

Social Intervention in Guiding Adolescents' Physical Behaviors:

A Preventive Strategy

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Abstract:

Social intervention in guiding adolescents' physical behaviors serves as a fundamental tool for promoting public health and ensuring the positive development of both individuals and society. Adolescence is a sensitive stage marked by physical, psychological, and social transformations, which make individuals vulnerable to behaviors that may negatively impact their health and future. Therefore, social institutions, including the family, schools, and civil society, play a pivotal role in preventing such behaviors through socialization, education, and continuous supervision.

Preventive strategies focus on avoiding the emergence of harmful behaviors through awareness-raising and early intervention, in addition to mitigating the impact of existing behaviors via psychological and social support as well as rehabilitation. These efforts rely on various tools, including awareness programs, individual counseling, and targeted activities, while leveraging digital media to deliver positive messages in innovative ways. However, these interventions face challenges, such as adolescents' resistance to guidance, the influence of globalization on cultural norms, and limited resources for implementing comprehensive programs.

Keywords: Social intervention, Adolescents' behaviors, Physical behaviors, Preventive strategies.

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Introduction:

Adolescence is a sensitive transitional stage characterized by significant physical, psychological, and social changes that heavily influence an individual's behaviors. Guiding these behaviors poses a challenge to families, communities, and educational institutions, particularly in the context of contemporary social and cultural transformations that introduce new patterns of interaction. This article examines social intervention as a tool for guiding adolescents' physical behaviors through preventive strategies, adopting a comprehensive sociological perspective.

1. Adolescents and Changing Physical Behaviors in a Social Context

Adolescents experience hormonal and physical changes that affect their self-image in relation to others, prompting them to redefine their physical identity. Pierre Bourdieu highlights the importance of "physical capital" as a domain shaped by cultural and social contexts (Bourdieu, 1984).

1.1 Dimensions of Physical Behaviors

- Identity Exploration: Adolescents strive to understand their changing bodies, often exhibiting heightened interest in their appearance and experimenting with various clothing styles and hairstyles.
- Self-Expression: Adolescents use their bodies as a means of expressing their independent identity, sometimes resorting to physical modifications such as tattoos or piercings.
- Hygiene: Personal hygiene, grooming, and appearance become priorities for adolescents. However, this attention to appearance can sometimes lead to eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia.
- Physical Activity: Adolescents feel a strong need for movement and physical activity. They may engage in sports or other physical pursuits to channel their energy and explore new physical challenges, such as extreme sports or competitive events.
- Sleep Disorders: Many adolescents experience sleep disturbances, including insomnia or excessive sleeping, due to hormonal changes and psychological stress.
- Sexual Exploration: Adolescents go through a phase of exploring their sexual identity, engaging in various sexual behaviors as part of this process.

Notably, adolescents' perceptions of their behaviors are closely tied to social status and belonging.

1.2 Social Influence

Adolescents are a driving force for social change, with their actions and ideas significantly shaping their communities. As they represent the future generation, understanding how their behaviors impact society is of paramount importance. Adolescent behavior is influenced by their social environment, including family, school, and media, which collectively contribute to shaping acceptable behavioral norms.

2. Social Intervention as a Guiding Tool

2.1 Family Intervention

The family is defined as a legal and social structure of individuals united by bonds of marriage, kinship, or adoption, often sharing a household and engaging in reciprocal interactions within clearly defined social roles supported by a shared culture (Al-Jundi, 2015).

Additionally, the family has a distinctive cultural character that varies across societies. This cultural system shapes and indoctrinates individuals from birth, teaching them acceptable social behaviors and the nature of interactions with others, along with the traditions, customs, and prevailing social systems in society (Ahmed Mourad, 1992,).

Family intervention in addressing adolescents' physical challenges is one of the most critical factors in helping them navigate this sensitive stage. Adolescence is characterized by significant physical changes associated with growth, which can lead to various challenges. The family's role is pivotal in providing support and guidance.

2.1.1 Key Adolescent Challenges:

- Rapid Growth Changes: Such as height, weight, and changes in body features.
- Skin Problems: Including acne caused by hormonal changes.
- Hormonal Changes: Leading to mood swings and increased sensitivity.
- Dietary Habits: Poor nutrition or overeating can result in obesity or weakness.
- Physical Activity: There may be a lack of movement or excessive exercise.

2.1.3 Impact of Physical Changes on Behavior:

Rapid growth and physical changes during adolescence are often accompanied by unfavorable symptoms such as fatigue and lethargy. These changes may cause digestive system disturbances, resulting in fluctuations in metabolic rates. Adolescents may also experience intermittent headaches and back pain. These symptoms are more prevalent among girls, particularly during menstruation (Al-Abdallah, n.d).

Key physical changes and their effects include:

- Desire for individuality and isolation.
- Aversion to work.
- Instability.
- Defiance and stubbornness.
- Resistance to authority.
- Intense emotional reactions.
- Low self-confidence.
- Heightened shyness.

2.1.4 Role of the Family in Intervention and Problem-Solving

- Open Communication: Encourage dialogue with adolescents to understand their concerns about their bodies. Provide explanations that these changes are natural during this phase.
- Emotional Support: Avoid mockery or criticism regarding their appearance. Boost self-confidence and encourage self-acceptance.

- Health Education: Explain physical changes in a simple and scientific manner. Educate adolescents on the importance of personal hygiene.
- Dietary Guidance: Offer a variety of healthy foods to support proper growth. Monitor unhealthy eating habits without exerting excessive pressure.
- Regular Physical Activity: Promote healthy exercise habits without overexertion. Provide a supportive environment for enjoyable physical activities.
- Medical Consultations: Consult specialized doctors if issues like severe acne or growth disorders arise. Seek professional advice if problems significantly impact mental health.

The family's role extends beyond merely solving problems. It involves creating a supportive environment that helps adolescents adapt positively to physical and psychological changes. This approach contributes to developing a balanced and healthy personality in the future.

2.2 Educational Intervention

The school serves as the second environment for adolescent self-development, especially for those in boarding schools. However, the school is often perceived as an obstacle to the desired independence, acting as a substitute for the family. While schools, as social institutions, may provoke opposition, they also serve as cradles of culture, providing adolescents with intellectual and cultural resources that shape their personalities. Schools encourage thinking and offer patterns that stimulate imagination and inspire emulation. Nevertheless, there is a significant difference between learning through books and direct engagement with reality, a contrast described by François Mauriac as the condition of the "chained child." Despite these challenges, schools contribute to shaping adolescent personalities through structured and silent work (Ibid).

Effective educational intervention requires close collaboration between schools, families, and communities to provide comprehensive support for adolescents.

- Awareness and Counseling Programs: Schools should provide psychological counseling and guidance programs to help adolescents understand themselves and develop their social and emotional skills.
- Life Skills Training Programs: These programs should include training on problem-solving, decision-making, effective communication, and emotional management skills.
- Educational Curricula: Implement educational curricula that emphasize the importance of physical and mental health for adolescents.
- Positive Teacher-Student Interaction: Train teachers to support adolescents empathetically, avoiding direct criticism that may lead to negative outcomes.
- Awareness Campaigns: Organize awareness programs for adolescents and their parents on critical issues such as drug use, violence, and crime.

In conclusion, educational intervention is a dynamic process that requires the collaboration of all stakeholders involved with adolescents. By understanding the social context in which adolescents live and providing the necessary support, educational institutions can guide their behaviors toward positive and constructive pathways.

2.3 Media and Community Intervention

- Public Awareness Campaigns Targeting Adolescents to Promote Positive Behaviors and Raise Awareness of the Issues They Face and How to Address Them
- Support: Media can provide psychological support to adolescents through awareness and guidance programs.
- Communication: Media can serve as an effective communication tool between adolescents, their families, and the community.
- The Role of Social Media Platforms: These platforms influence physical behaviors and should be monitored to avoid negative impacts.
- Role Models: Positive media personalities can serve as role models for adolescents.
- Challenging Stereotypes: Efforts should be made to reduce the spread of ideal beauty standards imposed by the media and replace them with messages that promote self-acceptance.
- Producing Awareness Content: Media should invest in creating programs that showcase positive examples of self-care and healthy habits.
- Youth Centers: These centers offer activities that enhance social interaction and encourage the adoption of positive physical behaviors.

3. Preventive Strategies for Guiding Physical Behavior

1. Primary Prevention:

Promote health and educational awareness in schools and communities, with a focus on directed education to develop healthy daily habits.

2. Secondary Prevention:

Early intervention in cases of neglect or risky behaviors such as poor nutrition or lack of personal care.

3. Tertiary Prevention:

Work with adolescents facing advanced physical and behavioral challenges by designing behavioral and social rehabilitation programs in collaboration with families and schools.

4. Analogical Escalation in Relationships (Sociological Interpretation of Adolescent-Adult Interaction)

The transition into adolescence presents a multi-dimensional challenge for both the adolescent and their family, as well as for the professionals tasked with their care. Studies from care centers indicate that individual interventions based on treatment often lack sustained effectiveness. It is observed that adolescents quickly return to maladaptive behaviors, reflecting the limited impact of these approaches. Moreover, resorting to punishment not only exacerbates aggressive behaviors in adolescents but also contributes to a pattern of escalatory conflict, which can be understood from a communication theory perspective as analogical escalation. In this scenario, the parties interact in a confrontational manner, rather than collaborating to find solutions. This highlights the need to adopt more holistic therapeutic strategies that consider familial and group dynamics, focusing on enhancing the adolescent's coping skills and social integration.

Punishing adolescents intensifies their maladaptive behaviors, drawing the surrounding adults whether parents or professionals into a cycle of negative interaction. Adults often frame

adolescent behavior from a moralistic standpoint, assuming that adolescents lack respect for the rights of others and refuse to comply with social norms.

This perspective pushes adults, particularly therapists and professionals, to assume that adolescents have a defect in their moral development and are incapable of grasping concepts of justice and equality. However, the sociological approach reveals that these perceptions may reflect a misunderstanding of the nature of adolescent conflicts, which are marked by a strong desire for independence and a reconfiguration of their relationship with authority. Thus, punitive measures may reinforce adolescents' feelings of exclusion, driving them to escalate their defiant behaviors as a means of defending their sense of self.

This analysis underscores the need to reconsider current intervention models by adopting more empathetic approaches to the psychological and social development dynamics of adolescents, focusing on building positive communication based on mutual respect and guidance, rather than punishment.

5. Challenges of Social Intervention

5.1 Conflict Between Traditional and Modern Culture

The interaction between traditional and modern cultures presents a significant challenge in the treatment and protection of adolescents. This conflict is reflected in various aspects, including:

- **Educational Values:** Educational values differ between generations. Traditional culture tends to adopt more conservative values, while modern values are more open and liberal.
- Cultural changes and the impact of globalization on traditional social values:
- **Communication Methods:** Modern culture heavily relies on social media, whereas traditional culture emphasizes direct communication and personal relationships.
- Spread of unhealthy models through media.

5.2 Lifestyle Patterns

Lifestyle patterns, including daily habits such as nutrition, physical activity, sleep, and the use of technology, play a crucial role in shaping adolescents' physical and psychological health during adolescence. These patterns are influenced by social, psychological, and environmental factors, which makes social intervention necessary to guide adolescents toward healthy choices.

5.3 Weak Institutional Infrastructure

Many communities suffer from a lack of qualified programs that effectively guide adolescents.

6. The Importance of Family Socialization:

Due to human growth over time, the process of socialization takes a phased form. Moreover, since humans do not remain within a single social group but instead participate in multiple groups simultaneously, they are subjected to various types of socialization. Each type complements the other, forming an integrated system that reflects the overall pattern of socialization in the society.

Socialization, therefore, means transforming a biological being into a social person through various social groups that differ in type but are interconnected in function.

It can be said that the concept of socialization involves turning a biological entity (the newborn child) into a social person. This transformation occurs when the socializing agents (parents, teachers, religious figures) instill in the child the norms, beliefs, and behaviors of the group to which they belong. This process leads to the development of a social self. A newborn does not possess a social self at birth in which most of their behavior is driven by innate biological instincts, making their actions initially more instinctive, like those of animals. However, the key distinction is that the human newborn has the potential for speech and an agreed-upon mental capacity, enabling them to perceive the world through their senses. This ability allows them to use symbols and gestures as effective tools for communication and interaction with others. This capacity helps the child organize their life within rationally structured social groups, facilitating their training, instruction, and adaptation to the ways of life in society.

Socialization is a means of transmitting culture and civilization from one generation to the next, ensuring the continuity of societies, shaping their character, and defining their identity.

Regardless of the type of society whether it is nomadic, urban, industrial, or military an individual cannot attain their place within it without learning the cultural elements of their community and gaining social experience. This is essential for living appropriately, as individuals learn how to interact with those around them and shape their identity through these interactions. To achieve these social objectives, socialization sets goals across all stages of life: personal, social, professional, primary, and secondary. These goals are designed to guide and support individuals in becoming productive, well-integrated members of society. The key objectives of socialization can be summarized as follows:

- **Transforming the Biological Being into a Social Person:**

This involves shaping the newborn according to the customs and culture of their society, helping them acquire human and social traits (Maan Khalil Al-Omar 2004) The individual gains social membership, transitioning from a dependent child to a mature person who understands responsibility. This transformation equips the individual with personal and social qualities necessary for functioning within their community.

- **Social Control:**

Socialization guides individuals' behavior and actions according to cultural norms, legal rules, and social regulations like religion, family, and school. This ensures social stability and promotes security by integrating individuals into the social structure. Through this process, children learn language, customs, traditions, and ways to satisfy their physical, social, and psychological needs. Moreover, they develop the ability to anticipate how others will respond to their behavior, enabling them to navigate social interactions more effectively.

- **Social Cohesion:**

When an individual absorbs the rules, norms, and values of their society through socialization institutions, they naturally feel driven to share a larger common ground with other members of their community who themselves are shaped by the same cultural framework. This shared understanding fosters emotional and cooperative connections among individuals, ultimately leading to social cohesion.

An individual who belongs to this existence is embraced by an already established society with its own set of rules, values, and orientations. Through socialization, the community works to instill these principles into the individual, shaping their personality in alignment with the collective identity. This process encourages interaction and collaboration among members, resulting in social harmony and consistency.

- Social Adaptation:

This refers to how the individual aligns their behavior with societal customs, traditions, and obligations, a process that extends beyond childhood into adolescence, youth, and adulthood. The individual continuously adapts to evolving social needs, emerging changes, and the demands of different roles and social positions based on community expectations. Humans are composed of spirit, mind, and emotions, each with unique needs. Through socialization, individuals learn appropriate ways to satisfy these needs, but in a socially accepted manner. Their choices are shaped by cultural norms, ensuring they stay within the boundaries set by society.

– **Behavioral Consistency:**

During socialization, individuals acquire refined, culturally appropriate behavior. For example, a child learns not only how to eat but also the culturally accepted way of eating. They may avoid foods prohibited by their society like pork in Arab-Muslim communities or adapt to norms, such as not consuming dog soup, which is a traditional dish in Korean culture. They also learn when and where to maintain personal hygiene and how to control their instincts and emotional behavior. Such behaviors must align with societal expectations to ensure the individual's acceptance within the community. Socialization, therefore, teaches the individual values, attitudes, symbols, and all forms of behavior specific to their community. It shapes their ways of thinking and interacting, enabling them to integrate seamlessly into their social environment.

– **Acquiring Cultural Elements:**

The individual absorbs the cultural elements of their community, which become an integral part of their personal development. This process explains the diversity in personality patterns, influenced by how deeply individuals embrace cultural norms, alongside personal and social differences. Through socialization, the individual internalizes the values (Jado, 2004,), customs, and traditions of their society which are fully or partially by transforming them into personal beliefs, convictions, knowledge, and behaviors.

– **Shaping Ambitions:**

Socialization also molds the individual's ambitions. A child learns what is beneficial and necessary to earn the respect of others. For example, in a society that holds religious values sacred, the child is encouraged to adopt and practice these beliefs, striving to deepen their understanding and commitment to serve both personal aspirations and societal good. Similarly, in an information-driven society, individuals are expected to utilize advanced technology in communication, work, and daily activities to enhance their social mobility. The path to climbing the social ladder becomes smoother when individuals align their ambitions with societal values. Straying from the community's culture may result in ambitions disconnected from the individual's environment, making social integration and progress more challenging.

- **Conclusion :**

Guiding adolescents' physical behaviors through social intervention is an essential challenge, especially in light of contemporary social and cultural transformations. The radical changes occurring during adolescence highlight the significant impact of the surrounding environment on their perception of their body and related behaviors. From a sociological perspective, adolescent physical behaviors are not merely individual manifestations but are a reflection of their interactions with social, familial, and institutional systems. Therefore, social intervention in guiding adolescents' physical behaviors is not just a short-term therapeutic practice, but a continuous preventive process that contributes to building strong and balanced personalities. This is achieved through understanding the influential social factors and leveraging them positively, which allows for the creation of an environment that encourages a balance between their personal aspirations and social expectations. This ultimately contributes to the achievement of comprehensive social development.

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