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FEATURES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract. This article analyzes the psychological features of the formation and development of emotional intelligence in preschool children. Emotional intelligence is considered as an important psychological competence that includes a child's ability to recognize and manage their own feelings, understand the emotional states of other people, and give appropriate emotional responses in social relationships. The article substantiates that the development of emotional intelligence in the preschool period is influenced by the family environment, relationships with peers, pedagogical influence, play activity, and the child's individual psychological characteristics. It also highlights the importance of role-play games, emotion recognition exercises, fairy tales and works of fiction, situational tasks, and communication-based pedagogical methods in developing children's emotional intelligence.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, preschool age, emotional development, emotion awareness, empathy, self-regulation, social competence, preschool education, personality development.

Introduction. The preschool period is considered one of the most important stages in a child's mental development. It is during this period that the child actively develops the skills of understanding the surrounding world, expressing their own feelings, understanding the emotional states of other people, communicating, and entering into social relationships. The effectiveness of the child's further learning and interpersonal relationships largely



depends on the emotional and social competencies formed during this period.

Modern psychology increasingly emphasizes that assessing a child's development only through intellectual indicators is not sufficient. Along with acquiring knowledge, a child needs to be able to manage their emotions, understand how they feel in particular situations, recognize the experiences of others, and choose socially acceptable behavior. From this point of view, the concept of emotional intelligence acquires special scientific and practical significance.

The concept of emotional intelligence was developed by P. Salovey and J. Mayer in connection with a person's abilities to perceive and understand their own and other people's emotions and to use them in thinking and in regulating behavior. Later, D. Goleman made a great contribution to popularizing this concept and widely highlighted the importance of emotional competencies in personal and social activity.

The essence of emotional intelligence in the preschool period. When emotional intelligence is considered from the perspective of a preschool child, several interrelated components can be distinguished.

The first component is **emotion awareness**. The child learns to distinguish and name basic emotional states such as joy, sadness, fear, anger, and surprise. At first, the child's ability to recognize emotions relies on external signs — facial expressions, tone of voice, and body movements. Later, the child also begins to understand the causes of emotions.

The second component is **managing one's own emotions**. In preschool children, emotional reactions are often direct and intense. As they grow older, children begin to acquire the skills of controlling their emotional state, waiting, responding appropriately to the situation, and reducing impulsive reactions.

The third component is **empathy**, that is, the ability to understand another person's emotional state and respond to it appropriately. In preschool age, the first signs of empathy appear when a child feels sorry for another child who is crying, tries to help, or notices that a close person is upset.

The fourth component is **social-emotional relationships**. In the process of



communicating with peers and adults, the child learns to wait their turn, reach agreement, express their opinion, resolve conflicts, and take other people's opinions into account.

Age-specific features of emotional intelligence development. During the preschool period, emotional intelligence does not develop at a uniform pace. Its development is closely related to the child's age, experience, and family and social environment.

In early preschool age, the child mainly begins to distinguish simple and clear emotions. They can recognize states such as joy, sadness, fear, and anger through external signs. However, the child's ability to control their own emotions is still limited.

In middle preschool age, the ability to name emotions and understand their causes develops. Through questions such as "Why did I get upset?" and "Why is my friend crying?", the child begins to understand emotional cause-and-effect relationships. Play with peers becomes an important means of developing emotional and social skills.

In senior preschool age, the child becomes able to distinguish more complex emotional states, take another person's point of view into account, and understand how their own behavior affects others. At the same time, the child learns to control their behavior to a certain extent and adapt it to social rules.

Factors influencing the development of emotional intelligence. In the formation of emotional intelligence in preschool children, the **family environment** is of primary importance. By observing how adults express and manage emotions, the child adopts the corresponding models of behavior. When parents listen to the child's feelings, do not deny them, and help the child understand their emotional state, this develops the child's emotional competence.

The pedagogical environment in the preschool educational institution is also one of the important factors. The teacher should respect the child's feelings, listen to their opinion, and create an emotionally safe environment.

Communication with peers broadens the child's social-emotional experience. During joint games, the child learns to reach agreement, wait their turn, express their wishes, get out of conflict situations, and take other children's feelings into account.



In addition, **play activity** is a natural means of developing emotional intelligence. Especially in role-play games, the child performs various social roles and tries to understand another person's point of view.

Effective methods for developing emotional intelligence. To develop emotional intelligence in preschool children, it is advisable to include special psychological and pedagogical activities in the educational process.

First, through exercises such as **“Find the Emotion”**, children are shown various facial expressions and asked to name them. This exercise develops the ability to perceive and distinguish emotions.

Second, by **discussing fairy tales and stories**, children can analyze the emotional states of the characters. For example, questions such as “Why was the character upset?” and “What would you have done in their place?” develop empathy and emotional thinking.

Third, **role-play games** help develop children's social-emotional skills. Through games such as “Welcoming Guests,” “Doctor and Patient,” and “Helping a Friend,” the child practices appropriate emotional behavior in social situations.

Fourth, it is important to teach children **ways of managing their own emotions**. Simple techniques such as taking a deep breath, calming down for a short time, telling an adult how they feel, and describing the situation in words develop the child's ability to regulate themselves.

Discussion. The development of emotional intelligence does not occur separately from the child's overall psychological development. Cognitive, emotional, and social development processes are interconnected. The child observes the behavior of the people around them, recognizes their emotions, compares them with their own experience, and gradually adopts socially acceptable forms of behavior.

Therefore, in preschool education, the development of emotional intelligence should not be limited to separate lessons. It should be integrated into everyday pedagogical activity, play, communication, artistic activity, and all forms of relationships among children.



Cooperation between teachers and parents is also of particular importance. If the educational institution gives the child the opportunity to express their emotions while the family regularly denies the child's feelings, the stable formation of emotional competence becomes difficult. Therefore, it is advisable to develop a unified emotional and educational approach.

Conclusion. The preschool period is an important period for the formation of the main components of emotional intelligence — recognizing emotions, expressing and managing them, empathy, and social interaction skills.

Emotional intelligence lays the foundation not only for the child's current social adaptation but also for their future learning, interpersonal relationships, and psychological stability in independent life.

Therefore, one of the important tasks of the preschool education system is to develop and put into practice psychological and pedagogical programs aimed at developing children's emotional intelligence. In this regard, the comprehensive use of play activity, fairy tales and stories, analysis of emotional situations, role-play games, creative activities, and communication-based methods can ensure high effectiveness.

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