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Applying Technology and Awareness Integration Theory for Quality Early Childhood Care and Education

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Abstract

Administrators from 10 early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs in a Pacific Southwestern state in the United States participated as one part of a qualitative longitudinal study exploring the use of technology at the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020 through May 2023. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how ECCE program administrators employed technologies to support staff, children, and families while providing continuity of quality in curriculum, pedagogy, professional development, parent engagement opportunities, and community outreach during and following the Pandemic. Findings revealed that diverse technologies were used, offered, and supported by ECCE program administrators. Administrators acknowledged that continued use of technologies contributed to and sustained overall program quality; supported children's attainment of developmental milestones; and enhanced parent and staff relationships, capacity building, and engagement. Further, this paper reports on ways ECCE program administrators adapted findings from the study to foster inclusion of awareness integration theory into their daily practices. Consistency of quality care and education has promoted children's development in all learning domains leading to their formal school readiness. Examples of technology as a post-pandemic contributor to quality in ECCE programs are shared.

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Introduction

With the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, every aspect of the early childhood field involving children from birth to age eight and their families, and those who provided care and education for them, was dramatically impacted (Jalongo, 2022). A Pandemic is described as outbreaks that cause high-spread sickness that interrupt the economy and cause deaths (Akin & Gözel, 2020). As the Pandemic reached the United States, administrators of early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs were thrust into solving novel problems with lacking information, resources, or support from agencies (Kirby et al., 2021; Logan et al., 2021). ECCE administrators at every level of programming for young children, honed their leadership skills to create and maintain quality environments for children, where they felt safe and respected, and were motivated to learn (Movahedazarhouligh & Jones, 2024). ECCE programs across the globe were challenged to suddenly provide safe and responsive programming to address children's developmental milestones -- physical, cognitive, social, and emotional -- in a virtual learning environment (see Yildiz et al., 2022), or in a program that served the children of first responders to the Pandemic (Jalongo, 2022).

The roles and responsibilities of ECCE administrators during the Pandemic were continually changing as they respond to environmental and other external factors (Kirby et al., 2021; Logan et al., 2021). Administrators and directors in childcare programs used leadership skills that were adaptive and based on strengths (Movahedazarhouligh & Jones, 2024). As instructional leaders in ECCE, administrators' goals were to provide continuity of quality care and education by continuing to offer developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) in the virtual learning environment or in centers despite having to follow restrictive health and safety protocols (Jalongo, 2022). ECCE programs continued to address standards for optimal learning and development for young children.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, ECCE administrators in the role of program directors kept their centers open for first responder parents, which added to their financial burden (Manoukian, 2022). As was faced in many countries around the globe, ECCE administrators faced financial challenges due to parental discord regarding tuition payments, as well as purchasing resources for online education, providing professional development to use the needed technology, and coordinating virtual learning opportunities for children and families (Yildiz et al., 2022). Moreover, findings from one study conducted in the United States during the pandemic revealed that public school principals believed their future roles would shift from being an instructional leader to focusing primarily on safety and security issues, supporting the wellbeing and mental health of teachers and students, and increasing family engagement (Reid, 2021), which calls for adaptive leadership. ECCE administrators demonstrated adaptive leadership as they prepared for change and adapted to the problems inherent in addressing the challenges of the Pandemic (Bagwell, 2020; Tollman et al., 2021).

Administrators of ECCE programs are essential educators in helping children meet their developmental milestones and acquire the formal school readiness skills they need to be successful (Cadima et al., 2015; Downer et al., 2016; Pianta et al., 2017). With the Pandemic, the importance and fluid roles of ECCE administrators were heightened, and new responsibilities were added for administrators as programs move into leading their teachers and staff into virtual environments (Stone-Johnson & Miles Weiner, 2020) and increasing their mentoring, coaching, and social responsibilities due to the Pandemic. Barriers and restrictions were placed on ECCE programs operating as part of a school or an independent for profit or not-for-profit agency, or private program. During and following the COVID-19 pandemic and its variants, researchers of this study set out to explore how administrators of ECCE programs, who supported the transition to the virtual learning and/or kept their programs open, view technology as a post-pandemic contributor to program quality.

Review of the Literature

Virtual learning environments have become one of the current avenues adopted by ECCE programs throughout the Pacific Southwestern United States. ECCE programs operate as part of school districts, agencies, organizations, and private or independent programs (Johnson et al., 2022). At the outset of the Pandemic, facilitating virtual learning environments for ECCE classes and sessions was a major concern for administrators (Kaimara et al., 2022). As programs scrambled to offer online services for children and families, The American Academy of Pediatrics issued a statement that preschool level children should only be exposed to a maximum of one hour of screen time per day (Yildiz & Songul Yalcin, 2024); therefore, among other issues considered by administrators, children's exposure to screen time had to be considered (Yildiz & Songul Yalcin, 2024). Facilitating teachers' and staffs' abilities to address all aspects of children's development within the limited time frame allowed for children's learning in a virtual environment was challenging (Kaimara et al., 2022).

The virtual environment demonstrated a way of learning that did not require children to be physically present in the ECCE center and provided essential learning alternatives and opportunities. Over time, administrators found that learning in a virtual environment allowed for flexibility and effectiveness (see Hamutoglu et al., 2020; Naimi-Akbar et al., 2023). As teachers, children, parents and guardians became acclimated to technology and the scheduled activities they found the flexibility of virtual learning environments provided opportunities for teaching and learning in various ways (Hamutoglu et al., 2020). Administrators embraced virtual learning environments as an alternative to face-to-face teaching and learning, for teachers' staff development and mentoring, parent engagement and education, and community outreach. Administrators recognized that the new opportunities provided avenues for professional development as viable options for program continuity. Administrators, teachers, and researchers in this study established the understanding that virtual environments provide opportunities for ongoing development and learning, family engagement, and community outreach.

Several indispensable factors influence virtual learning: the students -- the prior skills of teachers before entering the virtual environment, the technology available, and the supporting software and devices available (Rayuwati, 2020). Furthermore, collaboration with others and development of resources and materials allow for successful learning of all stakeholders in virtual environments (Rayuwati, 2020). Within a successful virtual environment, the development of children is prioritized, which in turn, makes whole child development and learning important.

Whole Child Development & Learning

Following the move to virtual learning environments, an emphasis was placed on supporting children's learning in all developmental domains. The whole child developmental approach involves valuing children's physical development and emotional state (Cantor et al., 2021). It includes social skills such as building relationships that directly influence their learning (Manoukian, Researchers in the UK found that children's attendance in early childhood programs were positively associated with communication and problem-solving skills, and personal-social development. Children who participated in ECCE programs during the pandemic had learning benefits (Davies, 2023). The development of children is an important aspect of success in their education (Kriener-Althen et al., 2020). In the ECCE classroom, a child's development is measured to determine their learning and growth (Kriener-Althen et al., 2020). Cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and technological development and learning were addressed when working with children and families in the virtual environment created by the ECCE program.

Physical Development

Physical development is a domain that teachers addressed during virtual learning; however, researchers suggested that addressing the physical developmental domain was an issue (Daum et al., 2021). Teachers worked to strengthen relationships with adults in children's families to suggest ways to support children's physical activities while engaging in the virtual environment (Septian & Sukarmin, 2020). The entire community worked to support children's physical activity in the virtual learning environments by teachers collaborating with the students and family members to intentionally promote physical development (Daum et al., 2021). In the virtual environment, teachers had to be creative in implementing activities for young children to meet the physical standards of their education (Septian & Sukarmin, 2020).

Cognitive Development

Cognitive competence is addressed in virtual learning environments when it is addressed as both knowledge and skills (Kassymova et al., 2021). Cognitive development is connected with building relationships within the virtual environment because researchers found it expands the learning process through collaborative learning (Annansingh, 2019; Kassymova et al., 2021). Cognitively active learning included children's engagement in the class activities and depends on how the teacher facilitates learning to meet the needs of the learners.

Cognitive development includes language skills that are attained at an early age and correlate with children's literacy, pre-reading, and reading competencies and educational successes (Hansen & Broekhuizen, 2021). Researchers explained that language development in virtual learning environments needs interaction with peers and teachers through continuous interactions among children and teachers (Karatas & Tuncer, 2020; Marcum & Kim, 2020). Communication and collaboration are successful in classrooms for young children to increase language skills (Hazaymeh. 2021).

Researchers suggested that incorporating science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) in virtual learning environments requires children to be hands-on learners (Chen & Huang, 2023). STEAM components assist in learning success through their learning styles and processing the information provided. Researchers suggested that STEAM in the virtual learning environment is often initiated through games, requiring teamwork and interaction to be successful (Kummanee et al., 2020).

Social-Emotional Development

Social emotional development is an essential area of knowledge and skills that are essential to children's optimum growth and development (Chen & Brotherson, 2022; Peras & Prudente, 2021). For social-emotional learning (SEL) to occur, researchers found that children need to share their emotions with others in the virtual environment because this type of interaction assists in developing cognition skills (Peras & Prudente, 2021). SEL is also essential in developing resiliency in young children (Peras & Prudente, 2021). Challenges to SEL in the virtual environment were found to be a result of low levels of interactions with peers (Champeaux et al., 2022). Other researchers suggested that a social presence is needed in a virtual environment to have positive influence on children's behavior and SEL (Chiu et al., 2021).

Researchers also investigated how children's mental health was affected in the virtual learning environment (Di Malta et al., 2022; Lister et al, 2021; Wang et al., 2022). The importance of more interactions to connect with peers is essential for optimum mental health and wellbeing of children (Di Malta et al., 2022; Samuel et

al., 2022). Researchers suggested that the use of technology is not a major factor in the diminished mental health of students, but the lack of interactions and positive relationships had a negative influence (Samuel et al., 2022). Researchers suggested more research is needed in the area of children's wellbeing and mental health in the virtual learning environment (Samuel et al., 2022), children's motivation to learn in the virtual learning environment (Rakow et al., 2023), and development of resiliency (Peras & Prudente, 2021).

Successes and Challenges

Researchers have revealed that virtual learning environments present opportunities for both successes and challenges in meeting young children's developmental domains, particularly in addressing children's social and emotional development (Majadly et al., 2024). Researchers in this study explored administrators' perspectives of the influence of technology on virtual learning environments during and following the Pandemic. Researchers purpose was to gain greater awareness and understanding about how administrators support and successfully navigate virtual learning environments as they provide continuity of quality in ECCE programs.

Virtual Learning Tools

A variety of tools are used in the virtual learning environment to enhance the learning processes for children. Some tools increase children's interactions and collaboration with peers (Sodhar et al., 2020). Google Classroom and Zoom have assisted children's attainment of developmental milestones in the virtual learning environment (Bilal et al., 2022). Another tool utilized was YouTube videos and stories for teaching to heighten children's understanding of learning in the virtual environment (Suryatini, 2022).

Conceptual Framework

Restrictions were placed on ECCE programs operating as part of a school or an independent for profit or not-for-profit agencies, or private programs. During and following the COVID-19 pandemic and its variants, researchers of this study set out to explore how administrators of ECCE programs supported the transition to virtual learning and children's school readiness. The conceptual framework for this study is a combination of the Collaborative framework for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards. The CASEL concepts related to SEL focus on teacher capacity in the following areas: developing student SEL, forming and maintaining positive relationships with students, and developing SEL classroom environments. CASEL includes five competency areas that teachers use to support student's SEL. Those competencies are "self-awareness, self-management, social awareness,

relationship skills, and responsible decision-making" (CASEL, n.d., para 3). The ISTE emphasizes standards within the virtual environment to help students become well-rounded contributors while using technology (Crompton, 2023). The ISTE incorporates the following standards for student success: empowered learner, global collaborator, digital citizen, knowledge contributor, innovative designer, and computational thinker. The conceptual framework combines the CASEL framework and the ISTE standards. The CASEL framework is a theory of action. The ISTE is a group of standards that assist in supporting teachers with helping their students be successful in the virtual environment by effectively integrating technology (Crompton, 2023).

CASEL Framework

The theory behind CASEL assists in the development of children's involvement in a community (CASEL, 2013). CASEL's theory of action supports professional development of adults actively involved in the education of children. CASEL has developed standards that assist ECCE administrators, teachers, students and parents in establishing virtual learning environments that supports SEL. The components include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

ISTE Standards

ISTE represents a group of standards that assist administrators and teachers in promoting learning that empowers children to be successful in the virtual environment (Crompton, 2023). ISTE standards allow for the expansion of resources that help administrators influence the curriculum, pedagogy, and resources to support teachers, families, and young students in the virtual environment. These standards are designed to help students develop their SEL experiences through collaborating and sharing with their peers. The ISTE focuses on seven standards that allow students to be successful in a virtual environment. These standards assist in developing the skills and temperaments students will need in the evolving world (Chang, 2022). The standards consist of empowered learners, making them digital citizens and knowledge constructors, innovative designers, computational thinkers, creative communicators, and global collaborators (Chang., 2022).

Method

ECCE administrators from a Pacific Southwestern state in the United States were recruited in the winter and spring of 2024. The pool of potential participants was obtained from ECCE teachers who volunteered for a longitudinal study that was conducted from the mid-2020s to mid-2023. Administrators were from private and public preschools, agency and religious affiliated preschool programs, and infant-toddler programs in hospitals or university lab schools. Emails were sent to administrators, inviting their participation in the study, who were

given the title of principal, director, or coordinator. The email also included information about the intent of the study and volunteer/participant rights. Administrators from 10 early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs consented to participated in a qualitative study exploring their perceptions of their roles in supporting the use of technology at the onset of COVID-19 in January 2020 through May 2023. The study aimed to learn how ECCE program administrators supported their staff in providing continuity of quality ECCE programing in program curriculum, pedagogy, professional development, parent involvement, and community outreach. Administrators of ECCE programs are essential educators in helping their children meet their developmental milestones and acquire the formal school readiness skills they need (Cadima et al., 2015; Downer et al., 2016; Pianta et al., 2017) in virtual environments.

Data Collection & Analysis

Researchers developed a data collection instrument based on the conceptual framework and relevant literature. Interview questions and prompts were reviewed by an expert panel to ensure clarity and ease of understanding for participants. Data was collected via audio recording in Zoom or telephone interviews. Data were analyzed following a six-step process for thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2017) and coding processes outlined by Saldaña's (2016). Phase 1 of the analysis was to become familiar with data. At this point, recordings and transcripts of the interviews were reviewed. Phase 2 of the analysis focused on using a priori and open codes to organize the data into initial codes (see Saldaña, 2016). Coding is the process of identifying pieces of data that are of interest to the researcher and were relevant to the phenomenon under study (Braun & Clarke., 2017). Using the conceptual framework as a guide, priori coding, coding data segments that were relevant were used. Structural, descriptive, and axial coding were used to reveal patterns and categories with emerging themes. Data were analyzed by following an inductive process.

Results

Current ECCE administrators who had a minimum of three years of experience as a principal, director, or manager at the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic responded to one research question: How did the transition to a virtual learning environment and the use of technology influence your programs curriculum, pedagogy, professional development, teacher and parent relationships, and community outreach. The following are representative statements from administrator participants.

Participant 1

After the United States was introduced to COVID-19, early childhood facilities began integrating technology in unprecedented ways. This move to reliance on technology has continued today. It is now part of providing for a safe environment; our curriculum and pedagogy; and the modes of communication and interactions with others in a learning environment. Technology has also changed the way we are doing business today. For instance, to reduce the number and closeness of face-to-face interactions in childcare facilities, some programs started using online payment options instead of accepting payments at the centers, checking their children in and out via an application on their phones, or scanning a QR code as they enter or exit the building.

Participant 2

Crucial skills were missed while children were home with parents, older siblings, or other family members when childcare centers were shut down during the early onset of COVID-19. Opportunities to develop fine motor skills through completing puzzles, lacing cards with strings, pounding play dough, and cutting with scissors were often missed daily. We did what we could to involve children and their families on Zoom, however, because of the ages of the children it was difficult to keep them engaged when parents were not online and participating with the children or acting as co-teachers. When children returned to classrooms early childcare providers had to be innovative because children lacked basic skills, that we had taken for granted.

Participant 3

One use of technology that has continued to the current time is accessing virtual field trips. These became more popular so children could still have learning experiences and exposure without leaving their educational space.

Participant 4

Early childhood classrooms were conducted online during the COVID-19 isolation period. Serving an economically underprivileged area, we had to create an online environment for children closest to a face-to-face classroom. We were aware that building relationships was important for the wellbeing of children and their parents. We would allow children to stay on Zoom and play with each other after classroom hours were over. They were able to have conversations and share their emotions with their friends.

Participant 5

What I have changed after the isolation period during the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 is making myself available to parents by using technology, which has contributed to strengthening our relationships. I have also started seeking professional development using virtual consulting and classrooms. I use WhatsApp, text, and Zoom to contact parents, inform them about their children, and conduct meetings. I started giving parents access to the camera in my daycare so they could check on their children. I have noticed that parents tend to be more overprotective of their children in the last 4 years after the COVID-19 outbreak. I am extremely aware that children need more assistance with their social-emotional development. They need specific activities and tools to help them develop self-confidence, emotional regulation, and self-esteem. We use CASEL, but I have been learning and implementing the Awareness Integration Theory with the children in my care and their parents and have seen great results.

Participant 6

When the COVID-19 outbreak happened, all early childhood education establishments faced a major challenge in providing the same quality of care virtually – but we gave it our best effort. Young children did not have the skills or capabilities to use virtual technology, and teachers needed professional development, coaching, and mentoring. Parents also needed coaching and mentoring. The main concern expressed by the staff was children's lack of social-emotional skills. I believe that the isolation period caused major delays in children's physical, language, and social-emotional development.

Participant 7

Most children who were born during the COVID-19 isolation period were lacking skills in all developmental domains. This was so much that some children's behavior resembled the behaviors of children with disabilities, including autism. I started using technology not only to keep my connection with children and their parents but also for the professional development of my staff members. Technology is still used for much of the professional development I offer my staff. I want them to understand and use follow CASEL and include ISTE standards for students.

Participant 8

An option for parents, that teachers typically like best, is providing the option for parents to see their child via cameras in the classroom instead of visiting the classrooms in person. Cameras are used for security as well as

observation of staff and children. As far as children using technology in the classroom, It is important for children to be introduced to using tablets – they are a big part of the way kindergarteners are taught and tested.

Participant 9

Teachers began utilizing digital websites for online learning and for in the classroom instruction. Children as young as three years old started using a mouse and their pointer fingers to maneuver around on the web. Although screentime is limited, these innovations have continued to the present day. To have a quality program that prepares children for formal school, I need to be attentive to the needs of my staff in preparing children to learn in new ways – many of those new ways involve technology. While I prefer holding a book and turning pages, I can still see the value of having authors of children's books read their stories on U-TUBE and illustrators describe how they create art for their books.

Participant 10

I have used several apps, such as Zoom, to conduct parenting classes, parent-teacher meetings, staff meetings and trainings, and classes for children. We use play-based practices, DAP, and standards for best practices in our program. The most beneficial and effective method I have used to help children and their parents develop social-emotional competency, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-confidence, and emotional regulation is the Awareness Integration Theory. I attended training on AIT have used this theory in person, virtually, and through the AIT app. AIT offers a process to follow step by step. It also aligns with program values and positive outcomes for children who attend my program.

Findings from this research revealed that overtime, administrators supported the use a diverse array of technologies for multiple uses in ECCE programs for children from birth to entry into formal school. Administrators acknowledged that continued use of technology has the potential to contribute to overall program quality. Examples include the role of technology to embed awareness integration theory into practice. As an initial adaptation from face-to-face teaching and learning to the virtual environment, administrators in this study suggested adding a "technological" domain of learning to the list of children's developmental domains because ECCE programs are key to children's learning and readiness for formal schooling. Themes that emerged from the data indicate that administrators in this study facilitated the use of technologies for: (1) building and center security and safety; (2) parent and family communication, education, and co-teaching; (3) curriculum and pedagogy to meet children's developmental domains of learning – physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and technological; (4) assessment of child health, wellbeing, and progress toward meeting

developmental milestones; (5) professional learning opportunities for staff; and (6) licensing requirements for program quality.

Discussion

Virtual learning in ECCE is a form of education that combines curriculum, pedagogy, learning materials, and the use of technology that supports interaction between administrators, teachers, children, and parents. Virtual learning complements the face-to-face classroom environment in implementing educational standards, best practices, and innovative programs. Administrators are influential in encouraging teachers and families to incorporate instructional methods that promote children's developmental domains and support children meeting their developmental milestones and achieve readiness for formal schooling. Some participants recognized AIT in both the online learning and face-to-face environments. Findings revealed that the strategies and practices addressed in the research should be utilized by teachers in working with children and families (Kamei et al., 2021). Findings also deem administrators' roles in encouraging teachers to address children's developmental domains in virtual learning environments is important. Relationships among the administrators, teachers, and families are needed to maintain a learning environment in an online teaching environment, which is confirmed in the literature (Mahmud, 2022). Researchers explained that more studies are needed to investigate the importance of addressing children's developmental domains in virtual learning environments (Veraksa et al., 2021). The findings of this study may potentially enlighten others about the problems and successes found in remote and virtual learning environments with early childhood students. The potential positive change may be using participants' responses to identify possible training and professional learning opportunities that would lead to adjustments in virtual learning environments to promote whole child development with an emphasis on social-emotional development in early childhood students.

Conclusion

With this understanding of the influential role of virtual learning on the educational environment for students also came an increased interest in knowing and understanding how students' social and emotional developmental domains are being addressed in virtual environments (Wang, 2022). A significant increase in social and emotional maladjustment in young children who lack prosocial behaviors and have high incidents of conduct problems appears to be an outcome of the Pandemic (Jung & Barnett, 2021). Social emotional learning became an area that gained the attention of ECE professionals who recognized these domains of learning needed to be addressed in the virtual environment. Insufficient research had been conducted to provide the ECCE community evidence-based information about students' social-emotional growth and areas of wellbeing and mental health while learning in virtual environments. Social and emotional development lays a

foundation for future academic success (Panayiotou et al., 2019). Clarification is needed on how young students' social and emotional development was influenced in virtual learning environments. Although researchers have investigated this issue, the topic has yet to be explored thoroughly. Little research is reported in the current literature on ECE teachers' experiences on the influence of virtual learning environments on students' social emotional development.

Recommendations

Participants in this study focused on children's developmental domains and emphasized the importance of children's social emotional learning. Some administrators embedded Awareness Integration Theory into their consistent practice to support staff, children, and their families. Understanding administrators' experiences revealed how to create virtual environments that can contribute to program quality. Authors of this paper recommend virtual and face-to-face ECCE program administrators consider inclusion of the Awareness Integration Theory into their work with staff, children, and families. The following information is a discussion of the theory.

The Awareness Integration Theory originated, was developed, and researched by physiotherapist Dr. Foojan Zeine, by integrating elements from several phycological methods such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Existential Therapy, Person-Centered Therapy, Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT), Mind-Body Therapy (MBT), Transactional Analysis, Solution-Focused Therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Mindfulness, and Hypnosis, to create a cohesive framework that addresses the complexity of human experiences. The AIT leads individuals through six phases, each examining life domains such as career, relationships, family, early experiences, self-identity, and existential topics like mortality, spirituality, and perceptions of a higher power. Each phase utilizes focused questions and specific objectives to encourage personal growth and healing. Covering diverse life areas is essential, as they may influence each other directly or indirectly. Skills gained in one domain can aid development in others, while unresolved trauma or limiting beliefs in one area can obstruct overall progress and future goals. This thorough examination aligns with AIT's integrative approach (Zeine, 2017). Additionally, AIT promotes self-reflection, self-analysis, and self-help practices, enabling individuals to identify, address, and manage stress. It further supports emotional regulation and cognitive mindfulness, guiding intentional actions that yield fulfilling results. Five out of six phases of the AIT is used in a proactive manner when implemented for young children to help them regulate their emotions, build self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. Phase 4 of the AIT is used in a modified manner with children.

The following are the six phases of AIT:

Phase 1: This initial phase seeks to heighten awareness of one's beliefs, emotions, and behaviors within the context of their environment, emphasizing how these factors impact their lives (parenting style, teaching style, behaving towards children). Assessing core beliefs related to areas of desired success is essential (Zeine, 2021). Conflicting intentions or hidden dualities can often hinder goal achievement. Recognizing positive beliefs that facilitate progress is just as important as identifying limiting beliefs that obstruct effective learning or success.

Phase 2: This phase has three primary goals: (1) Enhancing awareness of how individuals perceive others' opinions and feelings toward them, (2) Improving skills in observing and interpreting others' actions, and (3) Acknowledging how these perceptions affect one's life (Zeine, 2021). Assumptions about others can create fears and resistance to goal pursuit, with fear of judgment often being a significant obstacle. Distinguishing reality from assumptions and developing the ability to perform reality checks allows for a more focused approach to achieving one's goals.

Phase 3: This phase aims to raise awareness of one's beliefs, emotions, and self-concept as they operate across different life areas. By understanding how one's established sense of identity interacts with these domains, individuals can begin modifying core beliefs that cause stagnation (Zeine, 2021). This stage also reveals negative core beliefs formed from past trauma or adverse childhood experiences (parents, educators, staff members). Recognizing these beliefs provides a chance to reshape them constructively within one's psychological framework.

Phase 4: This phase centers on integrating past experiences with the present, exploring how emotional schemas are stored in the body as memories, often filled with intense emotions. It connects related memories, traumas, and beliefs, reframing negative beliefs through visualization to reflect strengths, resilience, and abilities (Zeine, 2021). By connecting current strengths to previously limiting beliefs, this integration supports coaching and mentoring by addressing subconscious barriers.

Phase 5: In this phase, individuals define core values to guide their lives, making conscious choices about beliefs and actions that align with these values. This includes recognizing existing strengths and identifying skill areas to reach goals, fostering a renewed mindset and self-image. Life goals are set with an action plan, and coaches assist clients in building self-awareness while implementing actions toward meaningful outcomes (Zeine, 2021).

Phase 6: The final phase focuses on establishing sustainable frameworks to maintain progress, creating a supportive network to help realize goals and choosing an accountability partner to ensure consistent follow-through (Zeine, 2021). This creates a lasting support system that continues beyond the mentoring phase.

Usage of AIT has helped parents and childcare staff recognize their beliefs and fears in parenting a child or caring for children, reviewing the effects of their beliefs, fears, and other emotions on themselves and on children, and them changing or modifying them to achieve their desired results. Usage of AIT with young children helps increase their emotional intelligence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, caring for others, understanding of others' emotions and feeling, behaving properly towards others, acting in a kind and inclusive way, and being responsible for their actions. Children have shown themselves to be more attentive to their peers needs, solution driven, deeper thinkers, more conditionate, have a higher level of love of learning, and more understanding of others' needs.

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