



**PARENTS' ROLE IN EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM TO  
DEVELOP PERSONAL - SOCIAL SKILLS FOR CHILDREN  
WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

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**Abstract:**

This article discusses the role of parents in an early intervention program to develop personal and social skills for children with intellectual disabilities in three methods: modeling for teaching personal-social skills; personal - social skill training and creating a practice environment. They are important premises that help experts, teachers to support for parents more effectively. Thus improving early intervention services for those children is of higher quality.



## VAI TRÒ CỦA PHỤ HUYNH TRONG CHƯƠNG TRÌNH CAN THIỆP SỚM NHẪM PHÁT TRIỂN KỸ NĂNG CÁ NHÂN - XÃ HỘI CHO TRẺ KHUYẾT TẬT TRÍ TUỆ

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Thông tin bài viết	Tóm tắt
Ngày nhận bài: 18/8/2021	Bài báo này đề cập đến vai trò của phụ huynh trong chương trình can thiệp sớm nhằm phát triển kỹ năng cá nhân - xã hội cho trẻ khuyết tật trí tuệ ở ba phương diện: làm mẫu dạy kỹ năng cá nhân - xã hội; huấn luyện trẻ và tạo môi trường thực hành, luyện tập. Đây sẽ là tiền đề quan trọng giúp các nhà chuyên môn, giáo viên hỗ trợ phụ huynh hiệu quả hơn. Từ đó nâng cao chất lượng can thiệp sớm cho những trẻ này.
Ngày duyệt đăng: 1/12/2021	
<b>Từ khóa:</b> <i>Can thiệp sớm, kỹ năng cá nhân - xã hội, hướng dẫn phụ huynh, trẻ khuyết tật trí tuệ.</i>	

### INTRODUCTION

Among criteria for diagnosing intellectual disability (ID) for a group of adaptive behavioral skills, personal-social skill (PSS) plays an important role in helping individuals to take care of themselves and integrate into the community [1].

In early intervention (EI) programs, parents play a key and decisive role in the quality and effectiveness of EI programs, because they understand characteristics of their child development stages, thereby supporting experts to assess, set goals, and make intervention plans more effective. In addition, the family is the environment where children learn their first social skills before growing up and going to school [2].

The number of children with intellectual disabilities accounts for a high percentage of all types of disabilities. A report by UNICEF in 2017 states that children with cognitive disabilities account for 0,67% in the age group of 2-17 years.

Children with intellectual disabilities have an IQ index  $\leq 70-75$ , which affects their cognitive ability.

In addition to cognitive development, EI programs also pay much attention to the development of personal-social skills for children to be independent in daily life. EI affairs often focus on teachers without paying attention to the role of parents.

Working with families of children with special needs requires a combination of a family-friendly and child-centered approach (National Research Council, 2000). Parents play a vital role in the education and development of children with special needs (Brotherson, summers, Naig, Kyzar, et al., 2010; Bruder, 2010; Gallagher, Rhodes, & Darling, 2004; Murray, Christensen, Umbarger, Rade, et al., 2007; Trohanis, 2008).

Parents have valuable information about their child's learning and development through observation of their children's abilities in personal activities and outside the educational settings (Park, Alber-Morgan, & Fleming, 2011; Treyvaud, Anderson, Howard, Bear, et al., 2009). Parents know a lot about their children such as hobbies, dislikes, interests, strengths, fears, and previous learning experiences. Early

intervention/special education (EI/SE) programs for children should combine families and practitioners' involvement to clarify information about the child. Based on the advantages of parents' involvement in EI/SE, it is possible to set favorable goals for children, families, and practitioners [3].

Before the 1970s, specialists rarely discussed the term "early intervention". Most children with intellectual disabilities, before going to school, have no systematic support from specially trained professionals. The supports children receive are often medical care, targeted at the treatment of physical disabilities rather than mental disabilities, because there have not been many articles mentioning the effectiveness of early intervention for children with intellectual disabilities [4].

In 1994, a program of parent instruction under this training course was launched. A young family in Hanoi was selected as the target of this program; by the end of 1994, some families in Ho Chi Minh City also engaged in this program. Trainees of the training course took responsibility for putting the parent instruction program into practice and developing the kindergarten classes based on guidance from Ms. Pauline Nott, an Australian specialist on the early intervention program.

A project as "Development of early intervention centers for children with intellectual disabilities and young families" has also been started at the Research and Education Center for Disabled Children in HCMC. Deployed from November 1998 to April 2001, the program aims at the development of early interventions for children with intellectual disabilities and their families. The Center's early intervention activities include diagnosis, assessment, implementation of intervention at home or Center, support at preschools, and training organization for teachers on special education [5].

In recent years, there have been many research topics related to children with intellectual disabilities. Targeting those who learn to integrate into preschools, primary schools, or special schools. They have not paid much attention to children with intellectual disabilities in the age group in need of early intervention. These topics often refer to impacts towards helping children to develop a specific skill or field without focusing on supporting parents to develop personal and social skills for children with intellectual disabilities in the age group of early intervention.

## CONTENT OF RESEARCH

### 1. Some concepts about instruments

Early intervention is a system designed to support family patterns of interaction that best promote a

child's development (M. Guralnick - 2001 - one of the leading experts in the field of early intervention).

Early intervention is all kinds of activities to help children develop, as well as directly and immediately support parents after determining the child's status and development. Early intervention targets both children and parents, families, and society (The European Association on Early Childhood Intervention – 1993).

There are many various definitions of early intervention, but they all emphasize the importance of:

Providing a range of services at an early development stage for children with developmental disorders or risk for developmental delay.

Involvement of parents, family, and child's familiar environment in providing early intervention services.

Personal skills are those that help people take care of themselves in aspects such as eating, dressing, and personal hygiene.

Social skills are those associated with communication skills to help people interact with those around them [6].

Personal – social skills are abilities required for a child to take care of himself (hand-washing and use of household utensils) and interact with others (playing games and understanding others' feelings).

Personal development is about how children come to understand who they are and what they can do.

Social development refers to how children understand themselves with their interactions with others [7].

In the Small Steps program, personal-social skills are divided into the following groups:

PS.A: Socialization and Play

PS.B: Eat and Drink

PS.C: Dressing

PS.D: Going to the toilet

PS.E: Bathing and grooming

Family is the environment where children learn their first personal-social skills before growing up and going to school [5].

### 2. Role of parents in teaching personal – social skills

In early intervention for disabled children in general and children with intellectual disabilities in particular, parents play an extremely important and decisive role in the effectiveness of early intervention

for children. Because parents are those who understand characteristics of their child development stages, thereby supporting experts to assess, set goals, and make intervention plans more effectively.

The early intervention program is to identify and teach skills that a child lacks, as well as regularly review progress to ensure such child’s developing and mastering goals are set out. Parents play an important role in both two stages of early intervention as assessment and intervention.

After growing up, the child will become a member of a large society and begin to build relationships with other children and adults inside or outside educational settings. Socialization is effective in helping them recover (capacity to withstand tough times). If a child constantly rejects or separates himself from his peers, he will become lonely and have lower self-esteem than normal ones. Parents can help their children to learn social skills so that they are not rejected by or behave violently with other ones.

*Modeling for social skills*

Parents can act as the trainer of their children to help them develop social skills. Children can learn a lot from observing their parents playing with them or how their parents interact with others.

*A trainer of children*

Pointing out: Every day, parents can use random opportunities to point out when others are using the required skills that may be a specific behavior of parents, other adults, children, or even a character in a book or television. This idea is to give children examples and act as a model to do appropriate social skills.

Support: Instead of nagging, parents should gently suggest children use a new social skill when a situation happens. They should suggest that “Now might be a good time to count to 10 in your mind” and do not keep quiet when your child interrupts.

A good trainer is a persistent person because it takes a long time to learn and practice a new skill. It is important to note that a good social relationship is obtained not just by personality or innate capacity. Every individual must get along with others to learn and practice more skills

*Creating a practice environment*

Practice: Adults can help children use an appropriate alternative response for any inappropriate response, which may require children to apply brainstorm about different alternative responses, and then they can practice such responses once or several times with the child. The practice may be outlining

specific words in reality to say or behavior to use, role-playing, and using newly learned skills in real life.

Praise: Give your children praise when they practice new skills as a way to make such skills become habits for them. At this time, children need adults to use specific words [8] [9].

**3. Subjects of survey**

Subjects of the survey: 16 parents, 25 teachers of children with intellectual disabilities, 16 children with intellectual disabilities at the age group of 3-4 years with a mild or moderate condition

Areas to be surveyed: specialized schools, early intervention centers in District 02 and District 10, Tan Phu District, Phu Nhuan District in Ho Chi Minh City.

**4. Practical research methods**

Investigation and interview: use questionnaires and survey templates to learn about the reality of teaching personal-social skills, find out parents’ attitudes about teaching personal and social skills, characteristics and expectations of families when teaching personal and social skills to children with intellectual disabilities.

Consulting with experts: learn about the factors affecting the parent instruction in developing personal-social skills for children with intellectual disabilities.

**5. Survey results**

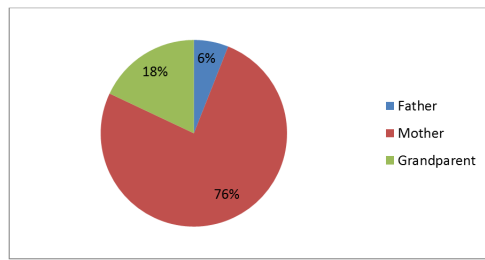
**5.1. Family structure:**

Main decision-makers: father (31%), consensus between father and mother (38%), mother only accounts for 19%.

**Table 1. Main decision-maker in the family**

Father	Mother	Grand-parent	The consensus of both father and mother
31%	19%	12%	38%

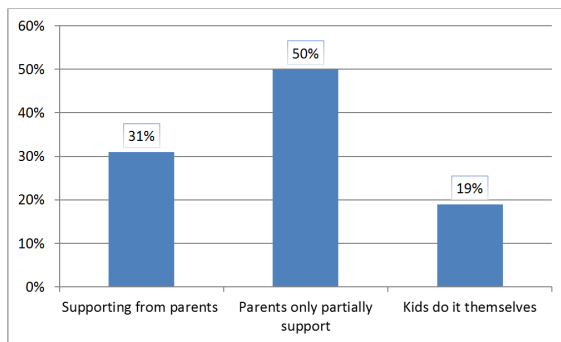
Meanwhile, the person who spends the most time with the child is the mother with a percentage of 76%, which indicates that it is necessary to improve the effectiveness of early intervention through parent instruction at home.



**Chart 1. Time the family members spend for children**

**5.2 Knowledge and skills that parents use to support children with intellectual disabilities in developing personal - social skills:**

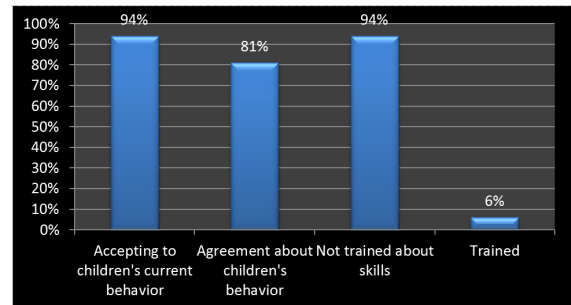
- The way parents support their children:



**Chart 2. The way parents support their children**

Children who have the opportunity to do something by themselves account for a very small percentage, only 19%. Those who get support from parents account for 31%. About 50% of parents only partially support.

- Parents' attitude and training they got:



**Chart 3. Parents attitude and the number of parents getting training**

94% of opinions accept the current behavior, 81% of the families get consensus about the behavior. Attitudes and behaviors of family members are almost consistent with each other, which is an advantage

However, most parents are not trained in skills (account for 94%), which affects the quality of taking care of and educating children with intellectual disabilities.

**Table 2. Knowledge and skills of parents before instruction**

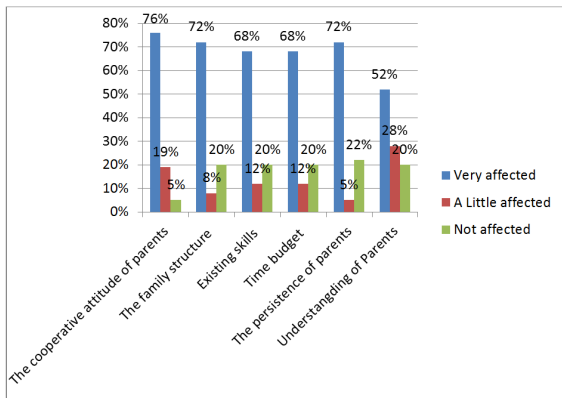
Content of survey	Do not know	Know	Understand	Apply/Develop	Master	Instruct others
Assess the child's current personal and social skills	100%	0	0	0	0	0
Set goals	100%	0	0	0	0	0
Make intervention plan	100%	0	0	0	0	0
Apply appropriate strategy	100%		0	0	0	0
Use appropriate instruments	88%	12%	0	0	0	0
Design/ select appropriate activities	100%		0	0	0	0
Test the child's progress	88%	12%	0	0	0	0
Be able to maintain a number of strategies and skills after intervention	94%	6%	0	0	0	0
Apply intervention strategies to daily habits of the family	94%	6%	0	0	0	0
Constantly support the child's development and learning	94%	6%	0	0	0	0

100% of parents surveyed do not know: how to assess the current personal-social skills of the child, set goals, make an intervention plan, and apply appropriate strategies.

Only 12% of parents know to use appropriate instruments and test the child's progress

**5.3 Factors affecting effectiveness of parent instruction**

Result of consulting five experts as administrators at schools and early intervention centers



**Chart 4. Factors affecting effectiveness of parent instruction**

The chart above shows that the most influential factor for parent instruction is the cooperative attitude of parents (76%), followed by the family structure and the persistence of parents (72%), the factor of existing skills and time budget ranks the third (68%).

**III. CONCLUSION**

Early intervention for children with intellectual disabilities needs to bring the role of parents into play, take advantage of natural conditions and environments. In addition to remedying and limiting intellectual defects, early intervention also does the same for adaptive behavior deficits. Among skills required, a group of personal-social skills can help children with intellectual disabilities live independently, integrate into the community and improve living quality [10].

Most families have not received much support from professionals and other sources such as family members and social groups. Therefore, the professionals need to establish a good relationship with, as well as build the trust of parents before supporting them at home. In addition, the role of family members must be promoted further: father, grandparent, a domestic worker. It is necessary to establish groups of the parent for regular activities to exchange and share experience

In the course of parent instruction to develop personal-social skills for children with intellectual disabilities, it is necessary to focus on factors affecting

parent instruction such as Awareness, academic level, existing skills, cooperative attitude, family structure, environment, practice time, and persistence. Thus promoting the role of parents in early intervention programs to develop personal and social skills for children with intellectual disabilities most effectively.

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