

# Social cognitive theory

[Science](#), [Social Science](#)



The paper "Social Cognitive Theory" is a good example of an essay on social science. Ethnic and racial differences, as well as age considerations, play an important role in determining how individuals develop and reinforce health-seeking behavior (Rivera, 2014). Available literature demonstrates that, although African Americans and other minorities have a greater incidence of oral health conditions such as tooth decay, oral cancer, dental caries and loss of periodontal (gum) attachment, they are less likely to seek help from dental health clinics compared to Whites (Tilashalski, Gilbert, Baykin, & Litaker, 2007). The low health-seeking behavior associated with African Americans and other minority groups is due to a host of behavioral, environmental, economic, cultural, and personal factors that need to be addressed if preventive and treatment-oriented interventions are to be effective (Rivera, 2014). The present paper discusses how social cognitive theory can be used to enhance compliance with routine periodontal evaluations and treatment in a population of predominantly African American and Asian American senior citizens. In the scenario described above, Albert Bandula's social cognitive theory could be applied to reinforce the self-confidence needed to seek medical help and also to encourage African American and Asian American senior citizens to honor their routine periodontal evaluations and treatment through positive outcome expectancies and goal formation. The social cognitive theory not only describes a dependent relationship between three components namely the environment, personal factors, and personal behavior but also underscores that the ability to perform a behavior is influenced by environmental and personal factors (Social Marketing Plan, 2004). Owing to the fact that the

periodontal program targets senior citizens, it is important for the dentist to ensure the situation (place, time, and access to the clinic) is favorable to the targeted population. For example, senior citizens should be encouraged to visit the clinic in the afternoon as opposed to having them come in the morning because most of them are not early risers. Additionally, they should be provided with social support (e. g., free travel to the dental health clinic) and culturally-specific information kits to enhance their behavioral capability in developing and reinforcing health-seeking behavior (Tougas, Hayden, McGrath, Huguet, & Rozario, 2015). The clinic should also ensure a welcoming environment and culturally-competent care to correct any stigmatization or discrimination misperceptions that may be preventing senior African American and Asian American citizens from honoring their appointments. To enhance compliance with periodontal evaluations and treatment at the public dental health clinic, it is important for the female dentist to design interventions that increase the self-efficacy and self-confidence of African Americans and Asian Americans senior citizens to perform the behavior of visiting the clinic on a regular basis according to the tenets of the social cognitive theory. The self-efficacy of the racially-diverse population to perform the behavior of visiting the clinic on a regular basis can be enhanced through approaching behavior change in small steps (e. g., undertaking 5-minute video presentations to demonstrate the importance of complying with appointments) and demonstrating specificity about the change being sought (e. g., having brief lectures to demonstrate the relationship between periodontal evaluations and an increase in the quality of life among the senior citizens). Lastly, it is important to reinforce the

behavior of complying with periodontal evaluations and treatment through the use of direct reinforcement (e. g., providing culturally-specific educational materials on periodontal disease), vicarious reinforcement (e. g., exposing senior citizens to credible role models of the target behavior such as people who have benefitted immensely from the program), and self-reinforcement (e. g., providing senior citizens with cultural-specific opportunities for decision making and goal setting with regard to what they want to achieve by honoring the periodontal evaluations and treatment) (Tougas et al., 2015). Drawing from this discussion, it can be concluded that many of the components of the social cognitive theory can be employed in ensuring compliance with the periodontal evaluations and treatment among African American and Asian American senior citizens visiting the public dental health clinic.