

SPECIAL FEATURES OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE OLDER PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN A PROVINCIAL SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

^aIRINA A. NEYASOVA, ^bTATIANA I. SHUKSHINA,
^cNATALIA G. SPIRENKOVA, ^dSVETLANA N.
 GORSHENINA

^{a,b,c,d}Mordovian State Pedagogical University named after
 M. E. Evseev, Studencheskaya str., 11 A, Saransk, Russia,
 430007
 email: ^a25909101@mail.ru, ^btishukshina@yandex.ru,
^cspirenkovan@mail.ru, ^dngorshenina@yandex.ru

Acknowledgements: This research was financially supported by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation as part of the State Order to the Federal State Institution of Higher Professional Education Mordovian State Pedagogical University named after M. E. Evseev for the year 2021. Project "Children and Childhood. Daily Life of a Child in a Provincial Social Environment", Agreement No. 073-03-2021-021/2 dd 18.01.2021.

Abstract: This paper presents the results of the experimental research into special features of social development of the older preschoolers in a provincial social environment. The authors revealed that positive changes relating to social development occur in the children of this age group, which are caused by the impact of provincial social environment (preservation of family traditions, participation of the broad spectrum of socializing agents in upbringing and socialization of a child, intergenerational continuity within a family, wide-ranging interactions with the peers, etc.), however, a large portion is constituted by the respondents with insufficiently stable social behavior which is explainable by their age-specific features.

Keywords: social development, older preschool children, diagnostics, childhood, provincial social environment, socialization.

1 Introduction

Amidst the ongoing social transformations, exploration of the modern childhood and its psychological-pedagogical features seems to be a relevant goal, which is explained by the influence rendered on this phenomenon by various socio-cultural conditions, the changing forms of communication between an adult and a child, emerging new ways of collecting information about social reality, changing needs of a child, etc. In the studies of recent years, the childhood is viewed as an autonomous sociocultural reality, a distinctive subculture with its own structure, language, functions, and traditions conditioned by age sensitivity.

At the present stage, the older preschool age occupies a special place in addressing the objectives of studying the psychological-pedagogical features of the childhood. This is a period when a child gradually enters the world of specific social relations, realizes the socio-cultural connections, "probing" own self in the socio-cultural space, when the cognitive assimilation of social reality gets substituted with conscious socialization. However, the social development of a child of this age group depends on many socialization factors, including the influence of the socio-cultural environment where the child lives. The current transformations in the society significantly change the objective conditions of social development of older preschool children, which requires scientific comprehension for considering the impact of the new realities of the socio-cultural environment. At the same time, problems related to studying the social development of older preschool children in specific socio-cultural conditions remain understudied. These include the problem of studying the influence of the provincial society on the process under scrutiny and exploration of its socializing potential. In the context of our study we will consider the special features of social development of preschool children living in a provincial social environment.

2 Literature Review

In the Russian and foreign science there are fundamental psychological and pedagogical studies concerning various aspects of human social development, personal involvement as an individual subject of social relations (Kon, 2004; Dodge et al., 1994; Hjele & Ziegler, 1992; Feldstein, 2009). Research has

focused on the study of social development at different age stages.

Older preschool age is considered in psychological and pedagogical theory as the most important age stage for social development (Damon et al., 2006; Bysheva & Khanova, 2016).

Peculiarities of children's social development in view of the age are considered in the works of Baranova (2020), Denham et al. (2011), Dougherty (2006), Gershon and Pellitteri (2018), Lapteva (2016), Pahomov (2020).

At the present stage in the development of pedagogical science, a steady tendency has been observed to study socio-pedagogical factors of social development. The findings of research into the impact of various socio-cultural conditions on the social development of children are presented in the works of James and Zanden (1990), Joan and Davidov (2010), Schoonmaker (2006), Valitskai and Sultanov (2009), Wichmann et al. (2004). However, the domestic science for a long time has not paid due attention to the study of the impact of the provincial society and its socio-pedagogical features, and the few studies known at the moment mostly focus on the geographical, economic or statistical and demographic issues. Having analyzed the literary sources, we should note that the modern provincial society is characterized by the strong family values; domesticity of population choosing to reside in the same locality; preservation of close family and collective relations; no social or cultural contrasts; differentiation of norms of the expected behavior and norms of relationships as concerns the age and gender of residents; certain selectiveness in communication, by intensity and emotional significance, as well as by content, etc. These studies do not view the provincial society as a distinct socio-cultural and socio-pedagogical environment. Socializing potential of provincial society, effective socio-pedagogical conditions for improving the positive socialization of the younger generations remain unexplored.

A view on the child as a subject of children's activities is presented in the studies of Vasenina et al. (2018), Gogoberidze et al. (2018), Osorina (2017), Smirnova (2013), Sadinova and Karpova (2018). Scientific works devoted to the problem of exploring the social development of older preschool children with account of the provincial society environment are extremely scarce and have only a polemic nature.

3 Research Methodological Framework

The research purpose was to explore special features of social development of the older preschool children in the provincial social environment.

This purpose was accomplished through the following objectives: identify the diagnostic criteria base for exploring the special features of social development of older preschool children in a provincial social environment; measure the level of social development of older preschool children in a provincial social environment; consolidate the results of diagnostic research and present the major trends in the social development of the older preschool children in a provincial social environment.

The ascertaining stage of our experiment took place during the year 2021. The experimental base of research was Kindergarten No. 76, Municipal Autonomous Pre-School Educational Institution, in the city of Saransk, the Republic of Mordovia. The research included 108 older preschool children (5-7 years).

For assessing the basic parameters of social development of the older preschool children, a complex of diagnostic methods was used: "Sociometric Survey" (Denisova, 2017), a subtest to identify the subjects of identification for older preschool children, "Unfinished Sentences", "Expert Evaluation of Older Preschool Children Socialization" (Mikliaeva, 2017),

"Unfinished Situations" (A. M. Shchetinina, L. V. Kirs) (Shchetinina, 2000).

For addressing the identified objectives, the following research methods were used: pedagogical experiment, observation, questionnaires; expert evaluation method; quantitative and qualitative analysis of the obtained data.

4 Results and Discussion

For revealing the specific features of social development of the older preschool children living in a provincial society the following indicators were defined: the level of knowledge and understanding of the socio-moral norms; understanding the motives of other people's actions, the ability to adequately perceive the observed behavior within a certain social context; the ability to put oneself in the place of another (to overcome communicative and moral egocentrism); the ability to establish emotional connection with adults, peers or peer group; the ability to develop the communicative situation.

The diagnostics helped to address the objective of studying the current level of social development of the older preschool children living in a provincial society. The level of social development of the older preschool children was identified based on the indicators listed above, taking into account the impact of the provincial social environment.

In the context of our study, of the greatest interest was the study of the relationship of the older preschool children with their main subjects of identification. Two types of social relationships, namely socially normalized relationships with adults and relationships with peers, are especially vividly manifested in the older preschool age.

Studying of the specific features characterizing the relationships of the older preschool children living in the provincial society environment is possible through examining the level of awareness of the emotional effect on the child's personality of communication with different categories of people.

From the angle of the emotional-motivational sphere, conspicuous are the results of a projective subtest for identifying the level of personal identification, which helps to reveal the child's position in relation to their subjects of identification (mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, peers, teacher, etc.), graphically represented as eight circles positioned horizontally, which also determines the rank positions of the subjects of identification. The results obtained by this subtest showed that the primary subject of identification in the immediate circle of the older preschool children is a mother. This subject was given the leading position by 70% of the subjects. Such ranking position can be explained by the fact that when children is near their mothers, in most cases they have the feeling of social comfort and protection. It is with her that children associate the expression of the best human qualities and try to copy her, wishing to acquire similar qualities. A role of the father is rather high for the older preschool children. However, this subject of identification takes a lower position in relation to the mother.

Children of the older preschool age in most cases assign 3rd and 4th position to such subjects of identification as grandfather and/or grandmother. In some families, these agents of socialization have a direct influence on the child's personality, in others, their influence is indirect. Despite the general trends of transitioning from multigenerational to nuclear family in modern provincial society, more intense migration processes, geographical separation affecting the relationships between the older generation and other family members, the role of these agents in the social development of a child in provincial society is quite sizeable, because through them children learn the customs and traditions of the family, they spend a lot of time with children because parents are busy with jobs, thus, along with mother and father, grandparents are significant agents of socialization for children of this age group.

Results of this subtest have been validated with the help of the Sociometric Survey (Denisova, 2017). This survey includes five blocks, 10 questions each, intended to investigate relationships with child's peers, family members, teachers, and a reference group. To the questions "Who do you like to play with at home?", "Who do you like to walk with?", "If you had two tickets to the circus, which family member would you go there with?" 78% of the older preschool children named their mother. Responses to the question "Who in the family would you want to be like?" revealed the reference group for the older preschool children - 38% prefer to be like their mother, 32% identify themselves with a dad, 4% with an older sister or brother, and 26% of children noted the important position of their grandparents.

If to widen the lens of exploration of this problem to include the glance into the features of social development in other institutions of socialization, it can be seen that one of the leading roles the children of the older preschool age assign is to their nursery teacher. Adults, who are not family members, become part of social reality of a child specifically in the preschool age. The conducted research has proven the important role of a nursery teacher in the social development of preschool children. 44% of the older preschool children put their teacher into the leading positions.

In a sociometric survey, when asked "Which adult would you share your troubles with?" 34% of the older preschoolers mentioned the teacher. This group of preschoolers quite often turn to the teacher to share the encountered difficulties. Along with other reference adults, 40% of the older preschoolers would share a joyful event with a teacher.

The peers of the older preschool children are mostly ranked to the lower positions. It should be noted that the level of awareness of the specifics of relationships among the older preschool children living in a provincial society is extremely low, which is explained by their insufficient experience in interpersonal interactions, 5-7 years old children are looking at the external reaction of another person, often not realizing the level of this person's importance to themselves. They are indiscriminate in establishing social contacts and strive for any kind of communication, in connection with which they assign 1st, 2nd or 3rd rank to each of the subjects of socialization.

In order to identify the distinctive features of interaction between older preschool children and their peers, we used observation and expert evaluation of the socialization of children belonging to this age group under the method of N.V. Mikliaeva (2017). According to the results of our research, the older preschool children may be divided into three main groups with a high 21.3%, an average 42.6%, and a low 36.1% level of socialization. The diagnostics revealed that in the older preschool age the system of relationships with peers becomes highly saturated, diverse and cooperative. As concerns communication with peers in this age group, the contacts of equal status are assumed. When communicating with peers, the older preschool children are able to take into account each other's point of view, negotiate, find compromises, express their attitude to the current situation, propose possible development scenarios in the process of play activity; the predominant motive in interaction with peers is the play, while the business motive in interaction is demonstrated by the older preschool children with low sociometric status, the personal motive in interactions is most often shown by children holding leading positions in the group of peers. The general tendency as concerns interactions in the peer group is the limited scope of interactions in a spontaneous environment. The yard games and mixed-age children's communities, which used to be an important component of socialization, have almost vanished. The provincial society, as the research shows, to some extent still preserved this kind of interactions of the older preschool children. Through interactions in a mixed-age community of children, an older preschool child gets the opportunity to adapt independently in the group of peers, and effectively develop many social skills.

In the process of experimental work an attempt was made to study the level of awareness by the older preschool children of the main social categories. For addressing this objective, the method "Unfinished Sentence" was used. Children were offered to explain such elementary social concepts as "a friend", "a family", "kindness", "mercy", "responsiveness", etc. It was found that as the older preschool children grow older, their understanding of basic social perceptions, concepts and knowledge improves; the number of social concepts used by them in speech increases; the content aspect of the studied component undergoes changes due to the growing number of attributes and categories included in the active vocabulary and resulting from clarification of the already assimilated information.

For studying understanding by the older preschool children of the motives of other people's actions; their ability to develop a communicative situation; their ability to establish an emotional connection with adults, a peer or a group of peers, the method "Unfinished Situations" was used (A. M. Shchetinina, L. V. Kirs) (Shchetinina, 2000). It was found that a significant portion of respondents (40.7%) have an insufficiently stable social and moral behavior, characterized by situational reactivity, which is tied into their age specifics; a significant number of older preschool children (31.4%) demonstrated absolute inconsistency in socio-moral norms and behavior in some aspects of the research.

Based on the results of diagnostics intended to identify the level of social development of the older preschool children, three groups were identified. Older preschool children with a high level of social development have deep objective knowledge and subjective ideas about socio-moral norms, fully understand the motives behind other people's actions; are able to establish an emotional connection with adults, peers or a group of peers; and are ready for collective interactions to deal with arising social situations. Children with a medium level of social development have some objective knowledge and subjective ideas about socio-moral norms, understand the motives behind other people's actions in some situations; are able to establish an emotional connection with adults, peers or a group of peers; are partially ready for collective interactions to deal with arising social situations; are able to determine the algorithm of actions with the help of adults or peers. The older preschool children with a low level of social development do not have the objective knowledge and subjective ideas about socio-moral norms, regardless of situation, do not understand the motives behind other people's actions; are not able to establish an emotional connection with adults, peers or a group of peers; and are not ready for collective interactions to deal with arising social situations.

The results of diagnostics of the levels of social development of the older preschool children living in a provincial society are presented in Table 1 produced by the authors.

Table 1 Diagnostic results of the level of social development of senior preschool children living in provincial society (%)

Level	Total respondents	High	Medium	Low
Group of children	108	25	41,6	33,4

Source: the authors

The results yielded at the ascertaining stage of the experiment showed that most of the older preschool children in the provincial social environment have low and medium levels of social development.

5 Conclusion

Social development of the older preschool children is an important predictor of their success at other age stages. During this age period, children actively enter the socio-cultural environment, their interest in learning more about social reality and the interactions with the "world of people" grows stronger. Through interactions with the world and the people around, the children satisfy their needs for self-fulfillment as expression of

own self among "others" and the need to find their own place. The leading subjects of relationships with the older preschool children are adults, acting as the role models of social behavior, transmitters of the ethical norms of interaction, and the peer group driving the development of mechanisms of interpersonal perception and understanding, instilling of positive personal qualities, performance of certain social roles established by the system of interpersonal interactions. Intergenerational interactions remain a priority in the modern provincial family, and the leading social role in the upbringing and socialization of children belongs to representatives of the older generations. However, the life space of an older preschool child in a modern provincial family becomes more and more limited, the number of activities that are appealing and interesting for children is reducing, the time they spent watching TV shows and playing computer games is increasing considerably, which hinders the process of social development. In a provincial society, influence of a peer group on the social development of an older preschool child in a spontaneous environment within a mixed-age children's community continues to some extent.

In the older preschool age, the social sphere develops, the main progress occurs due to the emergence of new social perceptions, the understanding of elementary socio-moral concepts improves, but social perceptions, concepts and knowledge remain fragmented and not yet structured into an organized system. A significant portion of respondents show insufficiently stable social behavior characterized by situational reactivity.

Literature:

1. Baranova, E. A.: *Fostering Social Confidence as a Factor in Socialization of the Older Preschool Children*. Modern Knowledge-Intensive Technologies, 11, 2020. 115-119 pp.
2. Byvsheva, M. V., Khanova, T. G.: *Special Aspects of the Social Situation of Development at a Preschool Age*. Bulletin of Minin University 3(16), 2016. P. 22.
3. Damon, W., Lerner, R., Eisenberg, N.: *Handbook of Child Psychology, Social, Emotional, and Personality Development*. New York: Wiley, 2006. 1152 p.
4. Denham, S. A., Zinsser, K., Bailey, C. S.: *Emotional Intelligence in the First Five Years of Life*. Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, 8, 2011. 1-7 pp.
5. Denisova, N. D.: *Diagnostics of Emotional and Personal Development of Preschool Children 3-7 Years Old*. Volgograd: Teacher, 2017. 196 p.
6. Dodge, K. A., Pettit, G. S., Bates J. E.: *Socialization Mediators of the Relation between Socioeconomic Status and Child Conduct Problems*. Child Development, 65(2), 1994. 649-665 pp.
7. Dougherty, L. R.: *Children's Emotionality and Social Status: A Meta-Analytic Review*. Social Development, 15(3), 2006. 394-417 pp.
8. Feldstein, D. I.: *Modern Childhood: Problems and Possible Solutions*. Bulletin of Practical Psychology in Education, 2(19), 2009. 28-32 pp.
9. Gershon, P., Pellitteri, J.: *Promoting Emotional Intelligence in Preschool Education: A Review of Programs*. International Journal of Emotional Education, 10, 2018. 26-41 pp.
10. Gogoberidze, A. G., Atarova, A. N., Novikov, M. S., Novitskaya, V. A., Yafizova, R. I.: *The Preschooler as a Subject of Designing the Sociocultural Space and Educational Environment of Own Development. The Conception of One Project*. Modern Preschool Education, 5(87), 2018. 16-23 pp.
11. Hjele, L., Ziegler, D.: *Personality Theories: Basic assumptions, Research, and Applications*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992. 362 p.
12. James, W., Zanden, V.: *The Social Experience an Introduction to Sociology*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990. 231 p.
13. Joan, E. G., Davidov, M.: *Integrating Different Perspectives on Socialization Theory and Research: A Domain-Specific Approach*. Child Development, 81(3), 2010. 687-709 pp.
14. Kon, I. S.: *Childhood as a Social Phenomenon*. Journal of Social Policy Research, 2(2), 2004. 151-174 pp.

15. Lapteva, Yu. A.: *Age Variability of Indicators Expressing Emotional Development of Children during Preschool Age*. Bulletin of VSPU, 6, 2016. 19-25 pp.
16. Mikliaeva, N. V.: *Comprehensive Diagnostics of Adaptation, Socialization and Social Intelligence of the Preschool Children*. Management of Preschool Educational Institution, 4, 2017. 91-102 pp.
17. Osorina, M. V.: *The Secret World of Children in the Space of the Adult World*. Saint Petersburg: Piter, 2019. 448 p.
18. Pakhomov, I. A.: *Factors Influencing the Social Experience of Preschool Children*. Bulletin of Tambov University, 25(185), 2020. 130-139 pp.
19. Sadinova, L., Karpova, N.: *Dialogical Speech Development in Senior Preschool Age Children by Means of Theatrical Activity*. Modern European Researches, 3, 2018. 34-42 pp.
20. Shchetinina, A. M.: *Diagnostics of the Social Development of a Child: Educational and Methodological Handbook*. Veliky Novgorod: Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University, 2000. 88 p.
21. Schoonmaker, S.: *Kids in Context: The Sociological Study of Children and Childhoods*. Contemporary Sociology, 35(6), 2006. 579-580 pp.
22. Smirnova, E. O.: *Game in the Modern Preschool Education*. Psychological Science and Education, 3, 2013. 92-98 pp.
23. Valitskai, A. P., Sultanov, K. V.: *Childhood and Society in the Context of Culture*. Saint Petersburg: Publisher of the Polytechnical University, 2009. 393 p.
24. Vasenina, S. I., Vinokurova, N. V., Kirkina, E. N.: *Formation of Spiritual and Moral Culture of Preschool Children in the Process of Leisure Activities*. Perspektivy Nauki i Obrazovania, 34(4), 2018. 175-182 pp.
25. Wichmann, C., Coplan, R. J., Daniels, T.: *The Social Cognitions of Socially Withdrawn Children (social cognitions of isolated children)*. Social Development, 13(3), 2004. 377-392 pp.

Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AM, AN