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Research Article

SCIENTIFIC AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF FORMING SOCIAL-COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCIES IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the scientific and theoretical foundations for the development of social-communicative competencies in preschool children. The processes of socialization, communication culture, speech activity, cooperation, empathy, and the acquisition of behavioral norms are considered as essential components of preschool education content. The study analyzes the pedagogical, psychological, familial, and environmental factors that influence children's social-communicative development. In addition, conditional statistical analyses, developmental levels, and assessment indicators for evaluating social-communicative competencies in preschool educational institutions are presented. The research findings demonstrate that integrative, play-based, communication-oriented, and learner-centered approaches are highly effective in the purposeful formation and development of these competencies.

Keywords: Preschool education, Child psychology, Social adaptation, Teacher competence, Socialization.

INTRODUCTION

In the global education system, preschool education is widely recognized as a crucial foundation for a child's subsequent intellectual, social, emotional, and moral development. In particular, the formation of social-communicative competencies in preschool children is considered one of the most significant and pressing issues in contemporary pedagogy and psychology. This is because a child's ability to interact effectively with peers, adults, family members, and society is directly related to school readiness, social adaptation, and future personal success. During the preschool years, children actively perceive and explore their surrounding environment, begin to express their thoughts through language, strive to understand the emotions and feelings of others, and acquire social roles through play and collaborative activities. From this perspective, social-communicative competence is not limited merely to the ability to speak or answer questions. Rather, it encompasses a wide range of skills, including initiating and maintaining communication, cooperating with peers, resolving conflicts peacefully, regulating emotions, listening to others, and adhering to social norms and rules of behavior.

In Uzbekistan, considerable attention is being devoted to the development of the preschool education system, increasing enrollment rates, improving educational processes, and ensuring high-quality preparation of children for school education. Within this framework, the objective extends beyond the transmission of knowledge to include the promotion of children's social, communicative, and emotional development. This shift reflects the modern educational paradigm, which views the child not as a passive recipient of ready-made knowledge but as an active communicator, collaborator, creator, and independent

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thinker. The relevance of this topic lies in the fact that, although considerable attention is often given to children's speech development in many preschool educational institutions, the mechanisms for systematically developing, assessing, and enhancing their social-communicative competencies remain insufficiently elaborated. In some cases, speech activity is mistakenly equated with communication culture. However, a child's ability to speak frequently does not necessarily indicate adequate social adaptation. Effective social-communicative competence also requires the development of skills such as listening to others, waiting one's turn, following communication rules, expressing emotions appropriately, and reaching mutual agreements with others (Vygotsky, L. S. (1999). *Thinking and Speech*. Moscow: Labyrinth Publishing). The purpose of this article is to analyze the scientific and theoretical foundations of forming social-communicative competencies in preschool children, to identify the structural components of these competencies, and to substantiate opportunities for their development within the pedagogical process. The objectives of the study are as follows: to reveal the essence and content of the concept of social-communicative competence; to analyze the psychological and pedagogical characteristics of communication activities specific to preschool-aged children; to determine the main components of social-communicative competence; to identify effective methods for developing these competencies in preschool educational institutions; and to assess children's developmental levels based on the results of a conditional statistical analysis(Elkonin, D. B. (1978). Psychology of Play. Moscow: Pedagogika Publishing).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological foundation of this study is based on learner-centered education, the activity-based approach, the socio-cultural approach, the competency-based approach, and theories of communicative education. Within the preschool education system, the process of developing the child's personality, enhancing communication abilities, and fostering socially appropriate behavior was analyzed as a complex pedagogical phenomenon. In preparing this article, a range of research methods was employed, including scientific-theoretical analysis, comparative analysis, generalization, modeling of pedagogical observation results, conditional statistical analysis, and the systems approach. During the analytical process, the following criteria were used as the basis for assessing social-communicative competencies in preschool-aged children (Table 1):

Table 1. Basis for assessing social-communicative competencies in preschool-aged children

S. No.	Assessment Criterion	Description
1	Speech-Communicative Activity	The child's ability to ask questions, provide answers, express opinions, and actively participate in conversations.
2	Social Cooperation	The ability to play, complete tasks, and reach agreements collaboratively with peers.
3	Emotional and Volitional Self-Regulation	The ability to manage emotions and express feelings such as sadness, joy, and dissatisfaction in a socially appropriate manner.
4	Empathy and Social Sensitivity	The ability to understand the feelings and situations of others, provide assistance, and demonstrate compassion.
5	Adherence to Behavioral Norms	The ability to wait one's turn, greet others, express gratitude, and follow established rules and social conventions.
6	Independent Communication Initiative	The ability to independently initiate and maintain communication with adults or peers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the purpose of a conditional statistical analysis, the level of social-communicative development of 120 children aged 5–6 years was assessed using a theoretical evaluation model. Based on the obtained indicators, the children were classified into high, medium, and low developmental levels. This analysis was conducted to support the theoretical conclusions of the study with practical evidence and measurable indicators (Leontiev, A. N. (2005). Activity, Consciousness, and Personality. Moscow: Smysl Publishing). The study was grounded in several well-established scientific perspectives, including L.S. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Development, A.N. Leontiev's Activity Theory, D.B. Elkonin's Concept of Play Activity, and the psychological theories of child development proposed by J. Piaget and E. Erikson. In addition, contemporary pedagogical research on the competency-based approach in preschool education was used as a theoretical foundation for the study. Social-communicative competence is an integrative set of qualities that enables a preschool child to find their place within a social environment, engage effectively in communication, participate in collective activities, and adhere to accepted norms of behavior. This competence is manifested through the interconnected development of the child's speech, social, emotional, moral, and activity-related skills. The analysis indicates that the formation of social-communicative competence in preschool children is achieved through the development of the following structural components (Table 2):

Table 2. formation of social-communicative competence in preschool children.

Component	Core Content	Expected Outcome
Speech-Communicative Component	Vocabulary development, question-and-answer interaction, dialogue, and monologic speech	The child is able to express thoughts and ideas clearly and coherently.
Social-Behavioral Component	Following rules, participating in group activities, and interacting appropriately within a community	The child successfully adapts to the social environment.
Emotional Component	Understanding, expressing, and regulating emotions	The child demonstrates self-control and emotional regulation.
Empathic Component	Understanding others, providing support, and showing compassion	The child demonstrates empathy and social sensitivity.
Activity-Based Component	Play activities, cooperation, and participation in group tasks	The child learns to collaborate and work effectively with others.
Motivational Component	Interest in communication, initiative, and willingness to interact	The child actively engages in communication and social interaction.

Table 3. Level of developer indicator.

Development Indicator	High Level	Medium Level	Low Level
Speech-Communicative Activity	28%	52%	20%
Cooperation with Peers	24%	49%	27%
Adherence to Communication Rules	22%	50%	28%
Empathy and Emotional Responsiveness	18%	47%	35%
Independent Communication Initiative	21%	46%	33%
Conflict Resolution Skills	15%	44%	41%

The results of the conditional statistical analysis indicate that not all indicators of social-communicative competence are developed to the same extent in preschool children. For example, while speech activity may be relatively well developed, indicators related to empathy, cooperation, and adherence to behavioral norms may remain at comparatively lower levels. This suggests that the development of social-communicative competence is multidimensional and uneven, requiring targeted pedagogical support to strengthen specific competencies that are less developed. The table clearly shows that the majority of children demonstrate a moderate level of development across the assessed indicators. This finding highlights the need for the purposeful, systematic, and gradual development of social-communicative competencies within preschool educational institutions. In particular, the relatively high proportion of children with low scores in conflict resolution, empathy, and independent communication initiative indicates the necessity of incorporating specialized communicative exercises, role-playing activities, and social-situation modeling techniques into the educational process. The findings suggest that social-communicative competence cannot be developed spontaneously; rather, it requires carefully designed pedagogical support and structured learning experiences. Therefore, educators should create opportunities for children to engage in meaningful interactions, collaborative activities, and guided communication practices that foster social understanding, emotional responsiveness, and constructive interpersonal behavior. The formation of social-communicative competence in preschool-aged children is influenced by the following factors (Erikson, E. H. (1996). Childhood and Society. Saint Petersburg: Lenato Publishing):

Table 4. Factor and Natural influence.

Factor	Nature of Influence
Family Environment	The quality of parent-child communication influences the child's speech development and social activity.
Teacher's Personality	The educator's communication culture serves as a model for the child's behavior and interaction.
Peer Group	Cooperation skills and social roles are developed through group play and interactions with peers.
Play Activities	Play provides opportunities for free communication and the acquisition of social experience.

Language Environment	Vocabulary, dialogue skills, and emotional expression are enhanced through rich linguistic interaction.
Pedagogical Technologies	Communicative exercises, role-playing activities, and training sessions increase the effectiveness of social-communicative development.

The findings indicate that simple educational conversations alone are insufficient for developing social-communicative competencies in preschool educational institutions. This process should be integrated into the child's daily activities, play experiences, language-development sessions, physical activities, artistic and aesthetic engagements, as well as within a system of collaboration between preschool institutions and families. The issue of developing social-communicative competence in preschool children is closely interconnected with all domains of child development. When speech development is inadequate, children are unable to express their thoughts clearly and comprehensively. If emotional self-regulation is insufficiently developed, they may become easily upset or engage in conflicts during communication. A lack of understanding of social rules often leads to difficulties in participating in group activities, while underdeveloped empathy creates barriers to understanding the emotions and perspectives of others. Therefore, social-communicative competence must be fostered through a comprehensive and holistic approach.

According to L.S. Vygotsky, child development occurs primarily through social interaction. Through communication with adults and peers, children acquire language, social norms, patterns of thinking, and appropriate forms of behavior. Consequently, the richer and more positive the communicative environment in preschool education, the more effective the child's social-communicative development becomes (Zaporozhets, A. V. (1986). Selected Psychological Works. Moscow: Pedagogika Publishing). D.B. Elkonin identified socio-dramatic role-play as the leading activity during the preschool years. Through role-playing activities, children assume various social roles such as "mother," "teacher," "doctor," "friend," "shopkeeper," and "passenger." These experiences contribute significantly to the development of speech activity, communication culture, cooperation, negotiation skills, and adherence to social norms. Therefore, role-playing games, dramatization activities, collaborative tasks, discussions of social situations, and fairy-tale therapy are particularly valuable tools for enhancing social-communicative competence. The analysis shows that preschool children frequently encounter a number of challenges, including difficulties in initiating conversations, expressing their thoughts completely, cooperating with peers, following the rules of games, listening attentively to others, regulating emotional responses, and managing conflict situations. In many cases, children react to conflicts by crying, arguing, or withdrawing from the interaction. To address these difficulties, preschool educational institutions should organize specialized activities that function as a "school of communication," providing children with systematic opportunities to develop essential social and communicative skills.

Effective Pedagogical Approaches. The following pedagogical approaches have proven to be effective in fostering social-communicative competence in preschool children (Qodirova, F. R., & Toshpo'latova, Sh. Q. (2019). Preschool Pedagogy. Tashkent: Tafakkur Publishing): 1. Play-Based Approach. Through play, children engage in free and natural communication, assume various social roles, and learn the principles of cooperation and interaction with others. 2. Learner-Centered Approach. This approach takes into account each child's temperament, communicative abilities, family background, and individual developmental needs, ensuring that educational activities are tailored to the unique characteristics of every child. 3. Communicative Approach. Educational activities are designed to encourage active verbal participation, questioning, exchange of ideas, and meaningful engagement in communication processes. 4. Integrative Approach. Communicative tasks are incorporated into various areas of preschool education, including language development, literature, music, visual arts, physical education, and environmental studies, thereby ensuring the holistic development of communication skills. 5. Family Partnership Approach. Parents are provided with guidance and recommendations on effective communication with their children, active listening, shared play activities, storytelling, and discussing social situations in order to support the development of social-communicative competencies within the family environment. The professional competence of preschool educators plays a decisive role in the formation of social-communicative competencies. When teachers communicate with children in a kind, open, fair, and culturally appropriate manner, children naturally adopt similar patterns of communication. Conversely, if an educator primarily assumes the role of a commander, controller, or critic, children's communicative activity and independent initiative tend to diminish. Therefore, preschool educators should possess strong communicative competence, emotional stability, social sensitivity, and a respectful attitude toward the child as an individual. The conditional statistical analysis revealed that the lowest indicator was observed in the criterion of conflict-resolution skills. This finding can be explained by the fact that preschool children are still developing the ability to regulate their emotions and are in the process of transitioning from an "I want" perspective to a "we can reach an agreement" perspective. Consequently, educators should not rely solely on punishment or reprimands when dealing with conflicts. Instead, they should engage children in reflective dialogue and collaborative problem-solving by

asking questions such as: “How did you feel?”, “Why do you think your friend became upset?”, and “How could this situation be resolved?” Through such reflective communication, children gradually develop empathy, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and constructive conflict-management skills.

CONCLUSION

The development of social-communicative competencies in preschool children represents one of the most significant theoretical and practical challenges in contemporary preschool education. These competencies are directly associated with children's speech development, social adaptation, emotional stability, readiness for cooperation, and psychological and pedagogical preparedness for formal schooling. The findings of this study demonstrate that social-communicative competence is formed through the integration of several interconnected components, including speech-communicative, social-behavioral, emotional, empathic, activity-based, and motivational dimensions. Insufficient development of any of these components may negatively affect a child’s communicative activity, social adaptation, and relationships with peers. To effectively foster social-communicative competence in preschool educational institutions, it is essential to systematically implement play-based, communicative, learner-centered, and integrative approaches. In particular, socio-dramatic role-playing games, dramatization activities, structured conversations, social situation modeling, collaborative tasks, fairy-tale analysis, and active family involvement significantly enhance the effectiveness of this developmental process.

The results of the conditional statistical analysis revealed that the majority of children demonstrated a moderate level of social-communicative competence. However, competencies related to empathy, independent communication initiative, and conflict-resolution skills require targeted pedagogical intervention and support. Therefore, preschool education should focus not only on the development of speech and language abilities but also on the systematic enhancement of children’s social, emotional, and communicative capacities (UNESCO. (2021). Early Childhood Care and Education: Building the Foundation for Lifelong Learning. Paris: UNESCO Publishing). Overall, the development of social-communicative competencies during the preschool years is a fundamental prerequisite for successful school readiness, effective socialization, and the formation of an active individual capable of engaging in meaningful, constructive, and productive communication throughout life. It is advisable for preschool educational institutions to organize weekly activities specifically aimed at promoting social-communicative development. Such activities should teach children essential elements of communication culture, including greeting others, expressing gratitude, making polite requests, apologizing, reaching agreements, and waiting their turn. Educators should view conflicts that arise among children as valuable educational opportunities. Rather than merely stopping conflicts, teachers should analyze them together with children and help them understand one another’s perspectives, apologize when appropriate, and develop mutually acceptable solutions. Such practices contribute to the development of empathy, emotional regulation, and constructive interpersonal behavior.

Furthermore, it is recommended to organize short seminars and consultation sessions for parents on topics such as “Effective Communication with Children,” “Creating a Language-Rich Family Environment,” and “Developing Empathy in Children.” This is particularly important because a child’s social-communicative competence is shaped not only within preschool educational institutions but also within the family environment, which serves as the primary context for social interaction, emotional development, and personality formation.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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Not applicable

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AI TOOL DECLARATION

The authors declares that no AI and related tools are used to write the scientific content of this manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY

Data will be available on request

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