

THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-SAFETY ON THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE LEARNING PROCESS AT ROMANIAN PREADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Working with preadolescents is a constant challenge, in particular in the education field. The constant pressure of a society that becomes more technologized determines the experts to permanently review the information that is passed on to the pupils; to analyse the knowledges, abilities, skills that are developed during the learning process; to improve/ develop the methods, techniques, strategies used during the teaching act; to create and increase the class environments in order to become suitable for learning and personal development for all the pupils.

The latest researches in psychology and in pedagogy (Ausubel, 1981, Neacsu, 2015) pointed the necessity of taking into consideration the classroom management, beyond the dynamic of the teaching process, as an educational and interpersonal environment with direct consequences both in learning efficiency and also in developing the pupils' personality.

This paper tries to emphasise the role that self-safety (which is developed through the classroom management) has upon the attitudes towards the learning process at preadolescents, particularly, at the Romanian preadolescents.

Key words: Self-safety, attitudes towards the learning process, preadolescents, classroom management.

1. Conceptual analyses and background

The human personality is constantly an object of interest for experts coming from different fields. These intense preoccupations are reflected in the various number of theories that have tried to explain the phenomena, in various interdisciplinary studies and researches related to human personality development stage.

Basically, the human personality can be understood at three levels (apud.Tutu, 2005, p.12):

- a) The general level – represented by the presence of all the features which are specific to human kind at each human subject;
- b) The typological level which is applied only to certain types or groups of individuals;
- c) The individual level– represented by the features that define a person as a single, unrepeatable entity.

At each level we try to analyze the human personality, we will notice that personality has a set of traits, that according to P.P. Neveanu (apud. Neveanu, 1977, p. 688) are : a) synthetic formations of psychic life and can not be reduced to a psychological process; b) it is relatively stable and it does not change under the transient conditions; c) it defines and accompanies each persons in all situations;d) it provides consistency in relation with the environment. Human becomes a personality due to the dynamic interaction with the social environment. Through the assimilation and accommodation process, he/she will adapt to the socio-cultural stuctures, will get new systems of knowledge and conduct (apud. Michael, 1991, p.11) and will be apart of different organizational climate.

In general, the notion of organizational climate (specific environment) signifies:

- a) intellectual and moral atmosphere that reigns in a group;
- b) the ensembl of collective perceptions and emotional states that exist within an organization;
- c) subjective states, especially affective and moral ones;
- d) a state of collective psychology, a group phenomenon;
- e) a state of collective contagion which manifests itself in what might be called the human environment and internal organization. (apud. Paun, 1999, p.54-55).

The **organizational climate** is a powerful factor of mobilization or demobilization of the members of an organization: it can have positive values and, in this case, it is a supportive factor or may have negative values and becomes a disturbing factor.

One particular organizational climate is the educational climate that occurs inside the educational institutions . It influences the quality of the entire pedagogical activities, in particular the performances of the pupils and the teachers.

The educational climate is the result of :

- a) the cohesion of the educational staff that comes out as a results of demands of a direct or indirect institutional context in a specific period of time;
- b) the coherent pedagogical projects; the perception that the a pupil has upon the the obstacles that will arise in the way of the educational engaged projects;
- c) the ability of meeting the general and individual interests of the subject /object of education, recorded effectively during and after the completion of the pedagogical activity.

The educational climate is present at the classroom level and at the school level; at classroom level it is a part of classroom management and it has its own dynamic in relation with the pupil's age, with the type of courses that are taught (apud. Iucu, 2006, p. 72)

Inside this educational climate, each pupil interacts and develops sets of relationships based on the Alter social perception, on the psychological affective distance, on the personal security mechanism that in time, will be transformed in self-safety.

“**Self-safety** is connected to building the original trust (a concept developed by EH. Erikson). Original trust is critical to the individual development, which will help him/her to adopt a full attitude of self-confidence, showing courage in facing difficulties, or it will distort behaviour so that any change will fray.

There are three types of self-safety:

- a) the **security requiring type** is characterized by constant exposure to dangerous situations to diminish fear, to convince themselves of their own social value and to mitigate the inferiority complex;
 - b) the **insecure type** is characterized by the need of the presence of a higher authority that will take care of them, that will provide all that he/she needs that will value the good and will punish the bad, that is the perfect representation of “good parents”;
 - c) the **realistic type** is characterized by the willingness of acquiring knowledge as a mark of true power, thus generating self- safety, and by the ability to take measures when self-security is under threat.” (Urea, 2015, p.117).
- The self-safety is a personality trait and it is put under a lot of pressure during the learning process due to the differential tasks that require different resources in a specific period of time.

The learning process is basically one of the major human activities that started in a non-formal form in the early childhood and stands the entire life of a human being. During the learning process, two major parties are involved: pupils and teachers (educators) who change a lot of information and develop sets of specific behaviour and attitudes (apud. Ausubel, Robinson, 1981, p.28).

Around 1974, Thomas and Killman developed an important theory in the human resources field, stipulating that in each activity a person will develop five types of behaviour/attitudes: **competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance and accommodation**. (Urea, 2015, p.121).

2. The structure of the research

The experts in the education field have revealed the importance of the pupil's security in the classroom management during the learning process and the teaching act. In the dynamic of the classroom management it will also develop a set of attitudes towards the learning process. So, this situation raised the following question: how does self-safety, as a personality' features, influence the pupil's attitudes during the learning process and the teaching act?

To answer this question we have developed an investigative research that has had the aim to investigate the influences of the types of self-safety manifested during the learning process upon their attitudes manifested towards the learning process; the wider goal was to thus design special strategies that will determine pupils' better school performance and will reduce failure in school.

Our research focused on two major objectives: investigation of the preadolescents' type of self-safety during the learning process; and investigation of the preadolescents' attitudes towards the learning process. We started from the following hypothesis: *taking into consideration the preadolescent's features, we assume that we will find, during the learning process, different types of influence of the pupil's self-safety upon their attitudes..*

3. The target group. Characteristics of the investigated population

Our research had an initial testing procedure on 40 preadolescents and the obtained Cronbach Alpha index ($\alpha = .645$) allowed us to proceed to extended psychological research that had the following stages: a) investigation of pupils' types of self-safety manifested during the learning process; b). investigation of the preadolescents' dynamic of personal attitudes towards the learning process.

We performed our research on 180 preadolescents, coming from the urban environment, with subjects aged 10-14 years, 97 boys and 83 girls (with mean of 12.7 years and median =12.9 years). The participation of the preadolescents in this investigation was with their parents' consent. The distribution was uniform, the skewness index values from 1.644 to 2.122 and with standard error of skewness from .710 to 1.033, and kurtosis index values from .807 to 1.150, respectively standard error of kurtosis from 1.122 to 1.456. The preadolescents came from two schools from Bucharest. The schools were selected according to the following criteria: a) each provided educational services to 2500 families; b) each school enrolled over 100 students in gymnasium.

4. Methods of research

In our research we used the following psychological instruments: "The Self-safety Questionnaire" developed by R. Urea, initially in 2005 for preadolescents (fidelity index test-retest: .802) and adapted in actual version in 2007 by R. Urea for Romanian preadolescents (internal consistency index: .712, fidelity index: .683); "The Thomas-Killman's Questionnaire" adapted in 2009 by R. Urea for Romanian preadolescents (internal consistency index: .769, fidelity index: .675)

5. Research' findings

5.1. Investigation of pupils' type of self-safety during the learning process

We used "The Self-safety Questionnaire" to investigate the type of self-safety that Romanian pre-adolescents manifest during the learning process. This instrument focuses on revealing the following types of self-safety: the security requiring type, the insecure type, the realistic type. The data collected are presented in Table no.1.

Table no. 1. The types of self-safety manifested during the learning process

Number of Subjects	Dominant types of self-safety during the learning process		
	The requiring type	The insecure type	The realistic type
180	15.28%	30.8%	53.92%

From the data collected in Table no. 1, we see that most of our investigated preadolescents manifest the realistic type of self-safety, in the dominant manner, during the learning process. This situation reveals that our preadolescents have willingness of knowledge as a mark of their self-safety. It actually means: a) that they developed, throughout the learning process, relationships based on trust, both with their peers and their teachers; b) the preadolescents' self-safety is related with the significance of the stimulus and the type of the person space: intimate, personal and formal (see also Urea &all, 2014).

In second position, the presence of the insecure type of self-safety during the learning process. This situation reveals the signified need of the presence of a higher authority that will take care of them, that will provide all that he/she needs, that will value the good and will punish the bad.

In other words, it means that: a) these preadolescents relate their self-safety in term of causality associated to the performed tasks: if they complied the teachers 'requirements they will be reward; if they don't complied the teachers 'requirements they will be punished; b) they will try to gain the "affection" of the "most popular pupil" that will protect them and increase their social status among their colleagues; c) the criteria used by these preadolescents in the assessment process of their self-safety are like "safety net", infantile.

The statistical analyses also allowed us to compute the kurtosis index (values from .765 to .924) which revealed that the features we found are relevant for our investigated subjects as a group.

We can say that the self-safety type manifested by preadolescents during the learning process is an expression of their experience in the learning environment and the educational climate.

5.2. Investigation of pupil's attitude towards the learning process

We used Thomas-Killman's Questionnaire to investigate the attitude towards the learning process among Romanian preadolescents. This instrument focuses on revealing the following types of attitudes: **competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance and accommodation**. The data collected are presented in Table no. 2.

Table.no 2. The types of attitudes towards the learning process

Number of Subjects	Dominant types of attitudes towards the learning process				
	Competition	Collaboration	Compromise	Avoidance	Accommodation
180	18,5%	40,5%	6,9%	8,1%	26%

From the data collected in Table no 2, we see that most of our investigated preadolescents developed the collaboration attitude in a dominant manner in their learning process. It signifies the existence of a good partnership between the teachers and the pupils. This partnership implies that: a) the teachers give proper information in a suitable manner; the preadolescent's school performance/ learning performance are evaluated in a fair manner; c) the preadolescents are constantly valorised in school environment on grounds of quality and merit; d) the preadolescents respect the teachers' work and will constantly develop personal interests for future profession and intended career; e) each preadolescent associate their school performance with the group performance; f) the preadolescents begin to realise the importance of the teamwork with their peers.

We also notice, that, in the last position, the presence of the compromise attitudes during the learning process.

Why is this thing important?

To answer to this question we have to take into consideration that the preadolescents have a constant need of social affirmation; they want to be noticed by the others. So, during the learning process, they are not willing to admit the compromise.

The statistical analyses data revealed significant direct correlation between the preadolescent's self-safety and the attitude that the preadolescent developed in the learning process: a) between preadolescents who have the **realistic type of self-safety** and developed during the learning process the **collaboration** attitude ($r = .788$, $p = 0.01$); b) between preadolescents who have the **insecure type of self-safety** and developed during the learning process the **accommodation** attitude ($r = .712$, $p = 0.05$); c) between preadolescents who have the **security requiring type of self-safety** and developed during the learning process the **competition** attitude ($r = .639$, $p = 0.01$).

The statistical analyses also allowed us to compute the kurtosis index (values from .645 to 1.082) which revealed that the features we found are relevant for our investigated subjects as a group.

We can say that the attitudes the preadolescents developed in the learning process are an expression of their experience in the learning environment and of the significance assigned to that.

6. Conclusions

Based on the statistical analyses, we found that the Cronbach Alpha index has the value .804. This value is a sign of the high reliability of the psychological instruments that were used in our research.

The data collected by us allow us to establish the following typology regarding the investigated phenomena: a) **Type A** is represented by teachers who have as a communication style the **assertive type** and it is also represented by the preadolescents **who developed the collaboration attitude in the learning process**; b) **Type B** is represented by teachers who have as a communication style the **non- assertive type** and it is also represented by the preadolescents **who developed the accommodation attitude in the learning process**; c) **Type C** is represented by teachers who have as a communication style the **aggressive type** and the preadolescents **who have developed the competition attitude in the learning process**.

Based on such typology revealed by our investigated subjects, we can develop two types of special programs: one type will be for teachers working with preadolescents and will concern the implementation of different efficient communication techniques in teaching act; the other type of programs will address preadolescents for developing differential learning techniques that will allow these pupils to increase and maintain their school performance. The statistical analyses also allowed us to compute the kurtosis index (values from .645 to 1.082) which revealed that the features we found are relevant for our investigated subjects as a group.

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The data collected by us allow us to establish the following typology regarding the investigated phenomena: a) **Type A** is represented by preadolescents who have the **realistic type of self-safety** and developed during the learning process the **collaboration** attitude; b) **Type B** is represented by the preadolescents who have the **insecure type of self-safety** and developed during the learning process the **accommodation** attitude; c) **Type C** is represented by the preadolescents who have the **security requiring type of self-safety** and developed during the learning process the **competition** attitude.

Such typology and the research' findings suggest:

1. At preadolescents with mental deficiencies, it is a direct influence that the self-safety type has on the attitudes developed during the learning process.
2. We can develop special programs: one type will concern the implementation of different strategies for increasing self-safety that will allow the preadolescent pupils to develop efficient attitudes during the learning process.
3. The curricula addressed to preadolescents should be revised every three years, especially in the socialization area and the professional orientation area.

Based on such typology revealed by our investigated subjects, it is necessary that the future researches in this area should be focused on revealing differential influences of self-safety upon the efficiency of social and professional adaptation.

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