

MULTIPROFESSIONAL APPROACH TO EMOTIONALLY DEVELOPING ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN SUFFERED FROM THE ARMED CONFLICT

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Abstract. The article concerns the current problem of protecting the younger generation from the negative psycho-emotional impact of armed and military conflicts that are currently occurring, with a certain periodicity, in different countries of the world. Our work is based on the researches of foreign and domestic scholars who studied various aspects of the mentioned problem and on our own experience of communicating with people and directly children living in the zone of armed conflict that is occurring in the east of Ukraine. For this category of children typical are violations in psycho-emotional (increased level of anxiety, fears, emotional discomfort, etc.), intellectual and social development (complications of social adaptation, difficulties in communicating and establishing contact with others, etc.). Empirical studies prove that work with such children requires multiprofessional approach, namely, the interaction of educators of preschool educational institutions and practical psychologists, which will allow the complex approach to the problem of psycho-emotional protection of preschoolers who have been affected by the armed conflict. According to the authors, an important condition that will allow to solve this problem is the creation of an emotionally developing environment in an educational institution, which includes the emotionally positive atmosphere and emotionogenicity of the educational process, emotional relationships between the subjects of interaction (preschool teacher, psychologist, children), children's activity, which contributes to the development of the emotional sphere, getting the experience of positive attitude to the surrounding world, emotional well-being and comfort of preschoolers. The article substantiates the directions of creating an emotionally developmental environment in the process of interaction between the educator and the psychologist: emotionally developing, emotionally supporting, emotionally adjusting, emotionally activating, emotionally preventing, emotionally correcting, and the forms of their introduction into the practice of preschool educational institutions are given.

Keywords: Preschool children, children who suffered from a armed conflict, refugee children, the interaction of a preschool teacher and a psychologist, an emotionally developing environment, emotional well-being, emotional comfort, emotional upbringing

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Introduction

The negative impact of events taking place in the east of Ukraine is traced in all spheres of vital activity of citizens: loss of housing, loved ones and relatives; decrease in the financial level of security; uncertainty in future; loss of life and value landmarks, etc. However, our biggest concern is that these disorders affect not only adults but also those who are the least protected — the children who are compelled to be in a negative emotionogenic environment.

On a global scale the problem of children's protection was and is relevant, which in its turn led to the need for the normative consolidation of their rights and freedoms in international decisions and declarations. Thus, the first such document was the Declaration of the Rights of the Child [4] adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, which states that humanity is obliged to give the child all the best — to provide his happy childhood, that he needs to be loved and understood for harmonious development. In connection with the worldwide increase in the number of child victims in armed conflicts, the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict [5] was adopted, which stated that these categories of people are often victims of inhuman acts, and the state and the community must make every effort to protect children and women from the devastating consequences of the war. The next step in solving this issue was the emergence of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child [15], in which countries-participants undertake to provide the protection and care that are necessary for the well-being and healthy development of a child and take all necessary measures to ensure his protection from all forms of discrimination or punishment. Ukraine supported them and joined the list of countries-participants in 1991, ratifying the Convention by the relevant resolution of the Verkhovna Rada.

Today, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has developed “Methodological recommendations on the peculiarities of teaching in preschool and comprehensive educational institutions for refugee children and children recognized as humans in need of additional protection, particularly those ones who are separated from the family” [16]. The document tells about the vulnerability of this category of people experiencing change, “stress associated with deprivation of home, the lack of familiar things, the loss of friends, relatives, sometimes parents, deprivation of their care and love”, preschoolers overcome numerous shocks that injure children's psyche, the “morally psychological state of the child” dramatically changes and “often has a devastating impact on children's psychological world”, which leads to “the feeling of discomfort, a decrease in activity and self-esteem; an increase in anxiety and aggression is often observed, which causes changes in value orientations of a child, the emerge of negative attitude towards other people” [16, p. 10]. Therefore, the tasks of a preschool educational establishment are: creating conditions for the general emotional comfort of the child; rehabilitation, preservation and strengthening of children's psychological health; positive perception of the child by the employees of the preschool educational institution and children's group [16, p. 11]. And we fully support the idea that one of the ways to ensure the emotional comfort of a preschool child is to integrate pedagogical efforts concerning formation of a sense of security based on the principles of a personally oriented

approach that involves the continuity of the work of educator, social teacher and psychologist and their cooperation [16, p. 11].

The importance of the chosen theme is supported by the research carried out by the Ukrainian Institute of Research of Extremism [7], which indicates that the society and the state must worry about security, education, the opportunity of full access to children affected by military actions, to rights and freedoms. The publication focuses on the fact that the hidden problem of the war is that during it a new generation is forming, the generation brought up on the values that are relevant for wartime—popularized aggression, violent methods of solving issues, the norms of morality of peaceful life, norms of law are discredited, and all these determine the norms of behavior of citizens of Ukraine, who grew up during the war period. And repeatedly the attention is paid to the need to involve professionals in the process of helping children: teachers, practical psychologists, social educators.

The influence of armed conflicts on the formation of the child's personality and his emotional development, in particular, is the subject of research by many scholars, namely:

- 1) the problem of emotional, behavioral and biological consequences of the impact of disasters, terrorist acts and armed conflicts on the development and upbringing of preschool children and identification of ways to mitigate this devastating impact (Hamiel, Wolmer, Pardo-Aviv & Laor [11]);
- 2) the complexity of the education and upbringing of refugee children related to the lack of educational institutions, the presence of behavioral problems or difficulties in social interaction, because resettlement creates additional stress factors (Graham, Minhas & Paxton [10]);
- 3) questions of early identification of symptoms of negative impact of traumatic events on the overall development of the child's personality and early interference to help the child (Gonzalez, Monzon, Solis, Jaycox & Langley [9]);
- 4) examined how attachment style predicts changes in mental health, and whether change in emotion regulation (ER) intensity mediates that association in the context of psychosocial intervention among war-affected children (Eloranta, Peltonen, Palosaari, Qouta & Punamäki [8]);
- 5) family's influence on the emotional regulation of preschool children (Di Maggio, Zappulla & Pace [6]), etc.

The area of our scientific interests is the training of educators to ensure emotional comfort and well-being of preschool children in collaboration with a psychologist; the emotional world of a child, his emotional education and the problem of creating an emotionally developing environment in a preschool educational institution.

The priority **aim** of the study is to justify the directions of interaction between educators and psychologists that will ensure the development of internal capabilities of the child's personality and the formation of the ability to establish harmonious relationships with other people, taking into account his needs, interests, emotions and feelings. In this regard, the issue of creating

an emotionally developing environment becomes of particular importance since a person who is in a state of emotional discomfort and is unable to manage his emotional states and reactions has significant difficulties in the process of self-development, self-realization and social adaptation. The solution of these tasks is possible providing the interaction of teachers and psychologists, which will allow a comprehensive approach to the problem.

Influence of the military conflict in the East of Ukraine on livelihoods and upbringing of the younger generation

Recently, the publications and studies covering various aspects of the problem of education of the younger generation in the conditions of war has begun to appear and they examine the consequences of its impact on the formation of the child's personality. Within the framework of the project "Improving Capacity of Service Providers in Psychosocial Adaptation of Internally Displaced Families with Children" implemented by the International Charitable Foundation "Ukrainian Foundation for Public Health" in cooperation with the International Charitable Organization "East Europe Foundation", with the financial support of ChildFund Deutschland, a manual for practitioners in social interaction "Psychosocial help for internally displaced children, their parents and families with children from the East of Ukraine" was created, which combines work experience of Ukraine, Georgia and Bosnia. The manual states that contemporary Ukrainian society is facing another crisis period associated with an armed conflict in the east of the country. It gives statistics on the number of people in need of help and describes psychoemotional manifestations in children as the result of the negative impact of events, namely: feeling of insecurity, fear of the future, anger, aggression, shame and guilt, alienation and isolation from the environment, sadness; problems with learning, attention, the ability to memorize information, psychosomatic disorders [21, p. 12].

Yahav in the article considers the impact of direct and indirect exposure to war and terrorism on children's mental health and emphasizes the importance of providing children with safety and security, as well as addressing basic needs and establishing trust with the child. The author notes that the intensity of the impact depends on certain factors — "including the child's developmental stage, gender, the intensity and duration of exposure, the extent of life disruption, the availability of parental support, and the surrounding culture" [22, p. 90]. The scientist used the following methods of working with children who suffered from military conflicts and terrorism including relaxation techniques, art therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and supportive therapy.

Joshi & O'Donnell [14, p. 275] note that the acts of war and terrorism are increasingly prevalent in contemporary society, and the problem of children as victims of this violence is often ignored, namely, they need substantial psychological and pedagogical help. The authors point to significant changes in social-emotional and cognitive development under the influence of negative life events, including the loss of loved ones, resettlement to other territories, the lack of educational structure and sharp changes in values in society. Children are characterized by vague, somatic responses to traumatic events that appear in emotional reactions to injury in the form of sleep disorders, sucking fingers,

the desire to keep a toy along with them, the emergence of anxiety and worry, being afraid to remain alone in the room, the constant need for attention [14, p. 277].

Special attention deserves the author's empirical study conducted by Aleksandrov, Okhrimenko & Serbyn who studied the individual psychological factors of predisposition to post-stress psychotraumatic experiences of children whose parents were injured when participating in hostilities in the area of anti-terrorist operation in eastern Ukraine. In this category of children there are various manifestations of stress, decrease in attention, aggressiveness or excessive passivity, nerve disorders and "distrustful suspicion and caution in actions, resulting in a tendency to anxiety and depression, loss of self-confidence, diminishes emotional stability and exacerbates vulnerability to changing feelings. They also decrease their social courage and activity, that is why they are less prepared to interact with unfamiliar circumstances and people around them. Coldness in relation with others and difficulties in communicating with friends appear" [1, p. 23].

Particularly important is the problem of protecting children in the territory of settlements located in the close connection to hostilities, conditionally they may be divided into two subgroups — refugee children who were forced to move from occupied territory with their parents and local children, who constantly see soldiers, military machinery and hear explosions. An urgent problem for children living in the post-war environment is the overcoming of psychological stress from military operations, and, what is more, the highest level of stress has appeared in the youngest children [7, p. 20].

Our own observations and experience of communicating with children living near the zone of armed conflict have confirmed the above-mentioned views of scholars and have shown that a significant number of preschoolers find it difficult to understand the emotional states of others, do not relate the manifestation of their emotions with the consequences to which they can lead, indicating the insufficient level of formation of the ability to regulate emotional manifestations. They have an increased level of anxiety, aggressiveness, low levels of stress resistance and difficulty in social adaptation. This forced us to dwell upon the problem of emotional well-being and comfort of preschool children and to investigate the readiness of educators and psychologists to interact with children affected by armed conflict.

Professional interaction of educators and psychologists in preschool educational institution

Many scholars (Bitianova [2]; Il'in [13]; Ruda [18]) emphasize that psychological and pedagogical activity involves close contact, mutual understanding between psychologists and preschool teachers, the presence of their ability to speak the same language, the coherence of their actions in the approach to the child. Preschool teachers in their activities should rely not only on pedagogical but also on psychological knowledge [13], teaching and psychology must be consistent with each other. The task of the psychological service of the educational institution is to induce the preschool teacher to realize his or her own pedagogical experience, to understand the possible reasons why it is

impossible to establish contact with the child, to find solutions to overcome the poor performance of the child, to find ways to create comfortable conditions for the stay of preschoolers in an educational institution, to take into account the individuality of each child [13, p. 14].

In her work Bitianova [2, p. 4] emphasizes the unity of the purpose of professional activity of a teacher and a psychologist — this is the child and the conditions of his full-fledged education and development. And although the methods and techniques of the abovementioned specialists are different, they objectively need the informational and organizational cooperation with each other, because only in this case the technologies that they are using work on the initially set goal.

Actual to our research is the dissertation of Ruda, who sees the collaboration of the teacher and the psychologist in such a way as “the psychologist carries out the diagnosis, the teacher carries out a holistic analysis of the child’s personality and manifestations of his psyche under the real conditions of educational process. The psychologist on the basis of diagnostics offers a strategy of influence, projects the social situation of development, specifies mental parameters. The teacher selects adequate for these purposes methods and techniques of educational work, specifying the proposals of the psychologist” [18, pp. 36–37]. Thus, the successful solving of difficult tasks of education and upbringing depends crucially on the activities of the entire pedagogical staff and the professional skills of the teacher. It is he who really organizes and carries out the process of education and upbringing, and the psychologist is an equal member of the pedagogical team, providing the branch of the pedagogical process, which, no-one except him can provide anyone. At the same time “interaction, complementarity, mutual awareness in the educational process contribute to the creation of optimal conditions for the effective use of the synthesis of psychological and pedagogical knowledge and experience” [18, p. 53].

The interaction between the preschool teacher and the psychologist is an integrative phenomenon characterized by the convergence of the activities of each of its subjects on a single structural basis; the convergence of values and value orientations related to the personality of the person; jointly produced on the basis of reflection a set of goals and means, mutually determined joint actions, organization and stimulation of the educational process as a process of free personal development of each child in accordance with his individual inborn abilities, interests and inclinations; the choice of means and methods of pedagogical actions aimed at the development of activity and independence of children, the ability to self-government and self-realization; discussion of the results of the mutual activity. Such interaction is aimed at the humanization of the pedagogical process, which involves the development of preschooler’s personality, his emotional sphere in particular, and will allow to help children who have acquired negative psycho-emotional impact as a result of armed conflict in the east of Ukraine.

In the methodological recommendations of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine [16, p. 13], it is stated the need for appropriate rehabilitation (psychological, pedagogical, socio-cultural) of the refugee children and children recognized as requiring additional protection having survived in stressful situations and may be in a depressed state. Indicators of the effectiveness of the

work of employees of preschool educational institutions as for creating conditions for the general emotional comfort of a refugee child are determined the formation of the sense of security, trust to children and adults and the feeling of maximum emotional comfort in a new natural and social environment.

In a manual for practitioners of the social sphere [21] it is also indicated that there is a crisis experienced by the professional environment of teachers, psychologists and social workers, which consists in the absence or imperfection of available methods of working with families and children who have been affected by the military conflict. It provides recommendations for facilitating the process of adaptation of internally displaced children to new preschool institutions and methods that can be applied to work with the children under stress. The requirements for professionals who can provide assistance are defined: “it is important to respect people you are trying to help regardless of your own values and beliefs; be aware of the difference between you and the person you are trying to help and respect these differences; you need to understand the limits of your authority and appreciate that you are not the judges of life, deeds and attitudes of another person; it is worth to consider yourself as a guest who was asked to provide help, but not to decide on the fate of other people and to make sentences” [21, p. 54].

In our opinion, the interaction in the dyad “a preschool teacher-a psychologist”, aimed at creating of an emotionally developing environment, is most successfully implemented in joint planning and in psychological and pedagogical consilium, seminars, workshops, meetings; during the joint conducting of educational activities, in keeping common documentation, mutual attending of classes, their mutual analysis and mutual consultation. The indicated forms of interaction between teachers and psychologists allow to plan and coordinate joint actions, control their implementation and expand the area for self-improvement and self-development.

Creation of an emotionally developing environment in the preschool educational institution in the process of interaction between preschool teachers and psychologists

The environment is the source of personal development and a kind of catalyst for the process of self-realization, which can accelerate or slow down this process, and under the developing environment we understand the optimal conditions for the normal development of personality, ensuring the development of a complex of person’s abilities, focusing on individual norms, taking into account individual and personality features. According to the context of the study, there is a need to substantiate the essence of the emotionally developing environment, which would contribute to the emotional comfort and well-being of preschool children. It will allow to enrich and substantially deepen the process of cognition of the surrounding reality and emotional sphere of a person, develop emotional personality qualities and skills, will promote the reception of experience of emotional attitude to the surrounding world by preschoolers, will develop their emotional activity and will reduce the influence of negative emotionogenic factors caused by armed conflict on the child.

We believe that an important part of the emotionally developing environment is *the emotionally positive atmosphere and emotionality of the educational process*. Famous teacher Suhomlinskij [19] attached great importance to the emotional atmosphere of the educational process and emphasized the organization of the spiritual activities of children. To do this, it is necessary to conduct the organization of educational activities in educational institutions on an optimistic basis, belief in the child's abilities; to raise empathy, respect for the feelings and emotions of another person; give opportunities for emotional detection to every preschooler, etc. Zins, Weissberg, Wang & Walberg [23, p. 264] confirm all these in their studies, considering that for the healthy development of the personality his/her emotionally-friendly environment in the educational establishment matters.

In our opinion this can be achieved by: creating favorable conditions for a child to stay at a preschool educational institution; increasing of positive emotionogenic objects in the surrounding and educational material; helping children who experience emotional discomfort and are in a state of increased anxiety and tension. It is advisable to focus children's attention on the emotional states of a person, to discuss with the preschooler his mood and causes of its occurrence, to conduct a joint analysis of emotionogenic situations, to create situations that contribute to the emergence of interest in the emotional states of a person, to emphasise on the mood of literary heroes, their emotional behavior, etc.

The emotionally developing environment includes the *emotional relationship between children and their interaction with the educator*, which allows to meet the need for preschoolers in communication and contributes to increasing their emotional experience. The key to success is to recognize the decisive influence of the emotions of a preschool teacher and a psychologist on the process of communication with children, because the effectiveness of work depends on how they possess the technique of emotional stimulation and contact. Thus, Sutton & Wheatley [20, p. 327] believe that the emotional state of teachers affects the process of cognition of the surrounding world by the child, the attitude towards the events that occur around the child, his/her motivation and behavior.

Establishing contact between a teacher and children and a favorable climate in the team will promote: the formation of the interest of preschoolers and the desire to learn more about the ways of adequate emotional behavior; education of respectful attitude to the emotional state of a person; the expansion of knowledge of children about the emotional sphere of the person, expressive channels for the detection of emotions (mimic, motor, speech) and methods of adequate emotional behavior; the formation of emotional personal qualities and skills in them. For this it is worth using tasks for the identification and reproduction of human emotional states; establishing a connection between the identification of emotions and the reciprocal reaction; integrity and correspondence of verbal and non-verbal channels of manifestation of emotions; emotional interpretation of situations; establishing a connection between emotional behavior of a person and its consequences; forecasting the results of communication depending on the nature of emotions; the search of the most optimal ways of revealing emotions; analysis of the emotional state (own and other

person); self-control on the manifestation of emotions and their self-regulation; adjustment of emotional behavior and analysis of the adequacy of the use of expressive channels for the manifestation of emotions, etc.

The environment should stimulate the desire to communicate, creative activity, to encourage the emergence and development of emotions and feelings. *The activity of children* makes it possible to consolidate and introiorise the acquired experience of emotional behavior, namely, it helps to understand own feelings and emotional states, to fix in children the positive emotional “Self” image based on an adequate representation of own emotional behavior, the recognition by children their own individuality and uniqueness and the ability of creative and original approach to solving emotional problems associated with constantly changing emotiogenic conditions. Here important role is played by the organization of independent activities of children, during which they can work and consolidate the acquired knowledge and skills; therefore, it is reasonable to use the tasks aimed at promoting the free expression of emotions; associated with the use of expressive channels in order to obtain a reverse emotional-positive (negative) attitude to the manifestation of emotions and regulation of emotional behavior; oriented to create a new original emotional image; for emotional improvisation, etc.

Having revealed the essence of the emotionally developing environment, the following problem arises in determining the practical directions of its creation in preschool educational institutions. Concerning this idea, the study conducted by Holmes, Levy, Smith, Pinne & Neese [12] seems interesting. The authors point out that “all too common exposure of young children to traumatic situations and the life-long consequences that can result underscore the need for effective, developmentally appropriate interventions that address complex trauma” [12, p. 1650]. The authors presented the Head Start Trauma Smart (HSTS) program to “decrease the stress of chronic trauma, foster age-appropriate social and cognitive development, and create an integrated, trauma-informed culture for young children, parents, and staff. Using the above modalities, the HSTS program is comprised of four components described below: Training, Intensive Individual Trauma-Focused Intervention, Classroom Consultation, Peer-Based Mentoring” [12, pp. 1652–1653]. In addition, HSTS offers a promising developmentally appropriate solution that combines evidence-informed modalities to offer training, classroom counseling, intensive intervention, and peer mentoring for parents and teachers in an integrated model [12, c. 1658].

According to Minou, an effective method that will allow to reintegrate children who have been affected by armed conflict into society is the “creative therapies for the child victims of war and armed conflicts. For example, the cultural media such as arts of interpretation and arts visual as well as the accounts of the children themselves, the creative word can decrease the psychological problems of the child victims of war and facilitate their rehabilitation in the community” [17, p. 229].

In our research we base on the highlighted by the author directions of interaction between preschool teachers and psychologists in the process of emotional upbringing of preschoolers [3, p. 94], the content and forms of implementation of which are being supplemented and changed in accordance with the

goal — the creation of an emotionally developing environment that will allow a child who has suffered from armed conflict, to harmoniously build relationships with the surrounding world and contribute to his/her emotional comfort and well-being:

- 1) *emotionally developing*. Provides the organization of work by a teacher, the task of which is to familiarize children with a complex world of emotions, methods of socially approved adequate emotional behavior (the organization of work of a circle “World of emotions”, according to a specially designed program, classes are conducted by a teacher);
- 2) *emotionally supporting*. It is impossible to order emotions and feelings and to wait for the child to experience something that he does not feel, or to experience and show only positively colored emotions. Therefore, the task of educators and psychologists is that they must be able to directly or indirectly guide the emotions of preschoolers by organizing their activities and setting up a favorable emotional atmosphere in the group (teachers and psychologists while having children in kindergarten should create situations of success, involving children in interaction with one another);
- 3) *emotionally adjusting*. The joint creation by preschool teachers and psychologists of emotionogenic visual-spatial environment that promotes the emergence of various emotions in children, reducing emotional stress and creates a sense of security and safety (equipping the group room with positively colored emotionogenic objects: increasing the number of flowers, creating a living corner and a selection of musical works, the creation of the “Self-expression wall”, where children can show their own emotional states, conduct “The Diary of emotions” by them, etc.)
- 4) *emotionally activating*. The activation of emotional reactions takes place when a child faces something new and unusual, therefore, this direction means the creation of emotiogenic situations by preschool teachers and psychologists that contribute to a surge of adequate emotions in children (conducting by preschool teachers and psychologists role-playing, activating games that allow to reproduce ways of socially approved emotional behavior; educational measures: holidays, sports activities, that expand the range of emotional experiences of preschoolers);
- 5) *emotionally preventing*. During the implementation of this direction preschool teachers and psychologists are using measures aimed at prophylactics of the emergence of emotional stress in children during tense intellectual and psychoemotional stress (exercises for muscle relaxation, psycho-gymnastic exercises that reduce the level of excitation, respiratory gymnastics, which acts soothing on the nervous system; mimic gymnastics, aimed at removing the overall tension of facial muscles; pantomime sketches; individual consultations; the organization and realization of these forms of work is carried out by both teachers and psychologists);
- 6) *emotionally correcting*. Provides conducting by psychologists the measures aimed at correcting the emotional and personal sphere of children: anxiety, fears, aggressiveness (correctional developing and training sessions aimed at stabilizing the emotional states of preschoolers).

Conclusions

The article reveals the importance of the emotionally developing environment in the formation of the personality of children who suffered from a negative psycho-emotional impact as a result of the armed conflict that is presently taking place in the east of Ukraine. Basing on our own researches and the views of other scholars, we believe that the effective results in solving the given tasks can only be achieved on condition of cooperation between teachers of preschool educational institution and psychological service. Based on the previous work experience of the emotional upbringing of preschoolers, the directions of cooperation between preschool teachers and psychologists were formulated, which could reduce the influence of negative emotionogenic factors on children and promote their emotional comfort and well-being. Perspectives for further research we see in the developing a program of realization of directions of interaction between a preschool teacher and a psychologist in the process of creating the emotionally developing environment in preschool educational institutions.

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