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1.0 INTRODUCTION

One branch of psychology is social psychology. Social psychology covers various topics or areas of study. In this paper the writer will discuss social psychology as a branch of psychology. It will discuss the self-concept, social influence; looking at conformity, compliance and obedience. It will also discuss aggression and its theories namely instinct approaches, frustration-aggression and observational learning theory. There will be the main discussion of the paper and then the functions of social psychology in education. Conclusion is the last to be presented then the bibliography.

2.0 DEFINITION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Wood, Wood & Boyd (2014) defines social psychology as the subfield that attempts to explain how the actual, imagined or amplified presence of others influences the thought, feelings and behavior of individuals. One can say social psychology is when we study the thoughts, affections and actions of other people in relation to others too.

3.0 OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

People’s thoughts, feelings an actions are influenced by their surroundings which includes the presence of others and strangers too. Social psychologist takes over from philosophy on the people’s consciousness and how they form beliefs about the social world. Social psychology examines the influence of social factors on the behavior of humans, considering the level of analysis. According to Aronson, Wilson, Akert & Sommers (2016), the goal of social psychology is to identify properties of human nature that makes the almost everyone susceptible to social influence regardless of social class or culture. For better understanding, one must first understand the social self then to how he/she is affected by the presence of others.

4.0 THE SOCIAL SELF

Humans as social beings need to understand themselves before they may understand how others influence them. The social self will look at the self-concept, self-esteem and self-presentation.

4.1 THE SELF-CONCEPT

Self-concept is defined as a term that relates to the sum total of beliefs that people have about themselves (Kassin, Fein and Markuss, 2011). One can say self-concept is a way of perceiving oneself which may either be positive or negative. As people interact with their environment, which includes parents, peers, teachers, the different chores and responsibilities that people are assigned or defined to do by society, make one’s self-concept to continue growing. These factors make one to develop either a positive or negative self-concept. The self-concept is made of cognitive aspects named schemas. These are beliefs that control or direct the processing of a self-relevant information to an individual. It is important for individuals to see themselves as distinct entities in the world, as the first step to self-concept.

Then social factors may be the next steps. People understands themselves better when they imagine what significant others say about themselves and incorporate those perceptions in to their self-concept. Kassin et al (2011) postulate that, the self is “relational” that we draw our senses of who we are from our past and current relationships with the significant others in our lives. Our self-concept is believed by social psychologist to be from five sources namely, introspection, perceptions of our own behavior, the influence of other people, autobiographical memories and the cultures in which we live.

4.2 INTROSPECTION

According Aronson et al (2016), introspection is the process where by people look inward and examine thoughts, feelings and motives. This is like a mirror where one looks inward and examines the information inside him/her. As humans, at times our thoughts naturally turn inward as we think about ourselves. This happens at a state called self-awareness. Self-awareness theory is the idea that hold when people pay attention on themselves, they evaluate, then compare their behavior to their internal standards and values. This theory helps people to change even their behaviors to match their standards. Self-awareness help individuals to be conscious of their internal standards and direct their behavior.

4.3 KNOWING OURSELVES BY OBSERVING OUR OWN BEHAVIOR

In our behavior we tend to know what we like or dislike. This is part of self-knowledge. That is the observation of one’s own behavior. Kassin et al (2016) contends that, when our attitudes and feelings are uncertain or ambiguous we infer these states by observing our own behavior and the situation in which it occurs. We observe our behavior and give ourselves self-explanation, which in turn helps us to make attributions about why we behaved on that particular way. Apart from inferring to our attitudes and preferences from our behaviors, people also infer on how motivated they are in doing something. The motivation may either be intrinsic or extrinsic.

4.4 THE INFLUENCE OF OTHER PEOPLE

Self-concept is shaped by the people around us, since it does not develop in a solitary context. Socializing with other people helps us to see our self-concept in relation to those of others. We know ourselves by comparing with others, measuring our abilities and attitudes. Social psychologist Leon Festinger developed the idea of social comparison theory. This theory hold that people learn about their own abilities and attitudes by comparing themselves to others. People engage in social comparison when there is no objective standard to measure themselves against and when they are not sure or certain about themselves in a particular field. People compare themselves with people of their group or trait. When one strives for excellence, upward social comparison may result. That is comparing ourselves to people who are better that we are with regard to a certain train r ability. When we want to feel good and boost our egos, engaging in downward social comparison would be good. This is when we compare ourselves to people who are worse than trait and ability. Thus the nature of our goals would determine who we can compare ourselves with.

4.5 AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MEMORIES

Autobiographical memories are collection of the sequences of events that have occurred in your life. The recollection of memories helps to feel special and they serve as important landmarks in the biographies about ourselves. Our identity is also shaped by linking the past to the present as it gives us a sense of continuity.

4.6 CULTURE AND THE SELF-CONCEPT

Cultural factors influence self-concept. Aronson et- al (2016) postulates that in many western cultures, people have an independent view of the self, which is a way of defining ourselves in terms of one’s own internal thoughts, feelings and actions and not in terms of thoughts, feelings and actions of others. On the other hand, may Asians and non-western cultures people have an interdependent view of the self. This is when one self is defined in relation to other people and taking into consideration that one’s behavior is often determined by thoughts, feelings and actions of other people.

4.7 FUNCTIONS OF THE SELF

The self has four main functions.

1. Self-knowledge which is our believes about who we are and the strategies in which we make and organize the information about us.

2. Self-control, which is the way of making plans and executing decisions.

3. Impressions management: the self helps us to view well a strategy of presenting ourselves to the world or other people.

4. Self-esteem which is the way we feel about ourselves. The self-esteem can either be high or low.

4.8 SELF-ESTEEM

Social comparison or categorization provide a basis for self-esteem. One’s self esteem depends on the results of these comparisons with others. Social groups are defined into hierarchies. From the hierarchies, there are varying degrees of power and status. Power and status helps in the construction of social identities. The movement from lower-status to higher status is called social mobility. This requires one to put more effort and be a hard worker. For instance, obtaining qualifications or acquiring certain skills, such as technical skills, musical and so on.

4.9 EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

A person’s self-concept has an impact on his/her academic performance at school. Mwamwenda (1995) contends that, a pupil with a positive self-concept stands a better chance of performing better that a pupil with a negative self-concept. As teachers, it is important to understand the self and the things involved in it in order to develop the pupils to their fullest potential possible. Self-concept is learned, not innate. To facilitate self-concept, teachers need to possess positive and realistic attitudes about themselves and their abilities before they are able to reach out to like and respect others. Their self-appreciation and acceptance would help them to be able to extend similar attitudes towards other people.

Teachers must interact with their pupils in a manner that would help them develop a high positive self-esteem that would make learners improve their self-concept. For instance, calling pupils by name, applying justice in the classroom and school environment would minimize chances of conflicts and punishments, thus when everyone does what is expected of him/her, respect enhances one’s self-concept. Praising pupils for good performance or responses given, improves one’s self-concept. Even the stuff must be acknowledged and be praised for good performance in their academic work.

Eliminating the use of corporal punishment and replacing it with positive discipline and enforcing positive behavior would help build up and improve learner’s self-concept. Teachers must avoid but rather promote positive behavior and look out for good things done by the learners.

5.0 SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Social influence is the process by which social groups and individuals exert pressure on an individual, either deliberately or unintentionally. Social influence is powerful to us since groups and other people have an important role into our lives. According to Wood, Wood & Boyd (2014), groups consist of two or more people who (1) interact with one another (2) perceive themselves as part of the group and (3) are interdependent. That is the event that affect one group member affects other members and the behavior of members has significant consequences for the success of the group in meeting its goals.

Groups develop and maintain norms, beliefs and expectations with regard to a specific behavior for group members. Norms usually describe how people in that group should behave. The norms also outline what the group members are not expected to do. Failure to adhere to the group norms may result in retaliation from other group members. As a group member it is important to conform so to meet the beliefs and expectations of the group. Groups are noted for exerting social influence over individuals. The three main types of social pressure are conformity, compliance and obedience.

5.1 CONFORMITY

Conformity is changing one’s behavior due to the real or imagined influence of others (Aronson et al, 2016). When people conform it means they fit with the group and are ready to follow the group norms and behavior. Overtime, historic periods and conformity changes. It also differs between cultures. In collectivists cultures, high rates of conformity have been reported.

5.2 WHY PEOPLE CONFORM

The theory of normative influence assets that people conform because they want to be accepted. This may be because they do not want to stand out or face criticism. So fear of being punished or ridiculed make people to choose to act the way the group is expected too. The theory of information influence suggest that people conform because they depend on others for the perceptions they have for the world. One’s understanding is checked or validated against the perceptive of others. For instance, in ambiguous situations, people depends on the way other people interpret the world or reality.

5.3 COMPLIANCE

When people follow implicit or explicit group norms, they are said to be conforming. At people are given direct request with the hope to make people comply. Compliance is defined as changes in behavior that are elicited by direct request. Compliance happens in many forms. There is a direct request and at times it become a Part of a subtle and manipulation. Compliance becomes successful when we know the targeted person. One’s status in a relationship, one’s personality, culture and the type of request makes people to comply. For instance, at school teachers can order any learner to pick up a paper on the school yard, the learners will comply because of teacher’s status.

5.4 TECHNIQUES USED TO GAIN COMPLIANCES FROM OTHERS

1 Foot on the door technique

There are three main techniques used to gain compliance from others. There is foot on the door technique. This is a strategy made to gain favorable responses to a small request at the initial stage with the intention to make the more flexible to agree later at a larger request.

2 Door-in-the-face technique

Wood et al (2014) describe this as a strategy in which someone make a large unreasonable request with the expectations that the person will refuse but will then be likely to respond favorable to a smaller request later. For instance a teacher can ask learners to clean for grade 1 and 2, and if they seem to be refusing, teacher may reduce the request to be for grade 1 only.

3 Low-ball technique

In this strategy someone makes an attractive first offer to get one committed to an action and then makes the terms of the offer less favorable.

5.5 OBEDIENCE

Wood et al (2014) postulates that obedience is behaving in accordance with the rules and commands of those in authority. Obedience helps in assuring that society survives and operates smoothly.

6.0 AGGRESSION

Aggression is defined in terms of intent and the reason the behavior. Feldman (2015) defines aggression as the intentional injury of or harm to another person. Aggression happens in different forms or approaches.

6.1 INSTINT APPROACHES: AGGRESSION AS RELEASE

Aggression has to do with inflicting pain to the next person. Instinct approaches to aggression contends that aggression is primarily the outcome of inmate or inborn-urges in both humans and animals. Louw & Edwards (1997) argue that humans have violence built into their genes and chromosomes. For instance, males may compete in order to secure their right to mate with females. Instinct approach may build up within an individual until that person finally release it in a process named Catharsis. Catharsis is a better way of releasing aggression. For instance, an angry teacher may vent his or her anger by hitting the table, wall or chalkboard which is socially acceptable that inflicting corporal punishment to the learner.

6.2 FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION APPROACHES

Another cause for aggression is frustration. The frustration-aggression theory suggests that people’s perception that they are being prevented from attaining goal will increase the probability of an aggression response (Feldman, 2015). The more the frustration is increased, the more aggression will occur. This is further determined by the closeness of the goal and the subject of one’s desire. However, frustration does not directly produce aggression. Frustration produces anger, annoyance and makes one ready to aggress if other thing about the situation are conducive to aggressive behavior. For instance, the other things may be the size and strength of that person’s ability to retaliation.

Another thing that may cause frustration and lead to aggression is relatively deprivation. This occurs when people come across a discrepancy between what they have and what they expect to have (Aronson et. Al, 2016). For instance, in class after writing an examination, a learner may hope to have responded well in most papers and think that he/she will get a merit or pass. When the results come out, that child may be frustrated and be angered by the results if they give his/her if failed or less that expectation, that pupil may be aggressive and even refuse to show the script to others.

6.3 OBSERVATIONAL LEARNING APPROACHES TO AGGRESSION

The social learning approach to aggression suggest that we learn to be aggressive. According to this theory of aggression, social and environmental conditions forces teach people to be aggressive. In this theory, attention is paid towards punishments and rewards that may be received by people after acting aggressively. For instance, if two boys fight over a girlfriend a teacher punishes them. The aggressive behavior may be reduced due to the punishment received. By watching other’s behavior, people learn to be aggressive. The social learning approach argues that, by watching models, aggression is learned. When people watch the behavior of models and the consequences of that modeled behavior, if the consequence is positive the behavior is likely to be imitated by people when they are in the same situation. For instance, the study Albert Bandura of adult being violent on a Bobo doll, while being watched by children who acted the same way at a later stage. At school level, an abused child may be seen by being aggressive towards other children most of the time. Therefore, the study of psychology and the sub contents of it does help teachers to understand most of the situations they may be faced with at school as they interact with diverse learners.

6.4 EFFECTS OF AGGRESSION IN EDUCATION

Aggression takes many forms namely verbal abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and psychological abuse. Even a teacher’s aversive behavior is seen as aggression. Verbal aggression, such as shouting at the learners makes learners to feel offended and his or her self-esteem gets reduced too. A good rapport between learners and teachers is encouraged. However, when teacher coerce learners to sexual relationship is not encouraged. When teachers are aggressive towards their learners, sadness, discouragement suicidal and loss of opportunities may result to the learners, thus hindering their success in academic performance.

In a classroom where most learners portray attributes of aggressive-distributive behavior, may be due to abuse or environmental forces/ conditions. Teachers may be forced to use effective behavior management strategies to maintain control of the classroom. This may compel the use of coercive and punitive discipline such a corporal punishment to control the class. However, this too have an effect of increasing learner deviance. The above three strategies namely social norms, deviance training and coercive teacher control methods, may all happen in combination adding to the escalating impact of exposure to high aggression classroom and schools on student aggressive behavior.

Teacher’s ways of communicating also has an impact in the teaching and learning process. As people communicates, there are four traits of aggressive behavior; (i) assertiveness, (ii) hostility (iii) argumentativeness (iv) verbal aggressiveness. Verbal aggressiveness defined as the attack of a person to another’s self-perception in order to cause them psychological pain, such as humiliation, shame, depression, helplessness and dispain along with more negative feelings about themselves, (Brophy, 2996). The perceived aggressiveness of the teacher and the effective teaching and learning concerning the course content gives a negative relation. Therefore, the teachers conduct in class his/her expected behavior and way of motivating students intrinsically as well as reasons for applying discipline in class are very vital to be noted by teachers. If teachers have an increased level of aggression that may lead to student’s cognitive loss in the course content, thus affecting the learning process and reducing learner’s satisfaction and intrinsic motivation.

Teacher’s hidden effect of anger such as harassment and criticism, physical violence such as corporal punishment, hitting, slapping, insulting and lack of communication with the learners are all a result of stress which teachers may exhibit. This may be caused by anger and frustration. These anger and violent acts by teachers further affects mental health of students. For instance, once a teacher stops to communicate with the learners, they may end up being withdrawn and fail to open up even in the further because of their past experiences. This in term greatly affects the academic performance of learners, since they learners can be afraid to even ask for clarity from teacher if he/she is deemed angrily.

7.0 MAIN DISCUSSION

Social psychology has to do with the study of people’s thoughts, feelings and actions. The self is vital to all individuals to comprehend oneself. If one knows his/her strengths and weaknesses as they interact with the environment and other people, the influence of social factors would be minimal. Perceiving oneself or one’s self-concept. Our behavior plays a major role in making us to say we know ourselves. Giving self-explanations and making attributions about the way we behave further tells that even the presence of others does affect our self-concept as social being. Our self-concept further develops our self-esteem, which may result from different categorizations that are further defined by hierarchies.

Social influence allows social groups to and individuals to put pressure to others either purposefully or unintentionally. Social influence makes individuals and groups to conform, where one’s behavior is changed by the presence of others. Groups and individuals are also made to comply to group norms and individuals using three main techniques namely; the foot on the door technique, door-in-the-face technique and low-ball techniques. Obedience is another social influence factor. People are made to be obedient to authority at work, elders in the family and society and to all spheres where and when it calls for obedience. This allow a smooth operation of organizations such as schools and society at large.

Aggression as defined as a way of inflicting pain or harm to others. Aggression has three main theories namely instinct approaches, frustration-aggression theory and observational learning theory. It matters not much the theory, but all cause one to be angry or aggressive. When aggression happens at school, studies have agreed that school environment can contribute to the socialization and promotion of childhood aggressiveness behavior problems. Anger frustration and aggression acts exhibited by both teachers/ educators and learners to affect academic performance of learners. The same thing with self-concept, teachers need to know it and understand their effect to teaching and learning as they have an impact in academic performance too. The same thing with social influence is affected if either teacher/ learner conforms to wrong groups and individuals who may discourage them from school work, thus affecting acting academic performance.

8.0 FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The aim of psychology is to understand thought/ cognition and behavior as they naturally occur in a social context. It looks at how the real act of observing other people can influence and change our behavior. In education, social psychology helps in the improvement of teaching techniques and learning procedure, intelligence level and thinking skills of students and how to build up and maintain a good teacher pupil relationship.

Socio-psychological issues such as punishments, lack of encouragement in school work, fear of failure in exam and other problems. These problem may cause poor academic performance. The study of social psychology points at some short comings in schools and other educational institution and how these environments may be made to be less restrictive, but rather be conducive environments for teaching and learning. Social psychology suggests techniques for effective learning, for instance, on how to build pupils self-concept and self-esteem, managing anger in the classroom among learners and others. Social psychology also helps to give direction on the methods of teaching in relation to the child’s psyche and mental development level of effective learning.

9.0 CONCLUSION

The paper discussed self-concept and it components, social influence and its approaches as well as aggression and its theories. All the aspects disclosed are seen to be having a great effect on academic performance if their knowledge and understand lacks from educators and the key stake holders in the teaching and learning of pupils.

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