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Abstract

Keywords:

preschoolers; self-knowledge;
educational interventional program;
role play; emotional expressiveness

The preschool period becomes a favorable ground for the development of emotional and social skills. We consider that the educational and family environment play an important role in the development of these competencies. Emotional and social skills play an important role in the child's further development. A good ability to understand emotions, self-knowledge, the environment in which and how they occur develops empathy and at the same time allows the preschooler to relate effectively to those around him, to respond appropriately to the emotions of others and to adapt more easily to the social environment. The main purpose of this research refers to the increased efficiency of both the role play and the artistic-plastic activities in the socio-emotional development of preschoolers. By introducing role-playing games in the didactic activity through stories and artistic-plastic activities, educational actions are initiated, the results of which are recorded and processed in order to demonstrate their value. The results of this study showed that the use of artistic and plastic activities as well as role play contributed to managing their own emotions, to understanding the need to respect the feelings and feelings of others, developing the ability to relate to others, improving skills, communication and self-expression in the development of self-confidence, the development of confidence in individual abilities, the development of self-control identifying possible solutions to problems such as anger, disappointment, sadness.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Vorschulkinder;
Selbsterkenntnis; pädagogisches
Interventionsprogramm;
Rollenspiel; emotionale
Ausdrucksfähigkeit

Die Vorschulzeit wird zu einem günstigen Boden für die Entwicklung emotionaler und sozialer Fähigkeiten. Wir sind der Ansicht, dass das schulische und familiäre Umfeld eine wichtige Rolle bei der Entwicklung dieser Kompetenzen spielt. Emotionale und soziale Fähigkeiten spielen eine wichtige Rolle in der weiteren Entwicklung des Kindes. Eine gute Fähigkeit, Emotionen, Selbsterkenntnis, die Umgebung, in der und wie sie auftreten, zu verstehen, entwickelt Empathie und ermöglicht es dem Vorschulkind gleichzeitig, sich effektiv auf seine Umgebung zu beziehen, angemessen auf die Emotionen anderer zu reagieren und sich leichter anzupassen zum sozialen Umfeld. Das Hauptziel dieser Forschung bezieht sich auf die Steigerung der Effizienz sowohl des Rollenspiels als auch der künstlerisch-plastischen Aktivitäten in der sozio-emotionalen Entwicklung von Vorschulkindern. Durch die Einführung von Rollenspielen in die didaktische Tätigkeit durch Geschichten und künstlerisch-plastische Aktivitäten werden pädagogische Aktionen initiiert, deren Ergebnisse erfasst und aufbereitet werden, um ihren Wert aufzuzeigen. Die Ergebnisse dieser Studie zeigten, dass der Einsatz von künstlerischen und plastischen Aktivitäten sowie Rollenspielen dazu beitrug, mit den eigenen Emotionen umzugehen, die Notwendigkeit zu verstehen, die Gefühle und Gefühle anderer zu respektieren, die Fähigkeit zu entwickeln, mit anderen in Beziehung zu treten, Fähigkeiten zu verbessern, Kommunikation und Selbstaussdruck bei der Entwicklung von Selbstvertrauen, der Entwicklung von Vertrauen in individuelle Fähigkeiten, der Entwicklung von Selbstbeherrschung, dem Aufzeigen von Lösungsmöglichkeiten für Probleme wie Wut, Enttäuschung, Traurigkeit.

1. Introduction

Preschool age represents the period, the comma in the phrase of life, when children need adults as landmarks, to learn how to relate to others with respect for their needs and those around them, how to manage the process of solving various situations, either emotional or social, that they face every day. To learn to live their daily emotions healthy.

Self-knowledge is the fascinating process by which children discover themselves. Self-knowledge lasts a lifetime. From birth, children are not aware of the idea of good / bad about themselves. They learn these things from everything around them: people, things, events, activities, and so on. In the process of self-knowledge family is the strongest force. The first years

are the most important in developing a genuine self-esteem in a person. Positive self-esteem cannot be given to one person by another person or society. It must be "won" by each individual (Mecca, Smelser & Vasconcellos, 1989). Self-knowledge is a collection of opinions describing oneself as an individual in relation to the physical and social world. The components of self-knowledge include convictions regarding appearance and physical features, abilities and capabilities, features of character, interests, desires, needs, attitudes, social roles, own position among other people, opinions and beliefs on what an individual deserves from other people (Uszynska-Jarmoc, 2022).

Preschool age is a fairly long period in which there are significant changes in the emotional life of the child. The emotions and feelings of the preschooler accompany all its manifestations, whether it is games, songs, educational activities, or the fulfillment of tasks received from adults.

Self-image is built through *self-knowledge*, thus developing self-confidence, self-esteem, "brick by brick", discovering the Self. From this point of view, it is considered important that preschoolers be motivated to participate in new activities, to be also involved in self-knowledge activities.

Emotions are formations of personality. They characterize individuals from a social-psychological point of view, highlighting the importance of the emotional process for personality. Emotions are a reflection of the processes that take place in the body of the individual, ie they are reduced to organic perceptions, somatic and vegetative reactions, which automatically manifest themselves under the influence of affectogenic irritants. In reality, however, during childhood, emotions go through a progressive path of development, accumulating a richer content and more complicated forms of manifestation under the influence of social conditions of life and education. Regarding the role of emotions in guiding and guiding the child's behavior, in the investigations of the psychologist Piaget (2005) it is mentioned that "during childhood the emotional and cognitive management of behavior go through the progressive path of development coordinating and complementing each other" (Piaget, 2005, p. 149). Emotional expressiveness, an important component of emotional intelligence, represents the preschooler's ability to express his emotions and feelings through verbal and

non-verbal behavior using mimicry, tonality and gestures.

Role play can be conceived as an environment that ultimately helps to express the emotions and feelings that some preschoolers face. Through role play and artistic-plastic activities, the preschooler can acquire autonomy, personality development and will even influence his activity as an adult. Role play, the safest way to access the child's soul, to his wonderful world of thoughts and dreams, has real formative values. It contributes to the intellectual, social, emotional, physical and aesthetic development of the child, cultivates self-confidence and the spirit of competition.

The game responds to the need for spiritual freedom and movement and is the requirement to escape from adult pressure. In the game, the child engages according to his own timing in action, participates voluntarily and is in control of the situation. His emotions and feelings become richer in content. The friendly emotions are more accentuated than the aggressive ones. Hostile relations give way to cooperation and competition. By playing, the child is able to achieve performances that other activities outside the game could not produce.

The artistic-plastic activities are a means of dynamism and expression of the preschooler's life. The child's motivation for artistic and plastic activities is represented by the need to express their own feelings, experiences, the need to render the image in an artistic way or the pleasure of telling stories in images.

2. Problem statement

One of the goals that preschool education assumes is, in addition to preparing the child for school, the child's socialization and the gradual achievement of personal autonomy (Brebent et al. 2009). Socialization is, therefore, a concept used in describing and explaining how children acquire the behavior necessary for their adaptation to the culture and society of which they are a part. Socialization can be defined as "the process by which a person acquires rules of conduct, belief systems, and attitudes of a society or social group so that he or she can function within it" (Birch, 2000, p. 45).

Throughout childhood, emotions follow a progressive path of development, accumulating a richer content and more complicated forms of manifestation under the influence of social living

conditions and education. Piaget (2005) assumed that "during childhood the emotional and cognitive direction of behavior go through the progressive path of development coordinating and complementing each other" (Piaget, 2005, p. 143).

The ability of preschoolers to regulate their emotions effectively with the help of the adults around them is the main goal of socio-emotional development, because this process has a protective role on the mental and social health of children. Preschoolers face a number of obstacles when they learn to regulate their emotions and behavior. They learn to tolerate frustration, cope with anxiety, defend themselves, negotiate friendships, and even tolerate being alone when marginalized. Self-esteem means continuous self-knowledge and a clear understanding of oneself. It helps children to feel good about themselves and to think positively about themselves.

A teacher cannot teach his children to recognize their feelings and to deal with them if they themselves are not able to do so, because it is well known that they follow the actions of the adult and at the same time imitate his qualities and defects. Terebush (2020) on this issue advises teachers to learn to accept their own emotions. "The message that was sent to you as a child by adults saying that you should not cry or be afraid was not the right one. Accept that the whole diversity of emotions we experience is part of the human condition" (Terebush, 2020, p. 151).

Therefore, the role play favors the child's experience of a social reality in a specific way, due to its main function of assimilating the real to the "I". Assuming different roles, playing them, the child reproduces patterns of behavior and assimilates them into his own behavior. Role play presumes liberty and its source is found in children's imagination.

Identifying and expressing emotions are important in communication and emotional control, which contributes to the development and completion of children's social relationships. Another important aspect is the ability to understand and discern the emotions of others, necessary for the manifestation of empathy. Children's assumptions about the emotional state of others will be guided by children's expectations, perceptual sensitivity, and the level of mental representations they have about their emotional knowledge (Shapiro, 2016).

The role of educators in developing children's emotional and social skills is extremely important,

especially since "preschoolers spend more of their active time in kindergarten than spending with their parents. Kindergarten itself is a social context in which children have the opportunity to interact with other children to a greater extent than in the family. Therefore, in these situations, children can systematically learn about appropriate emotions and social behaviors. Educators' reactions to children's emotional manifestations are an important source of learning about emotions. Using words that describe emotions in different contexts is a way to teach children to recognize and name their own or others' emotions. If the educator is not used to drawing children's attention to emotions, nor to discussing the emotional consequences of certain behaviors, then their pupils may not acquire the words that describe emotions" (Ștefan & Kallay, 2010, p. 44).

3. Research methodology

3.1 Purpose of research

The aim of this research is to demonstrate the benefits of using both role play (through therapeutic stories) and artistic-plastic activities in the development of emotional expressiveness and self-knowledge in preschoolers, focusing on the following objectives:

1. Assessment of the emotional abilities, respectively of the self-knowledge of the participants included in the research.
2. Elaboration and implementation of an educational intervention program based on role play and artistic-plastic activities starting from the identified needs.
3. Investigating the formative impact of the proposed intervention program for the development of self-knowledge and emotional expressiveness in preschoolers.

3.2. Hypothesis and research variables

This study's hypothesis is the following:

- The application of the intervention program "Little artists, big emotions!" will lead to the formation and modeling of the preschoolers self-knowledge and emotional expressiveness.

Independent variable: proposed educational intervention program

Dependent variables: emotional expressiveness, self-knowledge

3.3. Participants

In order to verify the hypothesis formulated and to follow the objectives stipulated in the research, 22 preschoolers from Ardud Kindergarten with Extended Program “Cetate” structure, Satu Mare county, have participated. Of these, 11 preschoolers participated in the intervention program, and the other 11 preschoolers constituting the control group. The sample of participants consists of 12 boys and 10 girls aged between 5 years and 6 months and 6 years and 6 months.

3.4. Instruments

3.4.1. The Child Self-View Questionnaire (CSVQ, Eder, 1990)

The CSVQ, consists 62-item forced-choice measure designed to assess young children's psychological self-concepts considered appropriate for children 3 ½ - 7 years of age.

The child's responses to the CSVQ were evaluated with regard to nine dimensions of the child's self-concept; these nine dimensions are: achievement, social potency, social closeness, well-being, traditionalism, harm avoidance, alienation, stress reaction, and aggression (Eder, 1990).

Thus, although a number of childhood self-concept measures have included items assessing self-perceptions of academic or athletic competence (Marsh et al., 1991), or overall appraisals of self-worth (Harter, 1982), the CSVQ is intended purely to measure self-views with respect to social, emotional, and personality characteristics.

3.4.2. Scale Parental Beliefs about Emotional Competence in Children (COMPE, Mendes et al., 2018)

Emotional competence is a critical and impactful component of a complete and healthy development. The aim of this study was to briefly present the construction stages of the COMPE scale and to verify the preliminary psychometric parameters such as the dimensionality and reliability of the articles. In order to obtain the final form of the scale, the content validation procedures for the creation of the initial version and the Response Theory were adopted to analyze the psychometric properties of the articles. As a result, this document presents a scale with a total of 30 items capable of composing a measure of the mentioned parental fillings, with three theoretical facets indicative of emotional competencies related to:

(a) emotional expression, (b) emotional understanding and (c)) emotional regulation, which is aggravated in a single point.

This questionnaire was completed by the parent of each participant selected in this research, keeping the data confidential.

3.5. Procedure

This research has an experimental design, as it extends over the school year 2020-2021 (October 2020-June 2021).

In the *pre-experimental phase*, the tools were applied through systematic direct observation and interview with parents, which was based on the four competencies: emotion recognition, expression of emotions, understanding of emotions and emotional self-regulation. Then, through direct systematic observation, the preschoolers participating in this research were evaluated to identify the level of development in the area of socio-emotional abilities.

In the *experimental phase* - starting from the difficulties identified following the evaluation, the educational intervention program “Little artists, big emotions!” was implemented.

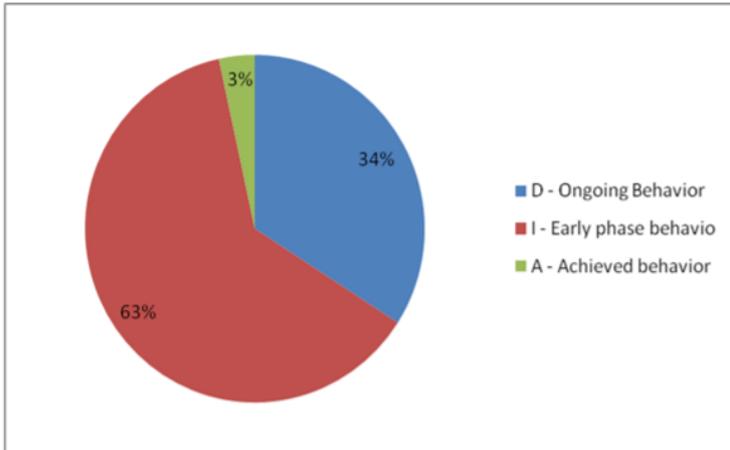
The proposed intervention program includes a set of 26 activities that have been folded on the following methods: role play, drawing, music and storytelling. The main objectives pursued were the following: experiencing a variety of emotions such as: fear, courage, joy, reconciliation through nonverbal language, developing confidence in individual abilities, identifying possible solutions to certain emotions such as anger, disappointment, sadness, managing behavioral and emotional reactions to potentially conflicting situations, building empathy, altruism, providing help and teamwork, self-motivation to overcome negative emotional states, training to assess moods emotional experiences during the day, the development of self-control and the development of gratitude.

In the *post-experimental phase* we analyzed the effects of interventions on children's behaviors in formal contexts. At this stage, the aim was to observe the socio-emotional behavior of preschoolers in the activities carried out in kindergarten, and to investigate the degree to which the proposed activities contributed to the development of self-knowledge and emotional expressiveness of preschoolers. Also, in this phase, the same instruments was used, based on which

the progress of each preschooler was recorded in part of the two stages (pre-experimental stage and post-experimental stage).

4. Results

Fig. 1. Results obtained in the pre-test phase for emotional abilities



Following the pre-test on the development of emotional abilities (see fig.1) developed in the preschool period of the 22 preschoolers of the large group, it was found that 63% of them are in the early stages of developing emotional skills, 34% are in the developmental phase, and 3% of them are in the phase of developing emotional skills, knowing how to identify their emotions, how to explain them and at the same time to express emotions in various conditions.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the measured variables of the participants from pretest and posttest

Experimental phase		Emotional expressivity	Self-knowledge
<i>Pre-test phase</i>	N	22	22
	Mean	3,34	2,91
	Std. Error of Mean	.12	.27
	Minimum	2,14	1,32
	Maximum	4,55	4,86
	Std. Deviation	.56	1.28
	% of Total Sum	44,1%	43,8%
	% of Total N	50,0%	50,0%

Experimental phase		Emotional expressivity	Self-knowledge
<i>Post-test phase</i>	N	22	22
	Mean	4,23	3,74
	Std. Error of Mean	.13	.15
	Minimum	2,36	2,36
	Maximum	4,90	5,00
	Std. Deviation	.60	.72
	% of Total Sum	55,9%	56,2%
	% of Total N	50,0%	50,0%
<i>Total</i>	N	44	44
	Mean	3,79	3,32
	Std. Error of Mean	.11	.16
	Minimum	2,14	1,32
	Maximum	4,90	5,00
	Std. Deviation	.73	1.1
	% of Total Sum	100,0%	100,0%
	% of Total N	100,0%	100,0%

Following the collection of reference data both through systematic direct observation and from discussions with parents, the preschoolers participating in this study handling with the following difficulties (see table 1): at the level of emotional expressiveness, the majority of preschoolers do not express the emotions they feel when they play with other peers or when another child takes their toy or spoils their game, they do not proudly share their work done in front of their peers and do not offer to help those around. Also, preschoolers confront with difficulties at the level of self-knowledge: they believe that those around them do not appreciate them and wish them harm, they do not appreciate both themselves and the work they do, they do not share their work with pride in front of their peers.

Table 2. Paired Samples t test Results

Variables	Pre-test		Post-test		N	95% CI for Mean Difference	t	df	d Cohen
	M	SD	M	SD					
<i>Emotional expressivity</i>	3.34	.56	4.23	.60	22	-1.42;-.23	2.90*	21	1.58
<i>Self-knowledge</i>	2.91	1.28	3.74	.72	22	-.75; -.03	2.25**	21	2.03

*p<.01; **p<.05

After the application of the proposed educational intervention program implemented behind the needs identified in the pretest phase, improvements appear in the measured variables (see table 2). Therefore, the use of artistic-plastic activities and role-playing contributed statistical significant at the level of emotional expressiveness (preschoolers improved their understanding of the need for respect for the feelings of those around them, developed their empathy and altruism, they manage to express both positive and negative emotions in a more functional way), but also at the level of self-knowledge (preschoolers have gained a higher level of self-confidence). Moreover, for testing the effectiveness of the proposed educational intervention program, we calculated the effect size and obtained a $d=1.58$ for the emotional expressivity and a $d=2.03$ for the self-knowledge, which means that the program had a very strong effect.

5. Conclusions

The main purpose of this research was to highlight the beneficial and positive role that role play and artistic-plastic activities have in the development of self-knowledge and emotional expressiveness in preschoolers. In this research we wanted to confirm the fact that artistic-plastic activities and role play, often encountered in kindergarten activities, through their effect on preschoolers are influenced by the development of self-knowledge and emotional expressiveness.

Respect for the needs of children is an essential requirement, which means that the formative approach cannot be general but specific to everyone. Kindergarten is very important in the development of emotional and social skills of children, through the influence of teachers, especially due to the fact that starting with preschool age the active time children

spend in it is greater than the time spent in the family. It is well known that teachers face most difficulties/problems when it comes to correcting or straightening children's behavior. It is from this point of view that we consider it important for teachers to have knowledge of psychology so that they can come more easily to the aid of preschoolers and help them both emotionally, but especially cognitively, in the overcoming their emotional fears. The healthy development of the soul and the body creates the premises for a quality cognitive development.

Regarding the needs and requirements of preschoolers as "actors" on the educational stage, in the educational process we consider that the teacher, but especially the educator, embodies a "conductor" who uses a whole series of tools, activities, techniques, methods, to meet these needs.

Knowing the behavior of the preschooler allows the teacher to provide the child with experiences that are more appropriate to his or her operating model. Moreover, the teacher is able to identify the contexts in which children need more support and what kind of help should be provided based on their experience. Both cognitive and social-emotional development are based on contexts in which children practice a series of behaviors step by step with the help of an adult. "Without the assistance of an adult, a child cannot know how to organize his emotions, how to express them in a socially accepted way, how to control his emotions so as not to hurt others, how to act and to cooperate. There are many life contexts that are too difficult for children to manage, consequently they need the help of an adult" (Catalano, 2019, p. 60).

Testing the educational interventional program "Little artists, big emotions!" over 22 preschoolers, we can confirm that this program has demonstrated its effectiveness regarding raising the level of emotional

expressivity ($d=1.58$) and the level of self-knowledge among preschoolers ($d=2.03$).

In conclusion, after each method applied, we believe that the performances that children perceive and make them responsible in solving future work tasks can be obtained. Preschoolers understand and notice that their involvement is different. When encouraged, they will cultivate a desire to get involved in solving other tasks. By applying these methods, preschoolers learn to share their ideas, gain confidence and become responsible for their ideas and actions.

A limitation of this research was represented by the chosen instruments that are not validated and adapted to the Romanian population, so that their psychometric properties cannot be modified. Another limitation was the small number of participants included in the research, respectively the lack of a control group to have an increased level of accuracy of the results obtained. A possible future research direction would be to insert activities that parents can participate with preschoolers so that they become aware of the long-term development of these skills for their preschoolers.

Authors note:

Luiza Elena Mureșan is teacher for primary and preschool education at Kindergarten with Extended Program GPP Cetate from Satu Mare, Romania. Given her passion about children and their harmonious development, she considered personal and professional development as her main objective in order to achieve a high quality educational act, by acquiring skills and competences such as creativity in the elaboration of activity plans, spontaneity and the skills to successfully adapt according to the concrete conditions by resizing and reorienting didactic activity, the ability to intervene as a regulator in both the initial and the continuous assessment of preschoolers, as well as the ability to carry out an education diagnosis.

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