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Research and development of intellectual consciousness for Thai youths’ quality of life

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Abstract

The research aimed to explore and develop intellectual consciousness. The results showed that psycho-social factors such as cognitive social-emotional socialization from parents, teachers, and friends as well as self-control could predict students’ intellectual consciousness which in turn had impact on students’ prosocial behavior, problem-solving, and quality of life. It was also found that students who received oriental mind-body approach, cognitive-behavior modification, and self-control training programs had higher emotional intelligence, public mind, and appropriate consumption behavior than students who did not attend the training programs.

Keywords: Intellectual consciousness, public mind, emotional intelligence, consumption, quality of life, training.

1. Introduction

At the present, the Thai society has been rapidly changed, especially adopting material culture. If individuals’ mind and mental development could not keep up with the rapid changes of material culture, it may cause problems for individuals, society, and nation. Specifically, Thai adolescents are the critical period among changing in physical, psychological, and social characteristics. If Thai adolescents lack desirable characteristics and behaviors, they will be deviant persons and make social problems. As a result, development of psychological characteristics such as intellectual consciousness is desirable in society. Intellectual consciousness includes public mind, emotional intelligence, and appropriate consumption consciousness. The development of intellectual consciousness can be transmitted through socialization both directly and indirectly from other social units such as families and schools. When Thai youths have intellectual consciousness, they will improve the quality of life directly.

There are quite limited research studies employing intellectual consciousness although these psychological characteristics are important to instill our children. More specifically, empirical evident is needed to study effects of socialization agents on intellectual consciousness and adolescents’ qualities. As a result, this study is interested to explore and develop intellectual consciousness. There were two phrases for the study. The first phrase was to examine a causal relationship model of intellectual consciousness for Thai adolescents. The model posits that...
socialization from parents, teachers, and friends as well as self-control influence youths’ intellectual consciousness, which in turn predicts adolescents’ quality of life. The second phrase was to investigate effects of intellectual consciousness training.

2. Method

2.1. Sample

There were two groups of sample in this research. The first sample used in the survey research was 3616 7th, 8th, and 9th grade students. The second sample for experiments was 276 students: 80 students for public mind development, 108 students for emotional intelligence development, and 88 students for appropriate consumption consciousness.

2.2. Research Instruments

The research instruments could be categorized into 2 types. The first type was self-report instruments used to measure the study variables: cognitive social-emotional socialization, self-control, intellectual consciousness, and quality of youths. Items were presented in a five-point Likert scale ranking from “very true” to “not true at all”. All measures were valid and reliable. Intellectual consciousness has three components: public mind, emotional intelligence, and appropriate consumption consciousness. Public mind test assesses youths’ concern for well-being society and beneficial public properties. Emotional intelligence test measures youths’ ability to be aware of their own feeling and others, to understand others’ emotion and needs, and to manage their own emotion. Appropriate consumption consciousness test measures youths’ to be aware of realistic values and benefits of natural resources, things, money, and time before making decision to consume and use them.

The second type was designed to serve as experimental variables in 3 research studies: Public mind training program based on cognitive-behavior modification approach, emotional intelligence training program based on oriental mind-body approach, and appropriate consumption behavior training program based on thought, attitude changes, and self-control skills. The public mind training program focused on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) that included role model, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion. In the emotional intelligence training program, mind activities focused on meditation and Tao philosophy whereas physical activities used exercises, recreation, and muscle relaxation. The program also included short lectures, role plays, group discussion, and experience exchanges. There were 2 components in appropriate consumption behavior training program. The first components included thought training and attitude changes. In the second component, the intervention was self-control training.

2.3. Procedure

The macro research project was divided into 4 research studies. The first survey study was to test the causal relationship model of intellectual consciousness. Students were administered 9 self-report questionnaires that assessed psychosocial factors, intellectual consciousness, and adolescents’ qualities. They completed the questionnaires anonymously, within 45-minute class sessions, in their classrooms.

The other 3 experimental studies were designed to study effects of intellectual consciousness training. Each experimental study used different treatments. Experiment 1 employed public mind program based on social cognitive theory which subjects were manipulated with role model playing and vicarious learning. In experiment 2, subjects received emotional intelligence program based on oriental approach. For experiment 3, self-control training on appropriate consumption behavior was given. Each experimental study employed a pre/post test quasi-experimental design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) with measures of dependent variables collected 1 month prior to participants attending 3 days training program and again at the end of training program. Participants of the control group completed the same measures as the training group, but were not exposed to the training.
2.4. Data analysis

A structural equation modelling analysis (with AMOS) was used to test the causal relationship model of intellectual consciousness. An analysis of covariance was undertaken to examine effects of training programs.

3. Results

3.1. Gender and Age Differences on Intellectual Consciousness

There were gender and age differences on intellectual consciousness. Female adolescents scored higher on intellectual consciousness than male adolescents. Furthermore, older adolescents had higher intellectual consciousness (i.e., emotional intelligence and public mind) than younger adolescents.

3.2. The Causal Relationship Model of Intellectual Consciousness

The empirical causal relationship model of intellectual consciousness fitted with the conceptual framework;

\(\chi^2 (100, n=862) = 465.60, \quad p < .001, \quad \text{GFI} = .94, \quad \text{AGFI} = .90, \quad \text{CFI} = .95, \quad \text{RMSEA} = .07\). That is, psychosocial factors had direct effects on intellectual consciousness, and adolescents’ qualities were influenced by intellectual consciousness. Specifically, cognitive social-emotional socialization contributed to intellectual consciousness the most \(\beta = .40\) whereas peer modelling of appropriate emotion and behavior was second in terms of the strength of its contribution \(\beta = .31\). Self-control was the third most powerful predictor. Psychosocial factors could predict 69% of intellectual consciousness. Moreover, both psychosocial factors and intellectual consciousness in the model could account for 60%, 32%, and 69% of adolescents’ prosocial behavior, problem-solving ability, and quality of life, respectively. The model was supported for all participants and for each gender separately (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1. The Empirical Model of Causal Relationship of Intellectual Consciousness](image)

3.3. Effects of Intellectual Consciousness Training

Subjects who received the public mind program had higher public mind behavior than subjects who did not receive the program. Similarly, subjects who attended the emotional intelligence program had overall, good, and efficient emotional intelligence than those who did not attend the program. Moreover, appropriate consumption behavior of subjects in the group that was given the self-control training was higher than those who were not given.
4. Discussion

The findings are consistent with the socialization approach (Maccoby, 1992) that social agencies such as parents, teachers, and friends play important roles to socialize their children combined with theoretical perspectives of personality and cognitive development (Radke-Yarrow, Zahn-Waxler, & Chapman, 1983) suggesting that individuals’ beliefs, feelings, and thought affect their own behaviors.

The results also confirm the significant role of parental socialization in desirable characteristics and behaviors through their offspring from early life experiences to adolescents. The parental influence has not decreased. Moreover, the evident form this macro research is consistent with the theoretical perspective of observational learning that individuals will adopt behaviors of others with whom they identify and with whom they have a strong emotional bond (Bandura, 1986). The findings showed that peer modelling of emotion and behavior influenced adolescents’ intellectual consciousness. Similarly, the study by Wentzel, Barry and Caldwell (2004) found that students with initially low levels of prosocial behavior relative to those of their friends improved when exposed to their more prosocial peers, and students with initially higher levels of prosocial behavior decreased their levels of prosocial behavior when exposed to their less prosocial peers.

The results of this study support personality theories that psychological characteristics play an important role to determine and develop behavior (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). It was found that both psychosocial factors and intellectual consciousness affected adolescents’ prosocial behavior, problem-solving ability, and quality of life. The findings also suggest that enhancement of adolescents’ intellectual consciousness needs to take into consideration, both appropriate socialization and self-control. To develop intellectual consciousness, one should be aware of integrative characteristics of public mind, emotional intelligence, and appropriate consumption consciousness.

4.1. Practical Implications

It is important for families and schools to understand what factors that influence youths’ intellectual consciousness and quality of life. Specifically, socializing agents such as families and schools as well as close friends play an important role to promote intellectual consciousness and desirable behaviors. Youths’ characteristics and behaviors depend on what their parents and teachers instill. In addition, parents and teachers should be good models in expressing appropriate emotion, consumption behavior, and prosocial behavior. Self-control has significant influences on intellectual consciousness and appropriate consumption behavior. Therefore, the findings on development of appropriate consumption behavior suggest that youths know how to control themselves rather than be controlled externally. Although traits such as public mind, emotional intelligence, and appropriate consumption awareness are relatively stable over time, these traits can be modified through intensive training. Importantly, youths’ intellectual consciousness should be developed systematically and continuously. Thus, teachers should be trained on how to develop intellectual consciousness so that they can integrate the development of intellectual consciousness into regular courses.

4.2. Future Research, Limitations, and Conclusion

The macro study suggests that there are significant effects of intellectual consciousness development training programs on Thai youths in the intervention group compared to the control group. However, the study has limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, the first survey study used a cross-sectional design so the inference of causal relationships might be problematic. Future research should be designed as a longitudinal study that follows up the socialization process of intellectual consciousness and desirable behaviors from various agents in order to confirm the causal relationship model of intellectual consciousness. The longitudinal study can also indicate whether intellectual consciousness is a stable trait. Furthermore, researchers should collect supplement qualitative data so that findings can extend knowledge of intellectual consciousness and desirable behaviors. Second, there was no follow-up study to assess the long-term effects of the interventions in 3 experimental studies. Thus, investigations of the effectiveness of training programs should include a long-term assessment of intellectual consciousness. Third, trainings on thought and attitude changes did not have enough effects on appropriate consumption behavior. Therefore, the duration of the program and amount of treatments should be increased to produce a beneficial effect on appropriate consumption behavior. Finally, additional content area of intellectual consciousness should be explored to better define the intellectual consciousness.
References