. Teachers are encouraged to practice the approach of multi-dimensional for them to effectively impart knowledge and understanding to their subordinates. With this aim, the students may be able to acquire what they are intended to and can therefore use it in their daily lives. Another thing is that, teachers, being persons looked up by the students should be able to disseminate information and explain the variations of the behaviors seen on different media to the actual and correct exhibited behavior. There are also environmental for the theory since the theory suggests an interaction between the individual and the environment, it assumes that it is greatly indomitable that one's behavior is affected by the changes happening to his life. However, it is said that behavior is more constant notwithstanding the situation; hence meek variations in situation will not always result to a change in behavior.

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