

Cognitive development in middle childhood: self regulation



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The developmental stage of middle childhood promotes many changes to a child's life. At this stage, the majority of children can successfully engage with a range of everyday practices that may involve areas pertaining to the use of problem solving skills, decision making and motor movement. Posner & Rothbart (2000) reinforce that during middle childhood the development of a child's independence is forming from their engagement with a range of social situations and circumstances. From which elements such as venturing into the higher levels of primary education and gaining more responsibilities enable children at this age to engage in regular contact with the larger world. Social connections and friendships become more important and the development of emotional, social, and mental skills adapt to suit such self-governance (Posner & Rothbart, 2000).

According to Heckhausen & Dweck (1998), it is during the middle years of childhood that children start to further develop cognitive strategies as to advance their control of their emotions and impulses. Children learn to maintain different moral and ethical standards, and start directing and monitoring their cognitive and behavioural response patterns and processes in their recognition of certain self-set goals and social expectations (Mischel & Ayduk, 2002).

In light of such developmental progression, the self-governed areas of impulse control, emotional stability, meta-cognition, and the ability to uphold social expectation and moral standards represent the diverse aspects that interrelate to support one of middle childhood's foundational elements known as self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2000).

Self-regulation can be seen as a foundational element in defining what it means to be human and encompasses the underlying abilities of decision-making, higher-order thinking and morality (Raffaelli, Crockett & Yuh-Ling, 2005). Thus self-regulatory capacities can be seen as essential far beyond that of middle childhood. Our need for complex and adaptive regulatory processes that allow us to maintain and further develop ourselves as to better suit a range of social, environmental and expressive conditions means that the development of self-regulation is really promoted in our development of independence, and therefore our progression throughout middle childhood and into the older stages of life.

Middle childhood is highlighted as a stage of development that is especially significant in shaping the content and function of a child's self-regulatory processing (Cicchetti & Tucker, 1994). Between the ages of 6 and 12, most children begin having extensive contact with society and must intensify their efforts to come to terms with their own needs and goals and those of others in their social environments. They become less egocentric and thus better able to emphasise and take the perspective of another person into consideration. As a result, they are increasingly sensitive to the views of others and to social, as opposed to material, reinforcers. Additionally, their repertoire of concepts and skills continues to grow at a rapid rate. The acquisition of a variety of intellectual, social, artistic and athletic skills provides new domains for self-regulation.

The theoretical concept of self-regulation is interrelated to an increasing set of self-governing variables (Posner & Rothbart, 2000). The diversity of self-governance has promoted studies theoretical connections to development <https://assignbuster.com/cognitive-development-in-middle-childhood-self-regulation/>

variables ranging between that of self-concept, self-esteem, self-awareness, self-evaluation, self-consciousness and even self-management.

As a result, this surge of research has engaged a deeper level interest into understanding the self through the collection of empirical evidence and the investigation of theoretical models of theorists such as Rosenberg (1979), Lynch et al. (1982) and Bandura (1986).

The influence of the defining characteristics of middle childhood on the development of self regulation is dealt with by many major developmental theorists; although their views are often conflicting. From a Freudian perspective, middle childhood is perceived as a period of self-discovery and independence which, in comparison to the earlier stages of development, children are able to become progressively free from the governance of the id (Freud, 1961). Middle childhood is consequently recognised as the age of the ego - A time of wider socialisation and personal exploration from which the child can move beyond that of a reliance on the family and turn to the outside world for self-support and guidance. Thus this phase of development allows one to become rapidly knowledgably socialised as they start to develop a scaffolding to further enhance a new level of both ' self' and ' social' understanding that is needed become an effective member of society.

Contrastingly, Zimmerman (2000) stresses that the basis of self-regulation is more foundational derived from an individual's perception of the reactions of others. The development phase of Middle childhood is time of critical analysis from which individuals become more aware of the evaluation of

others and is characterised by one's recognition and adaptation of response in light of a process of social self-reflection.

In acknowledging the cognitive development of children and in reference to the work of Piaget (1952), middle childhood is defined as a time when children progressively become less egocentric and much more responsive to others. Essentially, it was theorised the experiences that occur in this development period are a defining stage for children develop their own views of themselves (E. g. productive or inadequate etc) - An essential trait of in the acquisition of self regulation from the attainment of appreciation and self-worth that originates from that of a social perspective (Zimmerman, 2000).

The paper ' Developmental Stability and Change in Self-Regulation from Childhood to Adolescence' by Raffaelli, Crockett, & Yuh-Ling (2005) examines the developmental course of self-regulation in a cohort of children from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. The paper was aimed at addressing from maintain focus questions, which include: (i) What is the structure of self-regulation? (ii) Do self-regulatory capacities increase over time? (iii) Do individual differences in self-regulation stabilize during childhood? (iv) Are there gender differences in the development of self-regulation?

The research of the paper reflects an investigation that examined the development of self-regulatory processes in a range of childhood stages - From early childhood to early adolescence. In reference to the assessment of self-regulation in middle childhood, the study sampled approximately 650 children aged between 8 and 9. Researchers implemented 12 maternal-

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report items that measured regulation of affect, behaviour, attention across a three-point scale from often true to never true. The assigned assessment items were completed by the mother of the child and were aimed at addressing a range of developmental aspects such as temper control, impulsivity, restlessness, confusion, independence etc. Consequently the logic behind this collection of this parent-derived data is that by periodically collecting these report items at foundational stages of child development (i. e. early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence) the researchers are able to comparatively monitor the progressive development of self-regulatory processes as the children advanced into the different phases of childhood.

In examining the results, a factor analysis of the rated items revealed that the structure of self-regulatory processes is an integrated constructed of variables. That is, there were high inter-correlations between self-regulatory aspects (i. e. elements of emotional affect, attention regulation and behaviour regulation) which were indicative of different sub-components of self-regulations not being empirically distinct.

In addressing the question of whether self-regulatory capacities increase over time, the research examined the child's development using a repeated measures ANOVA which specified the rated items of self-regulation as the dependent variable and time intervals as the repeated factor. This analysis further supported a significant increase in self-regulation development during middle childhood (ages 8 to 9 years), with an approximate 45% increase in the developmental aspects addressed in the assigned report items during middle childhood than in contrast to that of early childhood.
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The collected data from the research also addressed the question of the stabilization of self-regulation during childhood. The findings of the analysed correlation coefficients between the stages of development and the assigned measurement items highlighted a trend that the stability of individual differences increased over time. Furthermore by analysing the development of these items the research also helped to identify how differences in areas such impulsivity, attention and ego control can predict subsequent boundaries in self-regulation development - I. e. Higher levels of aggressive tendencies were indicative of slower stabilisation of the overall development of self-regulation.

In addressing the dynamics of self-development between genders, the study provided comparative evidence that females exhibited significantly higher levels of self-regulation than males over all 3 key development stages and especially during the middle childhood phase. In reference to these findings the differences between genders was reinforced in comparative correlations which distinguished key differences in male development patterns in terms of higher levels of behavioural traits in aggressiveness and negative emotions such as anger and irritability - An area of examination which the researcher highlighted as being a possible element in delayed development in self-regulation.

In examining the interpretations of the results, there are evidently some limitations of the study that should be considered. One such restriction to the collection of the data was that the measure of self-regulation originated from a single reporter, the mother. Although the utilisation of parent-based observational reports are widely used in childhood studies and are <https://assignbuster.com/cognitive-development-in-middle-childhood-self-regulation/>

recognised as being an empirically valuable means of assessing child behaviour and response patterns (****). The reliance on a single and personally related correspondent may have skewed the results. In reference to the theorised social nature of middle childhood, the findings of analyses examining the factor structure of self-regulation could reflect common method variance that doesn't fully acknowledge a child's response patterns in various social situations (E. g. school attendance) where the mother is not present. Thus the acknowledged stability within the measured elements of the specified self-regulatory processes may be more reliable being observed on a shared-level basis. Future research should consider integrating multiple measures of self-regulation that are collected from multiple reporters or using multiple methods. The utilisation of such multi-method and reporter inclusion may prove to be important especially in fully analysing self-regulation functions beyond that of a parent-perspective and in to everyday life.

Another limitation of the study originates from use of a collected dataset that wasn't initially designed to target the developmental area of self-regulation. While there are a range of strengths in using the data collected from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth in the paper's given research (E. g. sample size, multiple cohorts and the use of consistent assessments across time), the analysis and measure of self-regulation was not fully customised to suit the research and was hence limited to the items that were available in the given dataset. The Behaviour Problems Inventory (BPI) that was used to originally collect this data was aimed at assessing behavioural issues rather than that of foundational elements of self-regulation. For that reason, this

variation in the context of measurement may have also affected how the mothers responded to the scaled-inventory items and may also account for the various high-level correlations of self-regulatory elements that were interpreted in the study. Additionally, the number of items used to analyse the levels of self-regulatory behaviour reflected a relatively small collection of scaled-items. This consequently reveals a limited level of variable analysis, especially in comparison to the work various childhood researchers examining self-regulation, who typically use a logically defined series of measures to best assess a child's ability to self-regulate (***)

The concept of 'self-regulation' is now recognised as a critical aspect and defining factor of individual development across the lifespan (***)

Furthermore, despite the highlighted restrictions, the presented study helps to support and append current literature and research in developmental psychology through a detailed analysis of a large-scale and long-term investigation of self-regulatory components from early childhood to adolescence.

In reinforcing the significance of this study, the recognition and analysis of fluctuating self-regulatory skills have been linked to a variety of lifestyle factors and developmental outcomes, such as academic engagement (***), coping skills (***), mental health status (***), risk-taking behaviours (***) and addiction (***). In essence, the interrelation of self-regulation as an explanatory developmental construct in child, adolescent and adult functioning promotes the need and value of research within this area.