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## **The role of stories in enhancing sociomoral development in children**

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### **Abstract:**

*Modern youth, particularly in light of the rise of social media, are subject to competing and constantly evolving moral and ethical norms. It is a laborious task to teach and instill good values in the receptive minds of children. Great literature, as a universal truth, can mitigate the effects of these negative influences and impart life lessons to children. Stories not only help kids learn to read and write, but they also help them grow into better human beings. Since morals are formed in childhood and early adolescence, children's literature can be used to strongly encourage good values like empathy, compassion, and kindness. In children's literature, characters come to life, and readers can imagine themselves in those characters' shoes. It's truly remarkable to witness the profound impact stories can have in shaping a generation that embraces kindness and empathy.*

**Keywords: Sociomoral Competence; Narrative Transportation; Trance, Suggestion, Metaphor.**

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**Introduction:** Developing the ability to understand and interpret the thoughts and emotions of others is vital for establishing deep connections and displaying empathy in our interactions. Both children and adults can enhance their social cognitive skills through various means, and one such activity is reading fiction. Fiction offers a distinct chance for readers to delve into the inner world of characters, enabling them to empathise, deduce, and investigate without the constraints of real life.

**Sociomoral Competence through narratives:** Sociomoral competence encompasses the ability to empathise with others and engage in complex social reasoning to find a balance between conflicting interests. Stories, on the other hand, have a persuasive effect due to their ability to fully immerse individuals, creating a state of transportation or narrative engagement. Narratives serve as a means for us to comprehend our existence, structure our recollections, and articulate our aspirations and desires. These narratives mould our perception of ourselves, our sense of identity, and guide us in navigating the complexities of the world. For centuries, storytelling has been an integral part of human culture, and it remains a crucial element for our overall well-being. Our lives are essentially a collection of

stories, and through the exploration and retelling of these stories, we acquired the ability to discover fresh interpretations and uncover new insights that can foster personal development and facilitate healing.

**The vital role of stories in daily life:** The stories are powerful enough to enchant and soothe the human mind. Numerous authors from a variety of perspectives portray the intricacy of life in their stories. Exploring literary works penned by diverse authors enhances our ability to think in a broader perspective and brings greater clarity to our ideas. Engaging in a captivating narrative is widely recognized as one of the most effective methods to unwind and alleviate stress. Moreover, the habit of reading fiction on a regular basis has been correlated with a reduced risk of depression and a slower cognitive decline in later years, as supported by research. The profound impact of stories on children's impressionable minds are also widely studied in the academic world. When selecting good reading materials for tender minds, it's crucial to avoid exposing them to stories that promote bigotry based on gender, ethnicity, ideology or nationality. Carefully choosing reading materials is essential, as stories can subtly alter our attitudes. It is quite amusing to see how tales are scattered in abundance within our social circles. It manifests in many ways, including whispers on the radio, influential news stories, status updates on social media, and even informally discussed topics with loved ones over dinner. When readers identify with the story's protagonist, they are more likely to immerse themselves in the story, according to studies. Our heart rate and breathing rate are affected by the heightened emotions that occur when we become involved in a story. We begin to identify with the characters and feel the things they do as our own involvement in the story deepens. Scientific studies have revealed that when we encounter positive situations, such as establishing trust, receiving acts of kindness in our daily interactions, and engaging in captivating stories, our brains release oxytocin. This release of oxytocin is responsible for promoting empathy within us.

**Narrative Transportation:** Immersing oneself in a story is like embarking on a journey from being an observer to becoming an active participant, and this process is known as narrative transportation. It's a captivating phenomenon that affects both our minds and bodies. As we transition, the world around us gradually fades away, leaving us fully engaged with the characters and their experiences. The plot seamlessly merges with our imagination, fostering a deeply immersive encounter where the main character's emotions entwine with our own. This powerful connection, facilitated by the carefully constructed language of the story, is a crucial aspect of narrative therapy. By immersing ourselves in these creative works, we can acquire valuable experiences and establish a profound emotional connection with the story. Reading stories allows individuals to embark on a journey of exploration, enabling them to assume various roles and viewpoints while forging a profound connection with the characters. This immersive experience enables readers to relate to specific characters and infuse their own emotions and personal encounters into the fictional realm. The greater the resemblance between a character and the reader, the more potent the identification and transportation become. Ultimately, delving into the narrative

universe can profoundly influence readers, moulding their convictions and actions in significant and impactful manners.

**Narrative Transportation: a stimulus for cognitive change:** There are various ways in which transportation can influence attitudes and behaviors. These include minimising counterarguments, forming connections with characters, enhancing perceived realism, creating mental imagery of story events, and fostering emotional engagement. Stories that transport individuals tend to cultivate a more receptive and accepting mindset. Engrossed in an engaging narrative, people are less inclined to challenge or dispute the story's message or implications. People may identify with the characters in a story, develop a sense of friendship with them, or even admire them. This can facilitate a shift in children's attitudes and beliefs to align with those of the narrative's characters or protagonist.

**Process of transformation:** When delving into a literary work, readers often discover a connection with the characters and situations portrayed. This connection can prompt them to reflect on their own perceptions and actions, drawing parallels to similar experiences in their lives. Furthermore, this identification can inspire readers to imagine themselves in the shoes of the characters, fostering empathy and understanding.

Taking this identification to the next level, the stage of catharsis emerges. Readers may find themselves sharing the same thoughts and emotions as the characters, even relating them to their own personal encounters. This emotional resonance allows readers to release pent-up feelings through the fictional character, providing a cathartic release and a sense of emotional purification. As readers progress further into the story, they may reach a stage of insight. This is when they begin to recognise aspects of themselves within the characters or situations presented, enabling them to apply this newfound understanding to their own personal challenges. This helps readers approach their own problems from a more intellectual standpoint; they can gain a deeper comprehension of their motivations and develop a heightened sense of self-awareness. This, in turn, can enhance their communication skills and empower them to express their emotions through the actions of fictional characters.

**Trance happened through stories:** "Trance" is a term that encompasses both physical and mental states, where individuals direct their concentration towards a few specific stimuli while ignoring the rest. Trance, rapport, and suggestions are not solely associated with hypnosis; they occur frequently. This is particularly evident when individuals direct their attention inward, towards remembered or imagined perceptions. Trances occur daily during activities such as driving, playing, working, watching TV, or engaging with highly focused content. Reading stories also induces trances in various forms and levels of intensity. These trances enhance learning, alleviate physical and mental stress, reduce inhibitions, and intensify imagined experiences.

**Stories with inbuilt suggestions:** Different types of verbal suggestions exist, including declarative, directive, implicit, and questioning. Directive recommendations are similar to orders, but with a clear element of instruction. On the other hand, implied suggestions are

subtly embedded within a phrase. Declarative ideas are straightforward statements, while question-based proposals imply that the client has the choice to accept or reject them through their silent or spoken response. These resources embedded in stories assist in uncovering answers to numerous perplexing questions that cloud restless minds and impede the path to discovering a suitable solution.

**Use of Metaphor and paradigms in stories:** Metaphorical stories convey more than the story's events. Metaphors are necessary to develop a healing mental image. Logical rhetorical inquiries and optimistic perspectives can improve debilitating life stories. In stories, metaphors help us reframe negative models as positive. Metaphors give access to new worlds. Acoustic and kinesthetic imagination are essential in order to eliminate the problematic metaphor. Therapeutic stories can be divided into rough genres based on the following criteria: Metaphors involve transferring many elements from a different context into the patient's own life, while paradigmatic stories only need to change a few elements, such as the protagonist or the time and place of the events, to reflect the patient's current situation. Metaphors come from different contexts and have different meanings. When comparing fiction with reality, structure is more similar than content. In structure and substance, paradigmatic stories reflect the listener's situation. Instead of transplanting conditions, change out characters or locales to make the story applicable to your life. Metaphors and paradigmatic stories can overlap, making them hard to distinguish. Interestingly, a single narrative can convey either a paradigmatic account about the patient's life or a metaphor about another aspect of life.

**Good climactic point the core of therapeutic story:** Stories that contain unforeseen climactic twists can be quite comforting. The turning point's surprises help reframe the problem and reinterpret it. If kids understand the story's underlying connotation and reinterpretation in the climax-turning moment, they can apply it in life. Understanding the story objectively helps him see similar solutions to his or her difficulties as preventive or real examples. Finding climactic turning moments in stories can reveal therapeutic stories. Comparing similar life events can help determine how to use them. Although ideas come spontaneously, we can use metaphors by exploring the life around us. This solution often applies to one's own or the advice-seeker's life. The lives of human beings are full of metaphorical and paradigmatic stories, and nature provides even more. Stories can be found abounding in the newspaper's cartoons, jokes, and magazines. Conversations between friends, acquaintances, and coworkers, filled with clever banter and funny stories, can spark new ideas. In addition, we can bookmark the thought-provoking speeches, wise sayings, and insightful personal experiences for later use as a preventative measure when our minds need a little boost of energy. Narratives shared through word of mouth are akin to raw gemstones. Initially rough in appearance, but once polished, they reveal their true beauty. Enhancing the haptic appeal of the story can be accomplished by refining the sentence structure and word choice.

**Biographical stories and anecdotes:** Biographies are powerful narratives that offer valuable insights and solutions by showcasing diverse paths taken during specific periods or

throughout an entire lifetime. A prime example of this principle in action is the following positive model, which demonstrates how biographical stories can inspire and guide individuals. While anecdotes also serve a similar purpose, they often lack the vividness of stories, making it more challenging for listeners to connect with them. However, anecdotes, like aphorisms, can still serve as effective conversation starters or illustrative examples.

**Fables, fairy tales, farces and legends:** Interestingly, both children and adults are intrigued by stories that resemble fairy tales, although teenagers may not share the same level of enthusiasm. From a therapeutic perspective, listening to fairy tales can transport individuals back to their childhood, where they were eager to learn and inclined to follow authority figures. This mindset resurfaces when someone engages with these stories, making them a valuable tool to encourage self-directed learning. Moreover, stories designed to assist individuals can draw inspiration from various sources, such as nature, technology, or the social sciences. Instead of traditional fables, real-life instances of animals or plants communicating amongst themselves or with humans can effectively demonstrate the consequences of good and bad decision-making in life.

**Conclusion:** Stories have the incredible ability to evoke a wide range of emotions within us. They can make us feel happy, sad, excited, or even bring tears to our eyes. The power of narratives lies in their capacity to deeply engage us, especially when they elicit strong emotions. Interestingly, some people, known as transportable, are more prone to losing themselves in stories than others. Those who are highly transportable can effortlessly immerse themselves in stories, regardless of their length or duration. Studies indicate that there is a link between exposure to fiction throughout one's lifetime and social cognitive skills, with reading fiction having small yet positive effects on social cognition. However, the exact mechanisms behind these effects remain unknown. To contribute to the existing body of research, this study aimed to examine the impact of narrative engagement on social cognition. The boundless possibilities of stories offer fresh perspectives on life, not just by transporting us to different times and places, which in itself can be incredibly captivating and enlightening, but also by allowing us to step into the shoes of others through the words of an author, virtually becoming those characters and experiencing their lives. This immersive experience of being someone else and walking in their footsteps not only stimulates and educates us but also serves a greater purpose of enriching our existence, broadening our minds and emotions, and exposing us to diverse circumstances and ways of thinking that can truly transform our lives.

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