ROLE OF TRADITIONAL GAMES IN INFLUENCING SOCIAL SKILLS AMONG CHILDREN

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Abstract: Personality is shaped by various social factors interaction with cultural and cognitive interpretations and functioning to form specific behavior. Traditional games helps in observing the environment and people around to improve one's social skills, and to deal with problematic situations. Social cognitive learning occurs while playing and it develops a strong sense of agency within social context to either exert control or to be controlled by people as both influencing and getting influenced by environment can be chosen by the individual. However, this sense of agency and control gets affected by low self-efficacy due to irrational outcome expectations and low self-evaluations. Mental health problems can be addressed by administration of traditional games as intrinsic motivation helps to accelerate learning momentum and vice versa. This paper aims to throw light on how traditional games indirectly promotes pro-social behavior by enhancing social skills among young individuals with peer groups. Positive behavior formation with cognitive empathy always gets rewarded and is most easily accepted and copied whereas negative behavior that ends up in getting punishment prevents that copying ability, as students mostly learn by observational method in school setting.

Key words: Traditional games, Motivation, Self-efficacy, cognitive empathy, Self-esteem.

Traditional games as indigenous sport activities have been in existence from time immemorial, and they have also been approved by UNESCO as heritage intangible activities. Sporting activities educate children about various methods of knowledge enhancement by supporting physical, mental, emotional and social development. Various reports stresses the importance of supportive teachers and peer groups for enhancing self-esteem of the students **(Loreman, 2007).**

Socio-cultural activities like drama, sports, dance and folk arts along with traditional games as group participatory events enhances effective communicative abilities, community belonging, interpersonal competence. Pro-social nature like sharing and caring attitude is fast vanishing due to changing social attitudes and tough times of societal disharmony with virtual games grabbing the interest of children and adults, in turn leading to low preference for playing physical / traditional games. Lack of physical contact and emotional stress reduces oxytocin and increases cortisol levels, thus creating innumerable developmental problems in the young generation. The present trend of gadget based attraction also points towards declining socio-cultural development and makes it necessary to restore the culture of playing traditional games in order to foster humane values during early developmental stages of young children. Adverse family and school environment stunts the social development of children, which otherwise should occur with accepting social rules with altruistic growth, honesty, self-defense, belongingness, cooperation and motivation for achieving tasks. Socio-economic status, friends, gender, race, age, along with emotional intelligence determine the level of social development. Higher emotional intelligence teaches emotional regulation and relationship management, while play is a significant factor for Emotional Intelligence and Social Development. Merely playing traditional games with relaxed mind influences children through group learning dynamics to understand others, to deal with task performance challenges by using their potential abilities to overcome their inhibitions and any type of social problems. When children get neglected by the significant others, their overall sense of self-esteem also gets diminished.

Social interactions in groups promote children to observe surroundings and behavior of others while developing conversational skills. Copying mannerisms, body language and way of speaking induces inhibition free learning confidence and emotional connect among children. Emotional changes with reactive elements like momentary feelings dominate thought patterns as emotional information to utilize them for problem solving and behavioral regulation**.** Articulating and negotiating suitably with friends on needy situations comes natural for children while playing in groups. Positive peer influence enables cognitive flow and creates happy moods and increased self-esteem. Mixed age group traditional games enhances social bonding between even siblings, older friends or parents in the form of more knowledgeable others that impart language efficiency.

Traditional games induces relaxation from academic or emotional stress by releasing oxytocin hormone which develops pro-social behavior with empathy and positive emotion**.** Oxytocin gets released by positive physical contacts like patting, hugging, holding hands, laughing, eye contact, motivating individuals to be in 'cognitive flow' while playing games to learn cognitive empathy with psychological benefits. It was proved that activities of traditional games integrated with social behavior was highly effective for improving social behavior among young students, as a significant aspect of learning (**Nur et al, 2019).** Various research results also have proved traditional games to improve socialization, language skills, negotiating the art of convincing others and cooperative learning as pro-social nature. Social skills training helps non-socializing people to understand others' feelings and respond easily with confidence, besides becoming assertive to feel empowered without compromising self-respect.

Motivation to learn is a basic necessity to inspire people for intensifying the hidden desires, untold dreams and willingness to perform the task efficiently, for meeting common objectives. To learn and continue new skills, external motivation is required to influence expectancy, goal achievement as value and emotions attached with newly learnt behavior to form affect reactions. Vicarious experiences through verbal encouragements for psychological state for physiological arousal provide information to change the negative behavior of an individual with relevant performance ability**.** Traditional games improves sensory awareness with tactile, gross and fine motor abilities, verbal and emotional intelligence (**Staples et al, 1998).**

Traditional games teaches the individual that the spirit of play is more important than winning or losing, since the games are filled with fun, without any rigid rules. Game play induces qualities of perseverance and patience and teaches children to continue even after losing. Children learn to understand the importance of social and emotional connect to get positive emotions after genuine laughter creating incidents during play. Optimistic behavior with self-acceptance and tolerance increases neutrality towards both positive and negative criticisms, as a learning curve**.** Receiving critical feedback can positively reinforce endurance power, whereas punishment and extinction helps develop both **e**xternal and internal motivation depending on self-reinforcements that hugely affect behavior. Retention ability helps to store the memory of observed behavior for a longer time which requires imitation to be mediated by symbols like words, smell of specific perfume, pictures or even body and hand gestures to represent assertive behavior; imitation as role play prepares the mind to achieve the set goal in any group guided, fun learning activity. Group activities played with friends in an uninhibited ambience provide the children with intricate cognitive factors**.** With experiential learning, traditional games help students to hone their creative ideas by enhancing the autonomous self-regulated learning attitude with vicarious experiences, in turn promoting positive mental health **(Bandura, Albert, 1965)**.

Traditional Games enhances cognitive empathy with social cognitive theory applications, and social skills develop individual and interpersonal social interactions by enhancing cognitive, linguistic, gross and fine motor aspects, socio-emotional and self-caring habits. It was shown that an inclusive physical activity school intervention program developed children's enjoyment with voluntary participation in physical activity sessions, self-perceptions, physical self-efficacy that influenced their overall social-emotional health and well-being through Traditional Indigenous Games (**Louth et al, 2018)**. Results concreted the positive experiences created by the TIG intervention program which enhanced self-compassion and kindness with mindful actions, while considering self-esteem as pillar of mental well-being of young children**.**

Group cooperative play is a kind of treatment framework to emphasize teaching children about life values in natural environments. Traditional Games played as leisure activity have been reported as essential mood boosters of mental and physical health with various psychological benefits and claims to create a sense of

wellbeing **(Coleman, 1993).** In any school, games period is most looked forward by the students for it helps to release academic and mental pressures. According to research reports, teaching children according to their inbuilt ability of learning and play has been positive to improve skills generalization **(Hoag, Burlingame, 1997; Reddy 2001).**

Conclusion:

Traditional games supplements the desire of voluntary learning of social skills which help to understand others by communicating effectively with people around. Imitation capacity with language adequacy can be improved as vicarious experiences while playing in groups and it is reported to foster social skills with socialization factors that immensely help in the natural process of self-development among the younger generation.

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