



A Comparative Study of The Communication Behaviors of Popular and Neglected Preschool Children

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Abstract: In this study, I developed a communication behavior observation form and used it as a research tool to analyze and compare the communication behaviors of three popular preschool children and three neglected preschool children. The results revealed both commonalities and significant differences in the communication behaviors of popular and neglected preschool children. There were significant differences in the dimensions of communication behavior situations, communication behavior willingness level, communication behavior emotional attitude, communication behavior object, communication behavior function, and communication behavior outcome ($P < 0.05$). There were no significant differences in communication behavior relationships and communication behavior performance styles ($P > 0.05$). Whether there were commonalities or differences, popular preschool children's communication behaviors outperformed neglected preschool children's communication behaviors on various dimensions.

Keywords: Popular Preschool Children, Neglected Preschool Children, Communication, Communication Behavior

I. Introduction

Social progress has led to increasingly close contact between people, individuals who want to develop in life, learn how to communicate with others is essential, communication is the bridge between people, good communication behavior is like a rock-solid bridge that brings people closer together, conducive to the formation of good interpersonal relationships. Carnegie once mentioned: that in terms of success, human relationships account for about three-quarters, Maslow pointed out that people will seek emotional needs after the basic conditions of survival were met.^[1] Human beings were social creatures who interacted with groups to meet the needs of healthy physical and mental development, and establishing good relationships with other members of the group was the necessary foundation for this purpose, especially for young children in the early years of life.^[2] Children's character and behavior habits are still in the process of construction. Children move from family to kindergarten, and their social scope gradually expands. In the process of communicating with others, children's physical and mental development gradually improves. Studies have shown that preschool children's early interpersonal skills and their interactions have an important impact on their future development in terms of interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, and well-being.^[3] Communication can be called an interpersonal skill, and there were certain differences in the communication behaviors of young children in different social positions. Professor Pang Lijuan conducted a comparative study on the psychological characteristics of different types of young children and pointed out that there were significant differences in the interpersonal characteristics of different types of young children.^[4] The communication behaviors of young children are similar to but not identical to those of adults. They are less apprehensive when communicating with others and can visually reflect their true thoughts through their external behaviors.

By reviewing the literature, I found that scholars such as Liu Yunyan, Zhu Qiuyue, and Wang Yan^{[5][6][7]} have studied the communication between kindergarten teachers and parents, and the research on kindergarten-family communication was earlier and more mature. Some scholars have conducted research on teacher-child communication through interviews.^[8] Some scholars have also studied the oral communication behavior or communication ability of special children through intervention.^{[9][10]} However, there were few studies on the communication behaviors of neglected preschool children.



Because of this, it is important to explore the communication behaviors of children with different social statuses. Popular children have good peer relationships, while neglected children were often neglected and there were some differences in their communication behaviors. A comparative study can better reflect the characteristics of neglected children's communication behaviors, which is beneficial for kindergarten teachers to pay more attention to neglected children. This paper compares the communication behaviors of popular and neglected children to analyze the commonalities and differences between the communication behaviors of popular and neglected children, which can provide a theoretical basis for improving the communication behaviors of neglected children.

Research Objectives and Research Methods

1. Research Subjects

Both the popular preschool children and the neglected preschool children were from a kindergarten junior class in Wuhan, China. There were 37 preschool children in the class, 16 boys and 21 girls, with an average age of 5 years and 10 months. Three popular and three neglected preschool children were selected for the study through peer nomination and teacher interviews. Popular children are those who have strong social interaction skills, are liked by many children in their toddler group, and receive more positive nominations in peer nominations.^[11] Neglected children are those who receive less attention from others in the toddler group, are rarely liked or disliked, always show hesitation and hovering when communicating and interacting with others, and receive few positive and negative nominations in peer nominations.^[12]

2. Research Methods

In this study, the subjects were selected based on peer nomination, and the naturalistic observation method was used to understand the communication behavior of the subjects. The peer nomination method was a social measurement method, which was the most basic, primary, and longest applied method of social measurement, and this method can measure the social status of young children in the group.^{[13][14]} In this paper, the popular and neglected preschool children were selected by peer nomination method, and three popular and three neglected preschool children were finally identified as observation subjects by combining with teacher interviews (The specific division was shown in the table below).

Table 1 The Types of Popular and Neglected Preschool Children^[4]

Type	Positive Nomination Criteria Score(Z)	Negative Nomination Criteria Score(Z)
Popular Preschool Children	≥ 1.0	≤ 0
Neglected Preschool Children	≤ -0.5	≤ -0.5
Rejected Preschool Children	≤ 0	≥ 1.0
Ambivalent Preschool Children	≥ 0.5	≥ 0.5
General Type of Preschool Children	Children Left In the Above Categories	

The natural observation method is a purposeful and planned method of observing and recording actual events in a natural situation. This observation lasted for one month, following the preschool children's daily living arrangements from the time they entered to the time they left the school, and recording the communication behaviors of the popular and neglected preschool children in their daily lives objectively and realistically based on the homemade "Child Communication Behavior Observation Form".

Study results

1. General Situation of Communication Behavior Between Popular Preschool Children and Neglected Preschool Children

Make frequency statistics on communication behavior events between popular children and neglected children. The frequency of communication behaviors between the popular and neglected preschool children was highly significant during the one-month observation period ($P=0.000$, $P<0.01$). The total number of events of communication behaviors between popular and neglected preschool children was 446, the number of events of communication behaviors of popular preschool children was 280 (62.8%) and the number of events of communication behaviors of neglected preschool children was 166 (37.2%). Based on the data, it can be concluded that the frequency of communication behaviors of neglected preschool children was significantly less than that of communication behaviors of popular preschool children.

Table 2 Statistical Table of Communication Behavior between Popular Preschool Children and Neglected Preschool Children

	N	Percentage (%)	T	DF	P
Popular Preschool Children	280	62.8			
Neglected Preschool Children	166	37.2	71.037	445	0.000
Total	446	100.0			

1. Specific Manifestations of Communication Behaviors of Popular and Neglected Preschool Children

The paper carried out a contingency table chi-square test on the dimensions of communication behavior situations, communication behavior willingness, communication behavior emotion, communication behavior object, communication behavior relationship, communication behavior function, communication behavior performance style, and communication behavior outcome between popular and neglected preschool children, and the specific results were shown in the following table.

Table 3 Specific Manifestations of Communication Behaviors of Popular and Neglected Preschool Children^[15]

		Popular Preschool Children (N)	Neglected Preschool Children (N)	X ²	DF	P
Communication Situations	Teaching Activities	42	50	19.112**	4	0.001
	Life Activities	44	25			
	Regional Activities	23	12			
	Outdoor Activities	18	16			
Communication Willingness	Excessive Links	153	63	32.121***	2	0.000
	Active	220	88			
	Passive	56	71			
Communication Emotions	Rejection	4	7	94.240***	2	0.000
	Active	226	59			
	Neutral	53	99			
Communication Object	Negative	1	8	13.002**	2	0.002
	Same-sex Companion	169	71			
	Heterosexual Companion	77	67			
Communication Relationships	Teacher	34	28	0.459	1	0.498
	Intimate	156	124			
	Ordinary	87	79			
	Obtain	44	12			
Communication Function	Joint Activities	90	47	19.112**	4	0.001
	Expression	28	16			
	Attention-getting	75	66			
	Help	20	11			
Communication Performance Form	Maintenance Rules	23	14	1.200	2	0.549
	Verbal	79	39			
	Non-verbal	61	38			
Communication Results	Combination of Both	140	89	63.042***	2	0.000
	Success	239	85			
	Failure	22	54			
	Unresolved	19	27			

(1) There were significant differences in communication behavior between popular preschool children and neglected preschool children in different situations. ($X^2=19.112$, $P=0.001$, $P<0.01$). The communication behaviors of the popular and neglected preschool children mainly occurred in the excessive links, and there were significant differences in the frequency of communication behaviors in different situations. Excluding the Excessive links, the popular preschool children showed more frequent communication behaviors in life activities and the least frequent communication behaviors in outdoor activities, while the neglected preschool children showed more frequent communication behaviors in teaching activities and the least frequent communication behaviors in area activities.

(2) There was a significant difference in the level of willingness to communicate behaviors between the popular and neglected preschool children ($X^2=32.121$, $P=0.000$, $P<0.001$). As can be seen from Table 3, the communication behaviors of popular preschool children and neglected preschool children, in communicating with others, were dominated by active willingness to communicate, followed by passive willingness, and the least frequent occurrence of willingness to reject. However, passive communication behaviors and refusal communication behaviors of popular preschool children appeared less frequently than communication behaviors of passive willingness and refusal willingness of neglected preschool children. Communication behaviors of active willingness appeared significantly more frequently in neglected preschool children.

- (3) There were significant differences in the emotional attitudes toward communication behaviors between popular and neglected preschool children ($X^2=94.240$, $P=0.000$, $P<0.01$). The emotional attitudes of the communication behaviors of the popular preschool children were dominated by positive emotions, followed by the communication behaviors with neutral emotional attitudes, and the communication behaviors with negative emotional attitudes appeared least frequently; The emotional attitudes of the communication behaviors of the neglected preschool children were dominated by neutral emotions, followed by the communication behaviors with positive emotions, and the communication behaviors with negative emotions appeared least frequently.
- (4) There were significant differences in communication behavior objects between popular children and neglected children ($X^2=13.002$, $P=0.002$, $P<0.01$). Table 3 showed that both the popular and neglected preschool children communicated mainly with same-sex peers and least frequently with teachers. Regardless of who the communication objects were, the frequency of communication behaviors with different objects was higher for the popular preschool children than for the neglected preschool children.
- (5) There was no significant difference in the relationship between the communication behaviors of popular and neglected preschool children ($X^2=0.459$, $P=0.498$, $P>0.05$). Table 3 showed that both popular and neglected preschool children have predominantly ordinary relationships with the people they communicate with, which indicated that communication behaviors were common and that preschool children communicate with people around them at all times, not just limited to communication with close peers.
- (6) There was a significant difference in the function of communication behaviors between popular and neglected preschool children ($X^2=19.112$, $P=0.001$, $P<0.05$). The functions of communication behaviors of the popular preschool children were mainly joint activities, while the neglected preschool children's communication behaviors were mainly attention-getting. The functions of obtaining, joint activities, expressing, attention-getting, helping, and maintaining rules shown by the popular preschool children's communication behaviors all appeared more frequently than the neglected preschool children.
- (7) There was no significant difference in the way popular and neglected preschool children display their communication behaviors ($X^2=1.200$, $P=0.549$, $P>0.05$). Table 3 showed that both popular and neglected preschool children perform communication behaviors in a combination of both verbal and nonverbal ways.
- (8) There were extremely significant differences in communication behavior outcomes between popular and neglected preschool children ($X^2=63.042$, $P=0.000$, $P<0.001$). Table 3 showed that both the popular and neglected preschool children had mainly successful communication outcomes, followed by failures and the least frequent results were those that were left unresolved. However, the frequency of successful communication behaviors for the popular preschool children was much higher than that for the neglected preschool children, while the frequency of failed and unresolved communication behaviors for the popular preschool children was lower than that for the neglected preschool children.

Discussion

1. Commonalities in the Communication Behaviors of Popular and Neglected Preschool Children

The comparison revealed that there were certain commonalities between the communication behaviors of popular preschool children and neglected preschool children, specifically: First, the communication behavior situation of preschool children was dominated by the transition session; Second, the willingness level of preschool children's communication behaviors was dominated by the initiative; Third, the objects of preschool children's communication behaviors were dominated by same-sex peers; Fourth, there was no significant difference between preschool children's communication behavior relationships; Fifth, there was no significant difference in the way preschool children display their communication behaviors; Sixth, the results of preschool children's communication behaviors was mainly successful.

The transition session is a freer part of the day, so preschool children use the short overtime to communicate with their peers. Overall, preschool children's willingness to communicate behavior was mainly active, which indicates that both popular and neglected preschool children were eager to communicate with others; the objects of preschool children's communication were mainly same-sex peers, which reflects the phenomenon of gender segregation. One study noted that the trend in peer interaction among young children was same-gender interaction, with 91% of children forming selective interactions with same-gender peers, and the choice of same-gender children for interaction was more evident among younger to older children.

^[16] Therefore, the communication targets of both popular and neglected preschool children were mainly same-sex peers; there was no significant difference between the communication behaviors of popular and neglected preschool children and the way of communication behaviors expressions. In practice, I found that children generally adopted the principle of proximity in their communication, and communicated directly with the children around them when they wanted to express themselves or have needs, rather than choosing their good friends to communicate with from far away. In day-to-day life activities, communication occurs at all times, and both verbal and nonverbal communication methods occur. The final results of the preschool children's communication were mainly successful, which indicates that when the preschool children communicated with others, they can basically get the other party's response and both parties can reach a consensus.

2. Differences in Communication Behaviors Between Popular and Neglected Preschool Children

While there were commonalities in the communication behaviors of popular and neglected children, there were also significant differences. This was demonstrated as follows. First, there were significant differences in the emotional attitudes of communication behaviors between popular and neglected preschool children. The emotional attitudes of communication behaviors of popular preschool children were dominated by positive emotions, while the emotional attitudes of communication behaviors of neglected preschool children were dominated by neutral emotions; neglected preschool children showed more neutral and negative emotional attitudes than popular preschool children and less positive emotional attitudes than popular preschool children when communicating with others. Second, there were significant differences in the communication behavior functions of popular and neglected preschool children. The communication behavior function of popular preschool children was based on joint activities, while the communication behavior function of neglected preschool children was based on attention-getting. Third, there were significant differences in the outcomes of communication behaviors between the popular and neglected preschool children. Neglected preschool children had significantly fewer successful communication behavior outcomes than popular preschool children, and more failed and unresolved communication behavior outcomes than popular preschool children.

While there were commonalities in the communication behaviors of popular and neglected preschool children, there were also significant differences. The communication behaviors of the popular preschool children were better than those of the neglected preschool children. The popular preschool children were more proactive and had positive emotional attitudes when communicating with others, but the neglected preschool children were less proactive and lacked positive emotional attitudes when communicating with others. For neglected preschool children, communication with others was more about getting the attention of others, while popular preschool children wanted to do activities with others.

Conclusion

To sum up, as a member of society, no matter whether it is an adult or a child, whether it is a popular child or a neglected child, everyone needs to communicate with others, and communication exists all the time. It was clear from the observational data that although neglected preschool children's communication behaviors occur significantly less frequently than popular children's communication behaviors, neglected preschool children still exhibit communication behaviors. Therefore, in the comparison of the communication behaviors of popular preschool children and neglected preschool children, teachers need to pay attention to the communication behaviors of neglected preschool children. First, teachers should create a relaxed and free environment for neglected children. Neglected children were less proactive in their communication behaviors than popular children, and when neglected children are in a free environment, it is beneficial for them to take the initiative in communicating with others. Second, adopt encouraging education. Encourage neglected children to take the initiative to communicate with others in daily life. Encouraging education is good for enhancing children's self-confidence, and teachers should encourage neglected children more to make them feel the feeling of being noticed. Third, When teachers arrange one-day activities, they arrange popular children and neglected children together, so that popular children can mobilize the enthusiasm of neglected children to communicate. Imitation is an important way for human beings to learn socially, which can help individuals master certain skills and acquire appropriate behaviors effectively, as well as to spread social culture. Newborn babies already have certain imitation skills, such as expression imitation.^[17] Under the influence of the popular preschool children, the neglected preschool children will imitate the proactiveness of the popular preschool children when communicating with others, will imitate the communication style and attitude of the popular preschool children, and will improve their initiative in communication as well as emotional attitude and communication style.

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