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**MODEL FOR STIMULATING EMOTIONAL-VOLITIONAL
DEVELOPMENT IN PRESCHOOL AGE**

ABSTRACT

Of doctoral dissertation

for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy)

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**Sofia
2025**

The dissertation was discussed at a meeting of the Department of Preschool and Media Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education, Sofia University. Kliment Ohridski" on 28.04.2025 and is directed for defence before a specialized scientific jury in scientific specialty 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy).

The dissertation is 220 pages long, of which 193 pages are text-statement and 9 pages are appendices. Its structure includes an introduction, six chapters and a conclusion. The bibliography includes 114 titles, of which 77 sources in Cyrillic and 37 in Latin. The appendices include the diagnostic tools that were used in the study. A total of 44 tables, 26 graphs and 7 figures are included in the dissertation.

The dissertation contains an introduction, six chapters, conclusion and implications, bibliography and appendices. The scientific contributions of the author are also presented.

The introduction of the thesis focuses on the need to study emotional-volitional development in preschool and presents its main goal: Developing and testing a theoretical-experimental model for stimulating emotional-volitional development in preschool.

Chapter I "Program Orientation of the Study" justifies the relevance of the problem and defines the concept of the study and the terminological justification of the problem.

The chapter II "Theoretical Grounding of the Problem Area" provides an analysis of concepts, theories, propositions, and views related to emotional-volitional and social development in preschool.

In Chapter III "Organization and Methodology of the Study" the main stages and related tasks and methods for diagnosis and stimulation of children's emotional-volitional development are presented.

Chapter IV presents an analysis of the results of the preliminary stage of the study.

Chapter V defines a theoretical-experimental model for stimulating emotional-volitional development in preschoolers called "Little Children with Big Emotions": principles, methods, techniques, thematic content in modules.

Chapter VI presents the results of the ascertainment and formative stages of the experiment.

The theoretical and practical-applied achievements of the dissertation, summarized also as scientific contributions, are presented in the conclusion.

The public defence of the dissertation will take place at from hours in the Hall No. of the Faculty of Education Sciences and Arts of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", bul. "Shipchenski prohod" 69A.

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INTRODUCTION

Preschool age is characterized by very dynamic physical, cognitive, motor, linguistic, emotional-volitional and social development of children. These aspects of children's selves unfold in parallel and influence each other. The factors that shape their specificity are genetic heredity, the quality of nutrition and daily routine, play and entertainment time, and the family and social environment in which the child grows up. Among preschool children, it is difficult to distinguish between physical, motor and perceptual development on the one hand and cognitive development on the other. Everyday life experiences in the early years of children's lives become the basis not only for later motor skills but also for cognitive, social and emotional development.

In pedagogical theory and practice, the importance of emotional-volitional development as fundamental to social interaction and personal growth is increasingly recognized. Children who are able to recognize and regulate their emotions have been shown to demonstrate better social skills, have lower levels of aggression, and higher levels of cooperation in group settings (Douglas & Troy, 2020; Saarni & Camras, 2022). This is why pedagogical interaction in kindergarten plays an essential role in stimulating emotional-volitional development.

Through play, children learn skills for recognizing and expressing emotions, as well as practice self-control, cooperation and ways to cope in difficult social situations. Another key aspect is the application of approaches based on non-violent communication and positive education that support the development of emotional awareness and social responsibility in children.

Prosocial behaviour, empathy and the ability to communicate effectively are key factors in children's social development. They form the basis of successful interpersonal relationships by promoting understanding of others' emotions and the development of positive social attitudes. Developing these skills in preschool helps social adjustment and reduces conflict in children's groups by providing children with tools for peaceful conflict resolution and cooperation with peers.

This dissertation focuses on the study of different aspects of the emotional-volitional development of preschool children, emphasizing the age characteristics, the influence of the environment and the importance of pedagogical interaction in kindergarten.

The focus of the research is the development and testing of a model for stimulating children's emotional-volitional development, including emotion recognition, appropriate responding, pro-social behaviour, developing skills for dealing with conflict situations and supporting personal development.

During the diagnostic and formative projections of the study, a variety of pedagogical and psychological methods are applied, aimed at analysing the following key aspects:

- recognition of basic emotions by preschool children.
- developing skills to respond appropriately to different emotional states.

- formation of pro-social behaviour and skills for adequate social interaction.
- assessment of conflict situations and children's ability to find appropriate solutions.

The subject of the dissertation is also the normative regulation of pre-school education in Bulgaria, and the pedagogical practices that stimulate the emotional-volitional and social development of children: an analysis of national educational standards, strategies and programs that are relevant to the issues under study.

By systematically exploring these aspects, the purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate the importance of purposeful pedagogical interaction in stimulating the emotional-volitional and social development of preschool children. It is expected that the approbation of the proposed model will contribute to the development of effective pedagogical strategies for kindergarten teachers and provide practical guidance to educators in the formation of children's emotional-volitional skills.

This study is organized in several main stages, including a theoretical review of existing concepts and models, an empirical study of the target group, and a validation of the developed model. Finally, there are conclusions and recommendations formulated, the purpose of which is to support pedagogical practice and enrich research in the field of emotional-volitional development in preschool.

Main aim of the thesis: Development and validation of a theoretical-experimental model for stimulating emotional-volitional development in preschool children (3-7 years old) in the kindergarten environment through play, artistic and communicative strategies.

CHAPTER I

PROGRAMME ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1.Relevance of the issues.

The text highlights the importance of emotional-volitional development and socialization in preschool as key factors for a child's future personal and academic success. Emotional awareness, self-regulation, communication skills, empathy, and prosocial behaviour are the foundation for successful adaptation in school and society. These are most effectively formed through active experiences, social interaction and targeted pedagogical influence at an early age.

The development of these skills acts as a defence against stress, aggression and behavioural difficulties, and the relationship between emotional-volitional skills and academic achievement is increasingly well researched and evidenced. Emotional maturity - the ability to work collectively, communicate effectively and be personally motivated - is also an important part of school readiness.

The increasing digitalization of children's lives poses new challenges to emotional development by limiting real communication and experiences. This requires careful management and adaptation of pedagogical content and approaches to ensure the sustainable development of emotional-volitional skills in the contemporary environment.

1.2.Conceptual parameters of the study.

I. Bizhkov and V. Krajewski (1999) describe the pedagogical experiment as a specially structured and executed pedagogical activity in which fundamentally new elements are introduced. The process is organized in such a way that it allows for a deeper observation of the relationships between its various aspects and a more precise measurement of the effects of the changes introduced.

In the context of the main goal of the dissertation, namely, the development and validation of a theoretical-experimental model for the stimulation of emotional-volitional development in preschool, we formulated the following components of the experimental study:

Aim of the study:

Exploring the possibilities for stimulating emotional-volitional and social development in the context of pedagogical interaction.

Study object:

Educational, nurturing and socializing parameters of emotional-volitional development in preschool.

Subject of the study:

The peculiarities and specificities of child development (emotional, cognitive, physical, social) between the ages of 3 and 7 and the pedagogical conditions for positive influence in the process of pedagogical interaction in order to build competencies related to positive emotional-vocal development of preschool children.

Hypotheses: options

Positive option:

We suggest that the development and approbation of an educational model to stimulate the emotional-volitional development of preschool children will positively influence the development of competencies related to:

- Stimulating children's "experience" through playful interaction.
- Learning skills to recognize and manage one's own emotions in the process of communicating with peers.
- Mastery of prosocial behaviours and personality traits in the context of regulation of one's own behaviour through the stimulation of emotional-personal self-awareness and adequate self-evaluation.

Negative option (study limitations):

The applied and validated model will not stimulate children's emotional-volitional development due to the possible following limitations of the study:

- Absence of children from the kindergarten on the days when the model was applied.
- For children with special educational needs (SEN).
- In children with adverse family environment.

The study was not designed to investigate the listed circumstances associated with the groups mentioned.

Expected changes will be identified through observation, teacher evaluation, and behavioural indicators.

1.3. Terminological justification of the problems.

The dissertation deals with the emotional-volitional development of preschool children, and for this purpose, terms and concepts related to the topic are distinguished.

The concepts of emotional-volitional development, emotional competence, emotional literacy, emotional intelligence, and volitional regulation are examined in the present study.

➤ In the current dissertation, emotional-volitional development in preschool is viewed as a holistic process of personal growth in which, in a dynamic interaction between emotions and will, the child builds his or her inner world, self-regulation skills, and stable behavioural habits. It involves developing emotional sensitivity, understanding and expressing emotions, and forming volitional qualities - such as patience, self-control and responsibility. Supported by pedagogical interaction and the social environment, this development is key to the formation of self-awareness, personal identity and successful social adaptation. Emotional-volitional development is monitored through behavioural indicators in play situations, observation and pedagogical tasks from the "Little Children with Big Emotions" model.

➤ Emotional intelligence (the ability to recognise, manage and use emotions) is understood as the ability of the preschool child to recognise and name his or her own emotions, to show empathy for others, to regulate emotional reactions and to participate in cooperative and social interaction in a group setting. Within the framework of the study, the concept is considered as a basis for the development of emotional competence and prosocial behavioural, and its acquisition is supported through targeted pedagogical activities - role-plays, emotional-communication tasks, art and story modules included in the model "Young children with big emotions".

➤ Emotional competence is demonstrated by children's ability to name emotions, respond empathically in social interactions, and regulate their behavioural in frustration. It is assessed through observation, teacher questionnaires and analysis of teaching activities (drawings, role plays, language expression).

➤ Emotional literacy (the knowledge and skills to understand, express and regulate emotions) is understood as the basis for forming competence - through mastery of emotional vocabulary, recognition of nuances in feelings and the skills to express them appropriately. It is developed through modules including stories, dramatization, artistic creativity and discussions.

➤ Volitional regulation in preschool is understood as the child's ability to consciously direct, control, and maintain his or her behaviour in relation to set rules, tasks, or social expectations. It includes resilience in the face of frustration, patience, waiting, completing activities, and self-discipline in play and learning situations. In the present study, volitional regulation is monitored through behavioural indicators in role-playing, rule-governed activities, responses in conflict situations, and in children's processes of cooperation and social negotiation.

➤ Empathy - the ability to perceive and understand the emotions and perspectives of others by combining affective (sympathy) and cognitive (awareness) components. Empathy is developed through learning - role play, empathy, discussion and activities to put oneself 'in the other's place'.

The other aspect explored is social development, which is integral to emotional. Social development is the process by which a child learns social norms, roles and interaction skills to function effectively in society. It takes place through the process of socialization - the acceptance of societal rules and patterns. In preschool, social development includes:

- building social skills through play and role play.
- identity formation and sense of belonging.
- developing self-regulation and autonomy in relationships.
- manifestations of prosocial behaviour - cooperation, sharing, conflict resolution.
- involvement in social and educational activities.

The following concepts related to social development are discussed:

➤ Social intelligence - the ability to interact effectively in a social context; the ability to understand, interpret and manage interpersonal relationships. It supports effective communication, conflict resolution, leadership and social adjustment.

➤ social culture - a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable a person to navigate, adapt and function in a social environment, including an understanding of social roles, etiquette, morality, relationships and tolerance.

➤ Prosocial behaviour - voluntary actions to help and support others (sharing, cooperating, comforting), guided by empathy and moral convictions, without expectation of personal gain. It is developed through modelling, social support and play practices. Prosocial behaviour is registered through acts of cooperation, sharing, helping and comforting in play and learning situations. Checklists and questionnaires were used in the current study for evaluation by teachers and educators.

The issues addressed are not only considered at a theoretical level, but are operationalized through specific indicators, tasks, and behaviours observed and measured in real educational settings.

In the context of the conceptual parameters of the study and the conceptual grounding of the problem, the main stages and the related tasks will be presented in CHAPTER III: Organization and Methodology of the Study.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM AREA

2.1. Physiological features of the emergence and manifestation of emotions in preschoolers

The neurobiological bases of development in preschool are closely related to the emotional, volitional and social development of the child. During this period, intense changes in the brain - increases in brain volume, synaptogenesis, and myelination - occur that enhance attention, memory, self-control, and social skills (Craig & Baucum, 2001; Douglas & Troy, 2020).

Lateralization occurs in parallel, with the left hemisphere supporting language and emotional expression (LoBue et al., 2019) and the right hemisphere supporting empathy and intuition. D. Golman (2000) emphasized the role of the amygdala in emotional responses and the need for self-regulation through prefrontal cortex development. This is also supported by B. Piriova (2008) who emphasizes the late maturation of the prefrontal cortex and its role in impulse control.

M. Norden (in Shapiro, 1999) emphasizes serotonin as a factor in emotional balance influenced by food, movement and sleep. A contemporary perspective is offered by L. Barrett (2023), which suggests that emotions are constructed by the brain based on experience, language, and culture-through the process of interoception, in which the brain predicts the meaning of bodily sensations through learned emotional categories.

These scientific views confirm that preschool appears to be a critical period for the development of emotions, self-regulation, and social behaviour, strongly influenced by neurological maturation. Contemporary research from a variety of scientific fields emphasizes that: brain and nervous system development is the foundation for emotional and social functioning; experience, environment, and culture shape how children understand and express their emotions; promoting body awareness, physical activity, and social support can significantly support emotional health and resilience at an early age.

2.2. Formation of volitional skills in preschool

Volitional development in preschool is a hierarchical and dynamic process, requiring the mobilization of mental and physical resources. It is inextricably linked to personal growth, successful learning, social adaptation and resilience to life challenges. Supported by an appropriate environment, positive emotions and directed education, the development of willpower at an early age creates a solid foundation for future personal fulfilment.

According to B. Minchev (2011), volitional action is an integrated mental activity that passes through six phases, including perception, thinking and behaviour. It is inextricably linked to the Self, which initiates, controls and, if necessary, terminates the action. It is this connection that gives volitional action a sense of

freedom and personal responsibility. Minchev emphasizes that through the accumulation of successful volitional actions, a style of volitional activity characterized by purposefulness, determination, endurance, and strength of will is developed, and these are the basis for the realization of the individual in a social context.

O. Semionow et al (2021) view volitional development in children as a process associated with the transition from impulsivity to self-control and goal-directed behaviour. At the beginning of this process, the child is driven by his or her momentary desires, but over time, through interaction with adults and peers, begins to acquire skills such as goal setting, patience, and resilience. The authors emphasize the relationship between volitional regulation and the development of higher mental functions such as attention, memory, reasoning, and emotional control. They formulate three main strategies to support volitional development: training self-control through exercise, nurturing qualities such as patience and courage, and structuring self-regulation mechanisms that can be applied to different life situations.

Research has shown that children with developed volitional regulation demonstrate better self-control, resilience to stress, rapid learning, and more successful adaptation in different areas of life. Positive emotions play an important role in facilitating volitional development, while negative emotions can hinder it. Volitional readiness at this age is expressed in skills such as following instructions, following rules and self-regulating behaviour.

2.3. Social development in preschool in the context of emotional-volitional development.

Social development in preschool is seen as a multi-layered and dynamic process related to the acquisition of social norms, roles and values through interaction with adults and peers. According to E. Erikson (1964), this period is critical for the formation of autonomy and identity. A. Bandura (1977) emphasized social learning through observation and modelling of behavior, introducing the concept of self-efficacy. Craig & Baucum (2001) emphasize the process of internalization of social and moral norms.

The behavioural perspective advocated by B. Skinner (1938) and L. Burke (2012), explains social behaviour through external reinforcement - rewards and punishments. From a cognitive perspective, A. Lillard and S. Curenton (1999) emphasize the capacity for social understanding - interpreting emotions and intentions. D. Bagenthal (after Eisenberg, 2006) introduces a biopsychosocial model accounting for biological, cultural, and personality influences.

B. Minchev (2011) identifies two key processes - building interpersonal relationships and autonomy, while Zhivko Zhechev (2020) proposes the concept of "social phasing" and emphasizes the role of art therapy. B. Uzunova (2020) emphasizes the need for social-emotional intelligence and a balance between personal affirmation and authenticity.

The theory of social intelligence is presented by E. Thorndike (1920) and developed by D. Golman (2010), who views it as key to interpersonal success. K. Izard (2017) highlights the influence of emotions on socialization and cognitive development.

What unites all the authors is the view that the child is an active participant in the socialization process, and that support, role models, and emotional-volitional skills are crucial for building adaptive and prosocial behaviour.

2.4. Factors of emotional-volitional and social development in preschool

The processes of emotional-volitional and social development in preschool cannot be considered in isolation from other areas of child development - physical, motor, cognitive, linguistic and others. All these aspects function as an interrelated system in which they simultaneously influence the development of emotional-volitional skills and are the result of their development. The same applies to social development and personality formation.

2.4.1. Physical and motor development

During this intense period of childhood, physical development marks significant dynamics. Changes in body size and proportion, along with maturation of the nervous and skeletal systems, not only facilitate motor activity but also contribute to the development of self-confidence, independence and social skills. The development of gross and fine motor skills assists children to actively participate in play, creativity and group activities - important experiences that support cooperation, taking turns and following rules. This develops qualities such as emotional resilience and the will to cope with challenges (Craig & Baucum, 2001). Mastery of bodily movements - walking, jumping, balancing - contributes to feelings of security and control, and physical independence (e.g. dressing independently) supports the formation of willpower and the ability to cope with emotional and social difficulties. Lack of motor control can cause frustration and social withdrawal if not addressed in a timely manner through appropriate support. This highlights the importance of good nutrition, exercise and an active lifestyle as conditions for emotional balance and social adjustment.

G. Craig and D. Baucum (2001) draw attention to the fact that developing gross motor skills - running, jumping, throwing - not only improves body control but also strengthens the child's intrinsic motivation and self-esteem. Successful participation in motor activities creates a positive emotional background. D. Douglas and M. Troy (2020) add that initially movements are performed for pleasure alone (functional subordination), but over time they become volitional actions carrying meaning and purpose - thus developing patience, resilience and persistence.

Fine motor skills - drawing, manipulating objects, eating - also have a significant impact on emotional and social development. K. Petty (2010) points out that around the age of four, these actions begin to automate,

allowing for both task performance and communication, supporting independence and building positive self-esteem. The maturation of the nervous system and increased ability to concentrate (Early EdU Alliance, 2018) make fine motor skills an important component for emotional resilience. Successes in this area lead to positive self-esteem, while difficulties can create stress and withdrawal - so support from adults is crucial (Craig & Baucum, 2001).

According to D. Douglas and M. Troy (2020), providing an appropriate and safe environment for motor development is essential not only for physical health, but also for building social skills, empathy, and cooperative behaviour through observation and imitation.

2.4.2. Cognitive development

Cognitive development in preschool is a complex, multidimensional process, closely related to the emotional and social development of the child. According to Jean Piaget, children actively construct their knowledge through interaction with their environment, using symbols and going through egocentric thinking that influences their social skills. Cognitive development supports emotional regulation and social adaptation. Piaget-inspired educational practice includes play and exploration activities that promote independence, self-control, and empathy.

Lev Vygotsky complements this perspective with a focus on the social nature of learning and the importance of cultural context. He stresses the role of language, cultural tools and the 'zone of proximal development' where the child develops through the support of more competent adults and peers. His theory lays the foundation for a pedagogy based on cooperation, dialogue and collaborative problem solving that develops both thinking and social skills.

The emotional sphere also has a strong influence on cognitive development - positive emotions such as curiosity and security stimulate learning. The child is still developing the ability to understand others' point of view and needs support to build social sensitivity. Cultural context and everyday activities also play an important role in the formation of cognitive structures.

2.4.3. Language and speech development

The development of language and speech in preschool is closely related to the cognitive, emotional-volitional and social development of the child. During this period, speech is refined, and language becomes a tool for expression, social interaction, and understanding of self and others (Tomasello, 2019). Communication with adults stimulates not only language but also emotional skills - children begin to name feelings, understand the emotions of others, and participate in social dialogues.

Language plays a key role in the acquisition of social norms and in the development of communicative skills, which develop from gestures to full dialogue by the age of 6-7. Language competency is directly linked to academic readiness for school, and deficits in this area, particularly in children from vulnerable backgrounds, can impede learning (Bierman, 2015).

The development of speech depends not only on inner talents, but also on the social and cultural environment. Approaches based on this idea emphasise the role of adults as active participants and models in the child's language and social development, with particular emphasis on play, independent learning and emotional support.

2.5. Features of emotional-volitional development in preschool age

Emotional-volitional development in preschool goes through dynamic and significant changes, which encompass the child's ability to recognize, express and regulate his emotions, as well as the formation of initial volitional skills. In this period, both basic emotions - joy, sadness, fear, anger, disgust, surprise - and more complex ones such as pride, jealousy, shame and guilt are manifested. Characteristic is the intensity of emotional reactions, especially to unmet needs, and the frequent changing of opposing emotions in a short interval.

At the age of 2, children express their emotions violently and continuously, often using the word "no" as an expression of initial volition (Petty, 2010). At this stage, parallel play predominates, imaginary friends are made, but direct interaction with peers is lacking. As the child gets older, at 3 years, an expansion of emotional vocabulary is noticed due to speech development. Play begins to serve a self-soothing function, and the child increasingly seeks adult approval. Fears of imaginary creatures and loneliness are common, with impulsivity still dominant (Borisova, Arnaudova, 1999).

At age 4, play becomes associative, children begin to follow directions with greater persistence, develop empathy, and recognize the emotions of others. Self-control and patience skills grow. At 5 years, there is better control of impulsivity, self-confidence increases, and children now create games with rules and strive for more complex social interactions (LoBue et al., 2019). Friendships deepen, especially those within the same sex, as do family relationships, especially with siblings.

At age 6, the ability to perceive the point of view of others strengthens, involvement in group activities increases, and moods are labile. The child is increasingly able to express himself verbally rather than through actions. At age 7, more mature forms of social responsibility and cooperation are developing, and independence and self-discipline are being consolidated. Emotional regulation improves, with anxiety now linked to real life circumstances - school, social belonging, family changes. The child begins to seek solitary activities, developing individuality and personal interests.

2.6. Expressing, understanding and regulating emotions in preschool.

Emotions are short-lived mental states that reflect the significance of events for the individual and have an important regulatory function for behaviour. They are manifested through physiological reactions, behaviours, and conscious experiences and are closely linked to needs, motives, and instincts (Dessev, 2023; Mayer et al., 2004). Emotions are distinct from feelings, which are more stable and conscious emotional relationships (Dessev, 2023) formed through interpretation of experiences (Paris et al., 2019).

Contemporary theories (Eisenberg, Saarni, Izard) emphasize that:

- Emotions are an adaptive response to important circumstances.
- the child moves from undifferentiated reactions to recognition of discrete emotions.
- The development of emotions is a process of consolidation of components such as expression, understanding and regulation.

Bahman & Maffini's (2008) models show that emotions are conceptualized along two dimensions, arousal and pleasure/displeasure, and children initially distinguish emotions as positive/negative before they begin to differentiate them by type. Emotions play a central role in learning and motivation. Positive emotions, especially joy, support self-regulation, social relationships and confidence building (Gercheva-Nesterova & Ilieva, 2017).

The development of emotions is studied in three main aspects:

- Expressing emotions - through facial expressions, voice, behaviour.
- Understanding emotions - of self and others.
- Emotion regulation - through cognitive and behavioural strategies (Peneva, 2015).

There have been significant advances in empirical research - studying the relationship between physiological expressions, cultural differences and emotional experience, asking whether outward expression always reflects inner experience (Gottman & Declaire, 1998).

2.6.1. Strategies for coping with emotional challenges.

According to S. Saryska (2023), children use a variety of strategies to cope with emotional experiences, from intuitive actions such as distraction to more complex cognitive techniques. M. Brackett summarizes emotion regulation into five categories: breathing, planning for the future, attention shifting, cognitive framing, and "metamoment"-a moment of conscious pause before a reaction.

L. Barrett (2023) emphasizes the role of language, awareness, and culture in creating and managing emotions. C. Saarni (1999, 2022) examines how children respond to emotional situations and emphasizes the importance of supportive adult responses for better emotional adjustment. Supportive responses include

validation, reassurance, and encouragement to cope, whereas non-supportive responses (punishment, belittling) can lead to problem behaviours.

K. Strongman (2003) combines evolutionary and social perspectives, suggesting that emotions are both biologically adaptive and socially constructed. Culture shapes how emotions are expressed and experienced.

Emotions have important adaptive functions and are key to social functioning. Parents, teachers, and significant adults play an essential role in helping children develop emotional regulation that is critical to their well-being and social integration.

2.6.2. Needs of preschool children

E. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) offers a universal framework for understanding human motivation that can be successfully adapted to preschool. According to Maslow, needs are arranged in a pyramid, where satisfaction of the lower levels is a necessary condition for moving to the higher levels. In the context of early childhood, meeting these needs is essential for children's healthy development, their confidence and readiness for future life challenges.

At the first level are the physiological needs, which include food, water, sleep, air and shelter. In young children, these needs strongly influence their emotional state - for example, hunger or tiredness are often expressed through irritation, crying or anger. In this period, children are not yet able to fully recognise and name their bodily sensations, making the role of the adult in providing adequate facilities even more crucial. Movement is also of particular importance, as in preschool, sensory and emotional perception are inextricably linked to motor activity.

The second level encompasses the needs for security and safety, which for children are realised through a stable environment, clarity of rules, predictability in daily routines and emotional support from significant adults. A sense of security and routine in kindergarten are essential for building trust and internal stability.

The third level includes social needs - the need for belonging, love and acceptance. For children, this means close relationships with parents, teachers and peers. Establishing friendships and actively participating in group games support social growth and emotional stability. A sense of belonging to a group is fundamental to socialisation.

At the fourth level are the esteem needs related to personal worth, recognition and self-esteem. For children, this is manifested through the need for encouragement, praise and choices. When their efforts are noticed and valued, they build confidence and motivation to develop.

The fifth and highest level is self-actualization - the pursuit of personal development, the expression of potential and the attainment of meaning. In preschool, this is realized through creativity, play, curiosity, and a desire to learn. It is play that is the main route to self-actualisation - through it the child experiments, creates,

expresses himself and learns to be autonomous. While the family remains the primary environment for meeting these needs, kindergarten expands opportunities for socialization, creative expression and learning.

2.6.3 Empathy, prosocial behaviour and communication

Empathy, prosocial behaviour and communication in preschool are closely related processes that form the core of the child's emotional, social and moral development. P. Campbell (2000) defines empathy as the ability to perceive a situation from another's perspective without necessarily sharing it, and emphasizes that it develops fairness, comforting, and compassion in children. R. Stamatov (2005) adds that empathy limits aggression and builds positive interpersonal relationships, leading to a sense of personal worth. D. Golman (2000) links empathy to emotional literacy, emphasizing that awareness of one's own emotions is the basis for empathy. E. Sofronieva (2020) distinguishes between affective and cognitive empathy - respectively related to empathy and to consciously putting oneself in the other's place.

Empathy training, according to K. Cotton (2020), are effective when they include knowledge about emotions, identification with others, role play, and taking another's perspective. M. Hoffman (2000) shows that highlighting cultural similarities enhances empathy among children. Repetition of activities to take another's perspective is significantly more effective than one-off efforts, and role-playing with people, animals, or objects supports the development of both cognitive and affective empathy. A. Cohn (in Cotton, 2020) emphasizes the importance of attributing positive qualities as a stimulus for building intrinsic motivation and stable self-esteem.

Prosocial behaviour, according to Eisenberg (2006), involves acting for the benefit of others without expectation of reward - helping, sharing, cooperating. M. Tomasello (2019) emphasizes that children possess an innate altruism aided by mirror neurons, and theory of mind - the ability to become aware of thoughts and feelings other than one's own - contributes to cooperation. J. Haidt (as cited in Tomasello, 2019) adds that moral intuitions such as caring and fairness underlie children's moral behaviour.

Teachers encourage prosocial behaviour through role-playing and discussion of moral dilemmas, while parents support development through personal example and shared experiences.

Communication, as an inseparable part of these processes, according to N. Richman (2002), is a bidirectional act of understanding and responding in which nonverbal cues in children are often leading. Г. Pyryov (1993) draws attention to the danger of social deprivation and its consequences for socialization, and H. Beleva (2024) emphasizes the egocentric nature of children's speech and the need for pedagogical support. T. Velinova (1995) considers communication as a social phenomenon related to the emotional environment.

Empathy, prosocial behaviour, and communication in preschoolers develop in a complex interplay of biological, cognitive, and social factors. Facilitated through play, role-play activities and supportive interaction with adults, these processes lay the foundations for a child's social and emotional maturity.

2.6.4. The role of "Non-violent communication" in the formation of emotional-volitional and social skills in children

The non-violent communication developed by M. Rosenberg (2009), is presented as an effective system for building cordial, authentic, and respectful relationships, particularly appropriate for preschoolers. It promotes empathy, self-awareness, and respect for the needs of others, and its goal is not simply to resolve conflict but to bring people together through understanding rather than punishment or control. The method is based on four main components: objectively observing the situation without blaming, expressing one's own emotions, identifying the needs behind them, and formulating specific and actionable requests.

Rosenberg stresses that emotions are a signal of unmet needs, and through their analysis and verbalization, children learn to become aware of their internal states as well as those of others.

In this context, the method of non-violent communication is seen as a valuable tool for parents and teachers. Applying it in daily interaction helps children to develop emotional-volitional skills, empathy, and a sustainable pattern of conflict resolution. As Hart and Hodson (2012) point out, through the positive example of adults, children learn behavioural patterns that will serve them throughout life, such as respect, tolerance, self-awareness, and the ability to dialogue.

2.7. Concepts and theories related to emotional-volitional and social development in preschool

This section presents an in-depth analysis of emotional development, emotional intelligence, and social-emotional competence in preschoolers, focusing on the influence of various factors-biological, social, cultural, and educational-as well as the views of leading authors in the field.

According to N. Vitanova (2013), emotional abilities and rational thinking are closely intertwined and together influence an individual's decisions and behaviour from early childhood. She emphasizes the difference between emotional development as a process of personal growth through experience and interaction, and emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions.

L. Barrett (2023) complements this perspective with a constructivist theory that emotions are not innate responses, but cognitive constructs of the brain built on past experiences, linguistic categories, and cultural patterns. It introduces key concepts such as emotional vocabulary, interoception, and cultural determinacy of emotional perception. According to Barrett, children do not experience complex emotions until they have internalized them as concepts and social meanings.

K. Bierman and M. Greenberg (2015) argue that social-emotional skills are as important as cognitive skills for school readiness. These include recognizing and regulating emotions, solving social problems, and building positive relationships. These skills not only support the learning process but also facilitate social inclusion. Al. Krastev (2023) discusses the relationship between social-emotional competence and

intercultural competence, highlighting the role of respect, openness and empathy for successful communication and social adaptation.

A. Saarni (2022) identified three main factors influencing emotional competence: individual child characteristics, parental support, and socialization through teachers and educators. This idea is supported by the research of Denham, J. Nelsen and S. Eubova, who place emphasis on the development of abilities such as recognizing and bodily sensing emotions, building strategies for coping with anger and impulsivity, and encouraging prosocial behaviours - such as sharing and helping.

J. Nelsen (2019) links the development of emotional literacy to higher resilience, focus, and academic success. Similarly, R. Engels-Critides (2020) defines emotional well-being as a composite of positive emotions and subjective satisfaction, and Shields et al. (2001) show that children with emotional stability adapt more readily in educational settings.

Central to the understanding of emotional intelligence is D. Golman (2000), who defines it through five main components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. He emphasizes the importance of parents and teachers as models for emotionally intelligent behaviour. M. Gittuni (2005) adds to the understanding through the concept of emotional identity, a link between the instinctive and rational aspects of personality, and arranges development into stages: emotion recognition, self-regulation, and empathy.

Salovey and Mayer (2004) also emphasise that despite the difficulty of directly measuring emotional quotient, it can be observed in an individual's behaviour. A practical focus in the development of these skills is suggested by L. Shapiro (1999), who recommends the use of games, role-play situations and stress management techniques.

L. Dessev (2023) considers emotions as short-term mental reactions related to needs and motives, and K. Izard (2017) emphasizes their gradual consolidation. Bahman & Maffini (2008) point out that children initially differentiate emotions into positive and negative, and over time achieve a more detailed understanding.

Paris et al. (2019) describe the early expression of emotions through face, voice and gestures as the basis for self-knowledge, while Gottman & Declaire (1998) consider the relationship between outward expression and inner experience. L. Peneva (2015) defines emotion regulation as the process of monitoring, evaluating, and adjusting emotional responses.

Saarni (2022) highlights that supportive responses from adults - such as reassurance and acknowledgement - significantly support emotional and social development, while non-supportive ones can have the opposite effect. Strongman (2003) and Hay (2019) propose a combined perspective between evolutionary theory and social constructionism, according to which emotions are both innate and socially formed.

Emotional-volitional and social development in preschool are seen as fundamental for personal growth, successful social adaptation and future educational realization. They are the result of a complex interaction between internal processes and external influences, and their development requires active and conscious support from adults - parents, teachers and specialists.

2.8. The role of family upbringing in emotional-volitional and social development

The family environment and upbringing are fundamental to a child's emotional, social and personal development, playing a leading role in the development of their identity, adaptability and emotional intelligence. R. Penev (2013) defines family upbringing as a process of interaction between parents and a child aimed at transmitting social norms, cultural orientations and patterns of behaviour, noting that upbringing in the family is purposeful, constant and with a specific organization based on the emotional bond and individual characteristics of family members. It is characterized by independence from the formal educational system, bilateral dependence between educator and educated, strong imitation and identification, intuitiveness, sometimes contradictory and difficult measurability of results.

The goal of family education according to Penev (2022) includes both personal development - achieving harmony between physical and mental health and raising a happy child - and social adaptation - learning useful social skills and building positive relationships. Love, respect for the child's personality and constructive dialogue are the foundations on which emotional-vocational skills are built.

J. Gottman and J. Deckler (1998) through the model of "emotional coaching," in which parents assist the child in becoming aware of and understanding his or her emotions by recognizing emotional cues, validating feelings, assisting in naming them, and guiding toward coping strategies. In this way, parents not only create a trusting relationship with the child but also contribute to the child's development as an emotionally intelligent, confident and socially adaptive person.

The family environment is a major factor in the development of a healthy, emotionally stable and socially competent personality, and its role extends beyond education - it creates the foundation for the child's future development and successful integration into society.

2.9. Pedagogical interaction for the mastery of emotional-volitional and social culture

Pedagogical interaction in preschool education is recognized as a fundamental factor for the harmonious development of the child, as it unites the social, cognitive, emotional-volitional and cultural spheres of his growth. According to Stoyanova (2019), the development of social skills occurs through personal experience and overcoming difficulties, thus forming confidence, adaptation and a stable behavioural orientation towards the world. A key principle in pedagogical interaction is respect for the child's individuality, combined with the encouragement of their activity, independence and creativity in play and social contexts.

Modern models build on democratic traditions, introducing flexible educational programmes adapted to children's needs and interests. According to Gyurov (2006), the pedagogical situation should be seen as a social environment in which the teacher and children jointly create conditions for learning and socialization. Rusinova et al. (1993) propose a model of pedagogical interaction based on the age characteristics and needs of the child, realized through positive communication, partnership, trust and emotional experiences.

An appropriate educational environment creates conditions for exploration, expression and affirmation of children's activity while developing communication and social skills through group interactions. Differentiated teaching methods combining cognitive, social and emotional activities help to integrate learning with play and creative activities, creating a rich developmental environment.

The methods are classified into four main categories, and are tailored to the processes of perception, trial and expression, ensuring effective communication and interaction between the child and the adult:

- 1. Information and cognitive:** observation, demonstration, story, talk, dramatization, word games.
- 2. Object-operative:** investigation, examination, construction, object modelling, exercise, object games.
- 3. Practical-testing:** construction, experimentation, didactic games, object-schematic and graphic modelling, staging and studies, exercise.
- 4. Game-transforming:** didactic games, mobile games, musical games, story-role games, constructive games.

Pedagogical interaction is also aimed at building a social and emotional-volitional culture. Social culture includes skills of cooperation, empathy, adaptation to social norms, conflict resolution and understanding of social roles and relationships. Emotional-volitional culture encompasses emotional empathy, expression of individuality, self-regulation, self-esteem and achievement motivation. The development of emotional awareness and self-regulation supports the development of sustainable social behaviour, the ability to cope with challenges and build positive relationships.

2.9.1. The role of the game.

Play is fundamental to a child's emotional-volitional and social development, as through it they express inner experiences, develop social skills and master new roles. According to V. Gyurova (2009), play behaviour and communication reflect the child's personal experience and understanding of the social environment, and play has a structured role with implicit and explicit rules that support cognitive and personal development. Play creates a 'personal play world' in which the child experiences, experiments and constructs identity. In agreement with L. Spiridonova (2023), play has sensorimotor, cognitive and emotional dimensions and contributes to the overall development of personality.

According to D. Elkonin, from 3 to 7 years, play is transformed from actions related to objects to more complex social interactions, in which the child learns roles and prosocial behaviour. L. Vygotsky emphasizes that through play children learn to cooperate, make sense of their behaviour and engage in collective problem solving, which promotes reflective thinking and self-regulation.

Play is a path to social adaptation, curiosity and intellectual growth, and the joy of it keeps the child interested and motivated to participate actively. The emotional background of play, if positive, supports social activity, and experiences such as fear and shame can disrupt it. This is why the organisation of play should create conditions for joyful and interesting expectations that stimulate spontaneity and cognitive growth. It helps the child to understand the world, himself and others by providing a safe space for experimentation, expression and inner growth.

2.9.2. Art techniques and fine art as forms and methods for exploring and expressing emotions

Colour and imagery are some of the most accessible and natural means of self-expression for children, through which they not only visualise the world around them, but also express their feelings, experiences and emotions (Mihailova-Nedkova, 2023). Artistic activity combines real impressions and fantasy, becoming a natural channel for emotional release and awareness. In this context, art therapy uses the creative process as a tool for children's emotional, cognitive and social development. According to S. Buckwalter (2010), it is particularly effective with shy, anxious or traumatised children, creating a safe environment for expression and adaptation.

Art therapy offers a wide range of techniques - drawing, modelling, music, dance, dramatization and colour therapy - that support self-awareness, self-regulation and social activity. It can be individual or group and encourages the sharing of feelings, the development of self-esteem, adaptability and resilience. Group work reduces tension, enhances interaction between children and supports socialisation, with each child's role in the group often reflecting their social position within the family or other relationships (Buckletter, 2010).

Zh. Zhechev (2020) highlights the role of art therapy as an innovative method to stimulate social activity through creative activities that reduce anxiety, improve communication and build positive behaviour patterns. Creative activities reflect meaningful social and cultural experiences and support the development of fine motor skills, imagination and the ability to interpret social situations.

Integrated in the pedagogical model, it unites personal and creative expression with group interaction and creates conditions for a deeper understanding and development of the child's personality.

2.9.3. The role of 'positive discipline' and the Pyramid Model in shaping effective strategies in the kindergarten setting

The role of the kindergarten and the "first teacher" is crucial for the child's emotional-volitional and social development, complementing the influence of the family and laying the foundations for personality formation in preschool. At the beginning of their journey, children are completely dependent on adults, and the teacher's task is not only to teach but also to educate, building emotional stability and social skills. This requires a high degree of professionalism, love for children and the ability to deal with different challenges. In their daily work, teachers face a range of difficulties, from applying an individual approach and managing problem behaviour to managing large and diverse groups in terms of age and needs. These challenges are often exacerbated by a lack of mentoring support, insufficient resources and time, leading to stress and the risk of professional burnout.

To address these challenges, it is recommended to integrate the principles of positive psychology, which offer evidence-based and practically applicable interventions aimed at building positive attitudes, self-regulation, mindfulness, and gratitude. Supporting the child through positive discipline as described by J. Nelsen (2019), based on the ideas of A. Adler and combines respect and firmness, avoiding punitive practices and instead promoting social skills, independence and emotional resilience. This model emphasizes the importance of mutual respect, understanding the needs behind behaviour, effective communication, a focus on solutions, and encouragement of effort.

Another well-established strategy is the pyramid model of M. Hemmeter et al. (2021), which proposes a multilayered approach to building social-emotional competence through four stages: effective pedagogical policies, positive and inclusive environments, targeted support, and individualized strategies. This model integrates all participants in the educational process - teachers, parents, principals and support teams - and focuses on prevention, inclusion and building a healthy adult-child relationship.

CHAPTER III

ORGANIZATION AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.1. Organisation of the study.

Stage One: Theoretical justification of the problem area. Timeframe.

Stage Two: Conduct a confirmatory experiment. Time period.

Third stage: development of a pedagogical model for stimulating the emotional-volitional development of preschool children. Time period.

Stage Four: Conduct a formative experiment. Time period.

3.2. Research Methodology.

Preliminary (analytical) stage:

Main task: Theoretical interpretation of the problem area. Study of literature sources related to the problem area. The object of attention were the formulations related to:

- The process of socialization and personality emergence in preschool, prosocial behaviour and communication.
- Concepts and theories related to age characteristics and factors of emotional-volitional and social development in preschool.
- Needs of preschool children.
- The role of "Nonviolent Communication" in the formation of emotional-volitional skills in children.
- The role of pedagogical interaction games, art techniques, fine arts, positive discipline and the Pyramid model for mastering emotional-volitional and social culture.

Preliminary (exploratory) stage of the study.

1. Study and analyse the normative regulation in Bulgaria and Europe related to the intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, moral and physical development and support of each child and each student in the context of acquiring the competencies necessary for successful personal and professional realization.
2. A comparative analysis of the thematic content of cognitive books for preschool children.
3. Development of criteria and indicators and development of a toolkit for research on:
 - The ability to recognize emotions.
 - Evaluation of behaviours encountered in children's daily lives.
 - Presence of prosocial behaviour in the group.

- Features in communication and interaction with peers.

Finding stage of the study.

The ascertainment phase took place at the beginning of the school year (October and November 2023). The observational study was conducted in the experimental and control groups, a total of 8 groups (2pcs group one; 2pcs group two; 2pcs group three; 2pcs group four).

Main tasks of the fact-finding study:

- Identify the current level and group characteristics of children's knowledge and skills related to emotions, communication and prosocial behaviour.
- exploring the degree of ability to recognize and name some basic emotions.
- exploring the ability to respond appropriately to conflict.
- presence of prosocial behaviour and peculiarities in communication.
- peculiarities in the manifestation of certain positive and negative emotions and the ability to express them appropriately.

Based on the objectives, criteria, indicators and methods were derived for the ascertainment experiment developed in the preliminary stage of the study.

1. Recognizes some basic emotions. The form is completed by the children themselves, with the teacher guiding the process, giving instructions and reading out the questions. Five types of basic emotions are depicted (sadness, fear, anger, joy, surprise), children must circle the image (one correct answer) that corresponds to the emotion read by the teacher. The study was conducted individually with each child in the control and experimental groups of all age groups.

2. Evaluates behaviours encountered in everyday life. The form is filled in by the children themselves, the teacher only giving guidance. 6 different behaviours are depicted. The children's task is to judge whether they are correct or not by circling 😊 if correct and 😞 if incorrect. The study was conducted individually with each child in the control and experimental groups of the third and fourth age groups.

3. Polar profile of emotions: child's conflict and aggressiveness in play and social interaction with peers. The scale is completed by the teacher individually for each child, based on subjective judgment from daily observation of children. The study was conducted with children of all age groups.

4. Questionnaire. The questionnaire is filled in by the teacher individually for each child, based on subjective judgment from daily observation of the children. The rating scale is three-tiered (descending - "completely true", "somewhat true", "false") and has questions in positive form and in negative form, which was reflected in the data processing. There are 25 items, and they are divided into 4 scales of manifestation to differentiate the analysis of the results.

Establishing the impact of the methodology developed in the pedagogical model on children.

Two groups are selected on a non-random basis - one applies the new methodology, the other retains the traditional methodology. Thus, one control and one experimental group of each age were selected (Table 1). All groups of children are from kindergarten №10 "Cheburashka", town of. Sofia, which is currently the base kindergarten of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Table 1. Participants in the control and experimental study.

Age group	Type	Number of children	Number of teachers
I A "hedgehog"	Experimental	27	2
I B "Schurche"	Control	27	2
II A "Sparrow"	Experimental	29	2
II B "Winnie"	Control	28	2
III A "Lioness"	Experimental	29	2
III B "Bee"	Control	28	2
IV A "Firefly"	Experimental	31	2
IV B "Kalinka"	Control	31	2
Total number:		230	16

Formative stage: theoretical and educational projections

The formative experiment was conducted at the end of the school year (April 2024), using the same instruments and indicators as in the ascertainment stage. The images on the "Recognizes Emotions" and "Acts" forms were replaced with similar ones to avoid repetition affecting the results.

Main task:

Systematizing themes in a modular context and age range in the pedagogical model "Little children with big emotions"

Formative stage: practical-technological projections.

Main task: Approval of the pedagogical model in the educational process in kindergarten. for the formation of social and emotional-volitional culture.

1. Building skills to recognize and name basic emotions, positive behaviour patterns.
2. Stimulating prosocial behaviour, communication skills and personal self-improvement.

Final (control) stage of the study.

Main task: Comparative analysis of the statistical data from the control and experimental groups.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE PRELIMINARY STAGE OF THE STUDY

4.1. Normative regulation in Bulgaria and Europe related to the emotional and social development of children

Preschool age is characterized by a transition from dependence to independence and by opportunities for active social, emotional, and cognitive development. The family lays the foundations for personality and emotional-volitional development, and the kindergarten complements this process through a structured educational, nurturing and socialising environment. There, social skills (such as cooperation and assertiveness) are formed, and emotional regulation and self-awareness are developed.

The pedagogical organization is based on normative documents such as the Law on Preschool and School Education (2015) and the Regulation on Preschool Education (2016), which define goals aimed at the overall development of the personality, including emotional and social. Emphasis is placed on lifelong learning, the acquisition of key competencies and the development of an individual style of behaviour through play, independence and creative expression.

There is a link between social-emotional learning and the goals set out in the Standard for Civic, Health, Environmental and Intercultural Education (Regulation 13), which aims to develop autonomous individuals capable of making independent decisions, setting goals and interacting constructively with others. The change in educational focus to a competency-based approach is based on the European Framework of Key Competences and in Bulgaria includes a ninth - critical thinking. Competences bring together knowledge, skills and attitudes that are applied effectively in different situations and are subdivided into behavioural ("soft") and professional ("hard").

Socio-emotional education (SEE) is recognised in Europe as an important factor in mental health and academic success, but in most countries, it is not a distinct subject. SEL has been found to improve school climate, reduce aggression and support personal development. According to the UNICEF report (Georgieva, 2023), socio-emotional learning develops skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and resilience that are transferable and applicable in different life and work contexts. In the face of global challenges, social-emotional learning is emerging as a key strategy for supporting child well-being and addressing risk behaviours.

4.2 Analysis of educational content related to themes of emotional-volitional development in preschool

The object of this study is educational content for preschool children. The object of the study is the quantitative characteristics of the subject matter in preschool curriculum systems in the context of preschool emotional-volitional development. The main method is the comparative analysis of thematics according to predefined criteria in terms of the degrees of emotional-volitional development of children in the kindergarten

context. In this comparative analysis, several series of cognitive books approved by the Ministry of Education for the school year 2021/2022 were considered (Table 2).

Published by	Name of the series of cognitive books
1 Bit and Technique Ltd.	"The Golden Key"
2 "Arts" Ltd.	"I'm in kindergarten"
3 KLET Bulgaria Ltd.	"My Fairy Tale Paths"
4 "Prosveta AzBuki" Ltd.	"Hand in hand"
5 "Prosveta Plus" Ltd.	"ABV Games"
6 "Prosveta - Sofia" AD	"Wonderful World"

As a result, criteria were specified for analysis regarding the quantitative parameters of the educational content in the cognitive books in the context of stimulating emotional-volitional development in preschoolers. In the present study the words "emotion", "mood" and "feelings" are taken with the meaning of synonyms.

1. Presence of themes related to underlying emotions. This criterion only considers the number of topics that include information about one or more emotions.

2. This criterion combines three sub-criteria to analyse the educational material as objectively as possible. A coherence between the three sub-criteria is observed, as they are most often found together within a single topic.

- Presence of images expressing different emotions in themes not directly related to the themes of types of emotions. This sub-criterion includes images of faces expressing a specific emotion. For example: 'joy - smiling face', 'sadness - sad face'.

- Setting a task, a game, a creative task related to defining and expressing an emotion. This includes tasks to determine the type of emotion or determine the "correct" or "incorrect" social behaviour associated with an emotional response.

- Mention of one or more emotions in the context of a topic described in the teacher's guidelines. This sub-criterion covers the methodological guidelines described for the relevant topic in the adjacent Teacher's Book. The criterion covers topics that address the types of emotions and the appropriate response to them. For example: revealing an emotion or evaluating the actions of characters in a literary work.

The methodological guidelines that the teacher receives from the authors' prescriptions are important for the way the educational topic is implemented. Reflected in the themes are the types of emotions, their recognition and the formation of prosocial behaviour. The individual characteristics of the teacher, with his/her specific pedagogical methods, communication style, the peculiarities of the children in the group, determine the course of the pedagogical situation. The criteria are applied in the cognitive books of the selected

publishers for all age groups in the kindergarten: group I (3-4y), group II (4-5y), group III - first preparatory (5-6y), group IV - second preparatory (6-7y).

Analysis of results

- In the series of cognitive booklets of the publishing house "Bit and Technique" Ltd. with the common name "The Golden Key", the use of the word "mood", which is perceived as a synonym of the word "emotion", is noticeable. There is a relatively even quantitative distribution of the number of topics covered, mainly in the 'Bulgarian Language and Literature', 'Music' and 'Environment'.

- The specific feature of the cognitive books "I am in the kindergarten" of the publishing house "Arts" Ltd. in the distribution of topics is expressed in the decision to cover one or more topics. There are two topics with the presence of the second criterion in the NAs for Music and Art and no topics with the presence of the first criterion.

- In the cognitive books "My fairy-tale paths" of the publishing house "KLET Bulgaria" Ltd. is found only one topic with the presence of the second criterion in the "Music" for the I group (3-4 years).

- In the cognitive booklets "Hand in Hand" by "Prosveta I Buki" Ltd., there is one topic with the presence of the first criterion in the "Bulgarian Language and Literature" for Group III (5-6 years) and no topic with the presence of the second criterion.

- A specific feature of the structure of topics in the "ABB Games" cognitive books is their binary nature. Each topic covers two OH. The words 'emotion' and 'mood' are treated as synonyms. A total of eight themes with the presence of the first criterion were found in the "Bulgarian Language and Literature" and "Environment of the World" NAs, mainly distributed in Group II (4-5y) and Group III (5-6y). One topic with a second criterion is found in the Art and Environment strands in Group II (4-5 years).

- In the cognitive books "Wonderful World" of ed. „Prosveta - Sofia" AD, three themes with the presence of the first criterion are found in the "Environment" and "Art". One topic with a second criterion is found in the Art curriculum in Group IV (6-7 years).

Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the comparative analysis:

- The themes in which the first and second criteria are found are distributed unevenly across the four age groups. For some age groups they are completely missing.

- The subjects in which the first and second criteria are found do not cover all educational areas, but mainly those in Bulgarian Language and Literature, Environment and Fine Arts.

- There is a paucity of topics related to both criteria.

In conclusion, as a global generalization, the finding that the topics related to the emotional-volitional development of children are in insufficient quantity and there is a need to develop educational content and technology to stimulate social and emotional learning in preschool, both in structural and content.

CHAPTER V

THEORETICAL-EXPERIMENTAL MODEL FOR STIMULATING EMOTIONAL-VOLITIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PRESCHOOL - FORMATIVE STAGE OF THE RESEARCH

5.1. Conceptual parameters, methods and forms of pedagogical interaction, embedded in the pedagogical model "Little children with big emotions"

The pedagogical model is structured around a coherent and hierarchical system of principles aimed at developing the emotional-volitional skills of preschool children. It combines a flexible organisation of educational content and an individual approach, where activities are not strictly fixed in certain modules but can be adapted according to the needs of the group and the specific situation. The principles are applied in the natural course of everyday life - in play, routines, transitions or conflicts - to establish patterns of behaviour and emotional habits.

The teacher has a central role as an emotionally literate adult who supports children's personal development with empathy, resilience and understanding, without labels and with the attitude that mistakes are part of learning.

Principle 1. No bad emotions

Inspired by theories of emotional intelligence (Golman, Gituny, Shapiro), this principle asserts that all emotions are permissible and significant. By recognizing bodily sensations associated with emotions, children develop emotional awareness through naming and understanding emotions. The teacher creates an accepting environment where feelings are validated without being judged. Module 1: "Recognize and Name."

Principle 2. All emotions are allowed, but not every behaviour

Based on Jane Nelson's approach to positive discipline, the principle addresses the difference between emotions and actions. Through clear boundaries and support, children develop self-regulation and inner responsibility. Module 2: "Self-Management and Prosocial Behaviour."

Principle 3. Behind every emotion is a need

Inspired by M. Rosenberg and E. Maslow, this principle promotes the understanding that emotions signal unmet needs. The teacher helps children recognize these needs through empathic dialogue and guiding questions. Module 3: Empathy and Tolerance.

Principle 4. With a kind word a friend win

Focuses on building a culture of respectful communication and positive relationships. The teacher supports children in developing assertiveness, empathy and peaceful conflict resolution skills. Module 4: "Communication and Friendship".

Principle 5. Every child is special

Emphasizes the uniqueness and personal value of each child. The development of virtues, self-esteem and personal responsibility is encouraged without comparison to others. The teacher encourages the expression of children's strengths and character. Module 5: Virtues.

Principle 6. The kindergarten - a second home

Inspired by the Pyramid model, this principle brings together four levels of support: an effective pedagogical strategy; a positive and inclusive environment - the basis for trust and belonging; targeted support - for children with difficulties; and an individual approach - for children with persistent challenges.

The model relies on a caring, safe and nurturing educational environment that places the child at the centre of the pedagogical process, combining emotional, social and personal growth. It creates consistency, efficiency and sustainability in the work of teachers, supporting children's holistic development in a safe, adaptive and stimulating environment.

Purpose of the model

Stimulating children's emotional-volitional and social development in the context of supporting personal growth, learning pro-social behaviour and communication skills.

Expected results

1. Optimizing the educational content in kindergarten in the context of themes to stimulate emotional-volitional and social skills.
2. Formation of knowledge, skills and attitudes of preschool children about basic emotions, prosocial behaviour, empathy and virtues adapted to the age.
3. Acquisition of competences by pedagogical specialists and students, future teachers, for the implementation of themes and technology for the stimulation of emotional-volitional and social development.

Methods, techniques and forms of pedagogical interaction.

Methods:

1. **Informative-cognitive:** observation, demonstration, narration, discussion, dramatization, evaluation, word games, etc.
2. **Object-operative:** exploration, construction, object games, object modelling, exercise, observation, etc.
3. **Practical-testing:** construction, experimentation, didactic games, object-schematic modelling, graphic modelling, staging, studies, etc.
4. **Game-converting:** role-playing, theatrical, constructive, didactic, musical, mobile, etc.

Techniques:

Art techniques: representational, object association, story therapy, music and dance, narrative.

Forms of pedagogical interaction:

-individual and group; -situational and casual.

5.2. Thematic content in Modules.

The thematic distribution by age group is presented in Table 3.

	1 group (theme)	Group 2 (theme)	Group 3 (theme)	Group 4 (theme)
Module 1 - Recognize and name emotions	Set #1 <i>"Winnie and the Emotions"</i>	Sit. No. 2 <i>"How do I feel today?"</i>	S. No. 3 <i>"The Confused Monster"</i>	S. №4 <i>"My friends the emotions"</i>
2 Module - Self-management and pro-social behaviour	Cit. No. 5 <i>"Svetophar"</i>	Set No. 6 <i>"On the playground"</i>	Sect. No. 7 <i>"Right and wrong"</i>	Sit. №8 <i>"My deeds"</i>
Module 3 - Empathy and Tolerance	-	-	Cit. No. 9 <i>"Different but the same"</i>	Sit. №10 <i>"I help"</i>
4 Module - Communication and friendship	-	-	Sit. №11 <i>"The tree of friendship"</i>	S. No. 12 <i>"The Group of Friends"</i>
Module 5 - Virtues	-	-	-	Sit. №13 <i>"The White and the Black Wolf"</i>
Module 6 - Environmental Management	1. Interactive dashboard to encourage positive behaviour. 2. Emotion board.	1. Interactive dashboard to encourage positive behaviour. 2. Emotion board.	1. The rules board in the group. 2. Emotion board. 3. "Rest corner". 4. Sign of concentration.	1. The rules board in the group. 2. Emotion board. 3. "Rest corner". 4. Sign of concentration.
Total number of situations	2	2	4	5

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS - ASCERTAINMENT AND CONTROL STAGE OF THE STUDY

6.1. Quasi-experiment.

Quasi-experiment presentation and analysis.

Data structuring and processing was done using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics software programs.

Initially, the internal consistency reliability of the scales in the study was tested using the **Cronbach's alpha** statistic (Table 4). All the items showed very good reliability of the scales in the *ascertainment* and *formative stages* except for "Questionnaire" whose value falls in the medium level.

Indicator	Recognizes emotions	Evaluation of deeds	Scala of emotions	Questionnaire
<i>Finding experiment</i>	0.892	0.745	0.850	0.597
<i>Forming experiment</i>	0.913	0.721	0.835	0.529

The quasi-experimental study aims to establish the effectiveness of the applied pedagogical impact by comparing an experimental and a control group. Two stages of measurement were carried out within one school year - initial (ascertainment) and final (formative), examining and comparing the values of key indicators of children's emotional-volitional development.

At the beginning, the comparability of the two groups is checked by baseline analysis. After the intervention period, a second measurement is carried out to establish the effect of impact by analysing the increment in scores in each group as well as the differences between groups. IBM SPSS software was used for statistical processing, and the reliability of differences was tested using Stewart's t-criterion for dependent and independent samples.

The results show that when the level of the guaranteed probability reached is $\geq 95\%$, the increment is considered statistically significant, which means that the improvements are not random but are due to the applied pedagogical model. The comparison between the experimental and control groups confirms the higher effectiveness of the intervention in the experimental group and validates the positive impact of the model on children's emotional-volitional development.

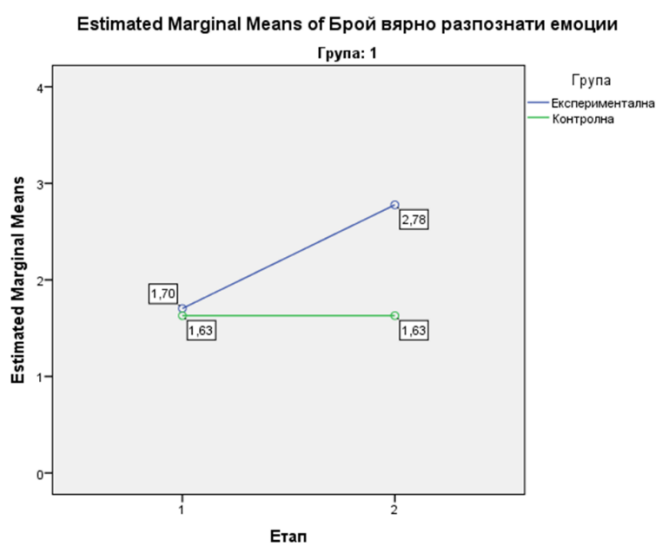
6.1.1. Analysis of results: First age group

Comparison between experimental I A group "Hedgehog" and control I B group "Cricket".

Indicator 1. Recognizes some basic emotions.

Table 5: Comparison between the experimental I A group "Hedgehog" and the control I B group "Cricket", on Indicator 1.

Брой вярно разпознати емоции	Етап				Промяна	t	p
	Констатиращ		Контролен				
Група	Средна	Стандартно отклонение	Средна	Стандартно отклонение			
Експериментална	1.70	1.27	2.78	1.55	1.07	5.21	0.000
Контролна	1.63	1.45	1.63	1.45	0.00	0.00	1.000
Разлика	0.07		1.15		1.07		
t	0.20		2.81		5.21		
p	0.842		0.007		0.000		



Graphic 1. Graphical representation of the results of Indicator 1 between the experimental I A group "Hedgehog" and the control I B group "Cricket".

The *Recognizes Some Basic Emotions* scale reflects the number of emotions correctly recognized between the experimental I A group "Hedgehog" and the control I B group "Cricket". According to the data in Table 5. of the input (ascertainment experiment), there is no statistically significant difference (0.07) between the two groups, which provides equal baseline conditions for comparison. There is a statistically significant change between the two stages in the experimental group, while there is a stagnation in the control group, which predetermines the statistically significant net difference between the two groups as well (1.07). There was also a high rate of change in the experimental group which outpaced the control group. The improvement in the values of the experimental group is due to the activities conducted in Module 1. "Recognize and name emotions" of the applied pedagogical model "Young children with big emotions".

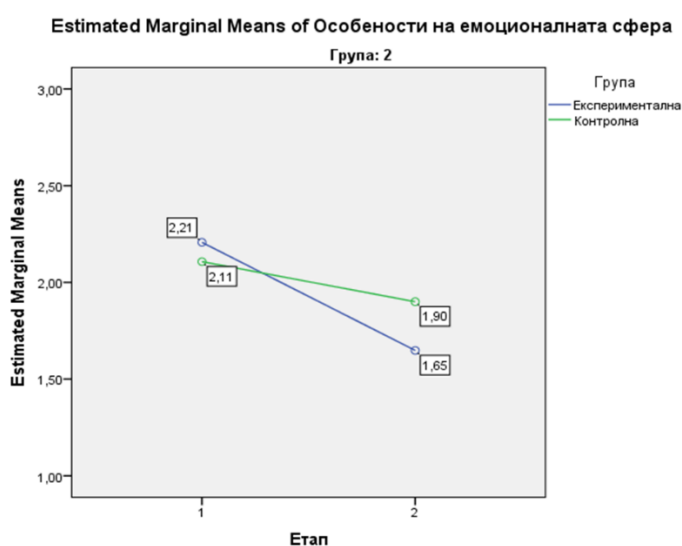
6.1.2. Analysis of results: Second age group

Comparison between experimental II A "Sparrow" and control II B "Bear".

Indicator 4.3. Features of the emotional sphere.

Table 6. Comparison of results between experimental II A "Sparrow" and control II B "Bear" on Indicator 4.3.

Особености на емоционалната сфера	Етап							
	Констатиращ				Контролен			
Група	Средна	Стандартно отклонение	Средна	Стандартно отклонение	Промяна	t	p	
Експериментална	2.21	0.34	1.65	0.31	-0.56	-13.50	0.000	
Контролна	2.11	0.40	1.90	0.38	-0.21	-5.70	0.000	
Разлика	0.10		-0.25		-0.35			
t	1.02		-2.72		-6.37			
p	0.313		0.009		0.000			



Graph 2. Graphical representation of the results of Indicator 4.3. between experimental II A "Sparrow" and control II B "Bear"

The *Traits of Emotional Domain* scale has a preponderance of positive questions and a downward gradation direction, which was reflected in the data processing, hence lower values indicate better scores. On this indicator it can be seen in Table 6 that at the input (ascertainment experiment) there was no statistically significant difference (0.10) between the two groups, with the experimental group having more negative values. There were statistically significant differences between the two groups separately, and a statistically significant difference (net effect) between the two groups (-0.35). There was also a higher rate of change in the experimental group, which outperformed the control group. The improvement in the values of the experimental group is due to the activities carried out in Module 2. "Self-management and prosocial behaviour" of the applied pedagogical model "Young children with big emotions".

6.1.3. Analysis of results: Third age group

Comparison between experimental III A "Lion" and control III B "Bee".

Indicator 2. Assesses behaviours encountered in everyday life.

Table 7. Comparison of results between experimental III A "Lion" and control III B "Bee" on Indicator 2.

Брой вярно разпознати постъпки	Етап				Промяна	t	p
	Констатиращ		Контролен				
Група	Средна	Стандартно отклонение	Средна	Стандартно отклонение			
Експериментална	4.38	2.24	5.69	0.76	1.31	3.77	0.001
Контролна	4.79	0.99	4.93	0.98	0.14	2.12	0.043
Разлика	-0.41		0.76		1.17		
t	-0.89		3.27		3.30		
p	0.379		0.002		0.003		

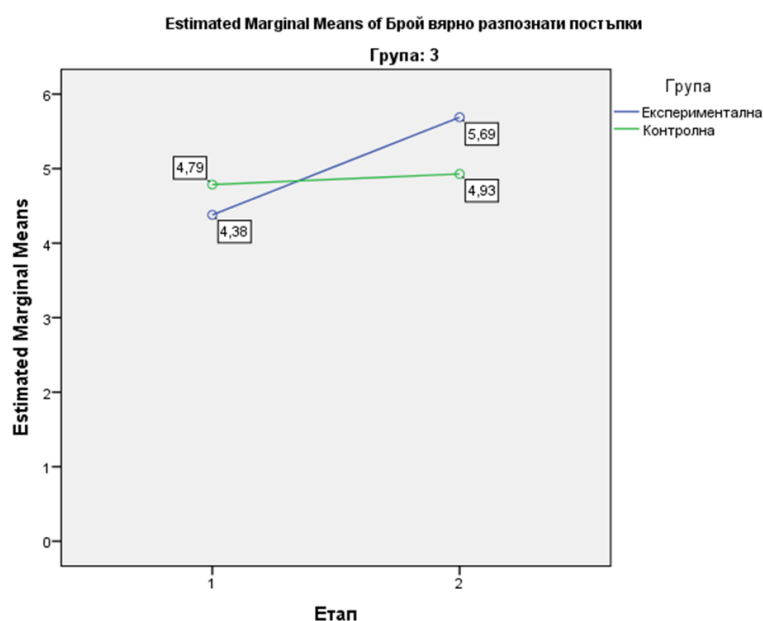


Figure 3. Graphical representation of the results of Indicator 2 between experimental III A "Lion" and control III B "Bee".

The scale "Evaluates actions encountered in everyday life" gives information about the number of correct answers given by the children. At entry (ascertainment experiment), there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups (-0.41), giving an equal start, as seen in Table 7. Between the two stages, there is a statistically significant difference in the two groups, and a statistically significant net difference between the two groups, with a bias towards the experimental group (1.17). A higher rate of change in the experimental group is also observed. The improvement in the values of the experimental group is due to the activities carried out in Module 3. "Empathy and Tolerance" of the applied pedagogical model "Young children with big emotions".

6.1.4. Analysis of results: Fourth age group

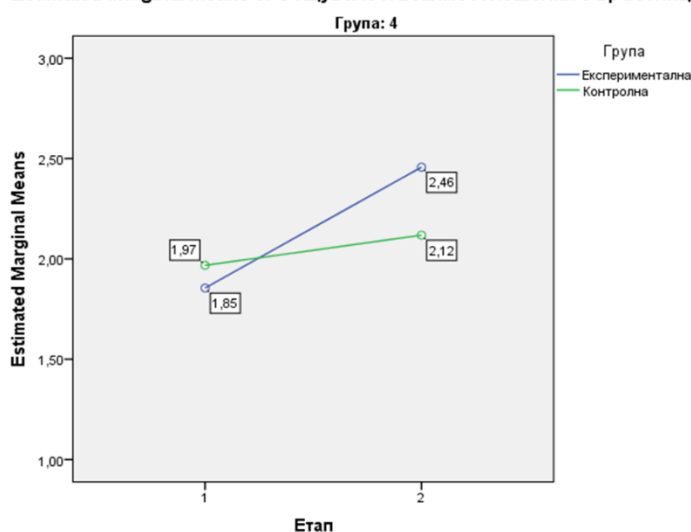
Comparison between experimental IV A "Firefly" and control IV B "Ladybug".

Indicator 4.4. Communication and interaction with peers.

Table 8. Comparison of results between experimental IV A "Firefly" and control IV B "Ladybug" on Indicator 4.4.

Общуване и взаимоотношения с връстници	Етап						t	p
	Констатиращ		Контролен		Промяна			
	Средна	Стандартно отклонение	Средна	Стандартно отклонение				
Експериментална	1.85	0.36	2.46	0.29	0.60	12.69	0.000	
Контролна	1.97	0.35	2.12	0.33	0.15	5.54	0.000	
Разлика	-0.11		0.34		0.45			
t	-1.25		4.29		8.26			
p	0.217		0.000		0.000			

Estimated Marginal Means of *Общуване и взаимоотношения с връстниците*



Graph 4. Graphical representation of the results of Indicator 4.4 between experimental IV A "Firefly" and control IV B "Ladybug".

The *Communication and Peer Relations* Scale is characterized by predominantly negative questioning and a downward scale. Consequently, higher values indicate better outcomes. At entry (ascertainment experiment), the two groups start from the same level, with no statistically significant differences in values (-0.11), which is observed in Table 8. Between the two stages, there is a statistically significant difference in the two groups, with the experimental group showing higher values, indicating a statistically significant net difference between the two groups (0.45). A higher rate of change was also observed in the experimental group. The improvement in the values of the experimental group is due to the activities conducted in Module 4. "Communication and friendship" of the applied pedagogical model "Little children with big emotions".

Based on the **pooled analysis** of the data from all age groups - I A "Hedgehog", II A "Sparrow", III A "Lion" and IV A "Firefly" - the following summary can be made:

In each of the experimental groups, statistically significant differences were observed between the values from the ascertainment and the formation experiments on all the examined indicators, which is a clear indicator of positive changes occurring as a result of the application of the Young Children with Big Emotions model.

Additionally, when compared with the control groups, the experimental groups showed higher scores on all indicators, with some cases (such as "Prosocial behaviour", "Communication and interaction with peers" or "Polar profile of emotions") showing a less significant difference, but a higher rate of increase in the values in favour of the experimental group.

The general trend indicates that significant changes occurred at a faster rate in the experimental groups, confirming the effectiveness of the implemented program in the context of emotional-volitional development.

CONCLUSION: The "Little Children with Big Emotions" model has had a positive and demonstrable impact on the emotional-volitional development of children from all age groups, contributing to the improvement of the skills of recognition, expression and regulation of emotions, development of prosocial behaviour, empathy and emotional resilience. This confirms its applicability and effectiveness in preschool settings.

CONCLUSION: *The results of the study confirm the main hypothesis that the application of a purposeful pedagogical model in kindergarten conditions leads to a significant stimulation of the emotional-volitional development of preschool children. The found positive dynamics in the skills of recognition and regulation of emotions, self-control and prosocial behaviour in the experimental groups is an indicator of the effectiveness of the developed model. Thus, the study contributes to both the theoretical understanding of emotional-volitional development and its practical application in preschool education.*

6.2 Correlation analysis

Correlational analysis was applied in the study to establish the presence and nature of interrelationships between the main components of emotional-volitional development in children - emotion recognition and naming, self-control and prosocial behaviour. The analysis not only measures the effect of the pedagogical model on each of these variables separately but also reveals the internal logical dependencies between them.

The results show that there are moderate correlations between the studied indicators (coefficients between 0.30 and 0.50), which means that better mastery of one aspect - for example, emotion recognition - corresponds to higher levels of self-control or prosocial behaviour. These relationships are mostly positive, indicating that the development of one element of emotional competence supports the others.

The calculations were performed using the IBM SPSS statistical software, and the interpretation of the results was made according to the specificity of the scales used. The correlation analysis confirms the internal consistency of the studied variables and further substantiates the effectiveness of the applied pedagogical model, highlighting their interdependence in the process of children's development.

Specificity in the interpretation of rocks:

Two of the scales used in the study, Emotional Traits and Prosocial Behaviour, have a decreasing gradation, with lower scores reflecting better behaviour (e.g. less emotional instability or more prosocial behaviour). This requires a careful approach to interpreting the results of correlation analysis to avoid reverse interpretation.

If only one of the scales being compared has an inverse (decreasing) gradation, the sign of the coefficient is reversed to reflect the actual direction of the relationship. If both scales are in the same direction (e.g., both descending), the sign does not change.

Summary of results:

1. In some groups (e.g., I A "Hedgehog" and II B "Bear"), no statistically significant correlations were found.
2. In other groups (e.g. I B "Cricket" - Table 44; II A "Sparrow" - Table 45; III A "Lion" - Table 46; III B "Bee" - Table 47; IV A "Firefly" - Table 48; IV B "Ladybug" - Table 49) correlations between the following variables were observed:
 - *"Prosocial behaviour"* and *"Features of the emotional sphere"* - the correlation remains negative, as both scales are downgraded.
 - *"Prosocial Behaviour"* and *"Polar Profile of Emotions"* - the sign of the correlation changes to reflect a positive relationship between the scales.
 - *"Poor self-control and overreacting in frustration"* and *"Recognize some underlying emotions"* - a negative correlation that logically reflects that with better emotional recognition, less impulsive behaviour is observed.
 - *"Prosocial behaviour"* and *"Communication and interaction with peers"* - the sign of the correlation changes, indicating an upward relationship.
 - *"Evaluates behaviours encountered in everyday life"* and *"Communication and interaction with peers"* - positive correlation found that does not require a sign change.

The correlational analysis confirms the effectiveness of the "Young Children with Big Emotions" pedagogical model by revealing meaningful and logically grounded relationships between the key components of emotional-volitional development. The data show that progress in areas such as emotion recognition and naming, self-regulation, and prosocial behaviour is closely related to improvement in social interaction with peers.

The moderate but significant correlations found reinforce the validity of the model by showing that building emotional awareness leads to better self-control, lower impulsivity, and enhanced social skills. Even in cases where a sign adjustment was necessary to match the direction of the scales, the logical consistency between the variables remained unchanged and confirmed the underlying hypothesis.

The results not only validate the theoretical basis of the model but also highlight its practical applicability in supporting the overall emotional and social development of preschool children.

Conclusion:

The correlation analysis confirms that significant relationships exist between the underlying indicators of emotional-volitional development. This supports the contention that the pedagogical model does not affect the development of emotional, volitional and social skills in preschool children in isolation but holistically.

CONCLUSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Emotional-volitional development in preschool is crucial for the development of personal autonomy, social adaptation, and prosocial behaviour in children. It integrates cognitive, emotional and behavioural components and is formed in the context of active relationships with the family and the educational environment.

At this stage, the child feels an increased need for emotional experiences, recognition and belonging. A pedagogical environment that uses play, creativity and communication supports the development of emotional awareness, self-regulation and resilience. Adults - teachers and parents - play a crucial role by modelling social skills such as cooperation, sharing and empathy through their own behaviour.

The rapid neurobiological changes during preschool create a foundation for mastering not only cognitive, but also emotional-regulatory and social skills. The child's intrinsic motivation - the drive for emotional contact, activity and affirmation - drives him to seek interaction, express himself and participate in the social life of the group.

The theoretical grounding of the problem area, the ascertaining and formative projections of the study led us to formulate the following CONCLUSIONS:

Conclusions based on the theoretical analysis:

1. In preschool age, there is an intensive development of emotional regulation skills, which requires targeted pedagogical support through activities for recognizing, naming and expressing emotions.
2. Emotions have an adaptive function - they support social behaviour, regulate interpersonal interaction, and participate in the development of moral attitudes in children.
3. Volitional development is a process of gradual mastery of self-regulation, resilience, and purposeful behaviour, the foundation of which is the accumulation of stable habits, self-knowledge, and the child's intrinsic motivation.
4. The analysis of the normative framework in Bulgaria reveals the need for enrichment of educational content and technologies aimed at the formation of emotional-role and social culture as an integral part of the overall pre-school education.

Findings from the ascertainment stage of the study:

1. There were significant age differences between the first and fourth age groups in the ability to recognize and name basic emotions, with within-group variability influenced by environment and individual experience.
2. Children demonstrate limited strategies for dealing with conflict - impulsive reactions and avoidance dominate, with dialogue and compromise seeking poorly developed.

3. Prosocial behaviour occurs erratically and mainly with the help of an adult. Independent expressions of empathy, sharing and helping are seen more often in older age groups.
4. Most children recognize emotions visually, but a limited emotional vocabulary prevents adequate expression and self-regulation.
5. Positive emotions are expressed more spontaneously and freely by children, while negative emotions are often expressed through non-verbal cues or behavioural responses such as crying, refusal to participate or avoidance. This highlights the need for targeted pedagogical work aimed at developing skills for awareness and adequate verbal expression of negative emotional states.
6. The toolkit used proved its feasibility by providing a reliable basis for differentiated assessment of the indicators studied.
7. Correlations between scales reflecting emotional awareness, self-control, and prosocial behaviour confirm that the individual components of the model function in an integrated manner. This result supports the theoretical basis of the hypothesis and underscores the need for targeted pedagogical influence.

Findings from the formative stage of the study:

1. Children from the experimental groups showed significant positive dynamics in the development of emotional-volitional skills - better recognition and naming of emotions, self-control, empathy and participation in social interaction.
2. The experimental groups scored significantly higher than the control groups on both emotion understanding and self-regulation and on prosocial behaviours.
3. There is a transfer of the newly acquired skills to real social situations - children apply the learned behavioural patterns spontaneously and independently (recognize emotions in themselves and others, seek help when needed and more often offer solutions to situations).
4. Reuse of the same toolkit with updated visual content confirmed its reliability and applicability for measuring development dynamics.
5. The "Little Children with Big Emotions" model has proven to be effective, leading to the development of emotional awareness, self-regulation and prosocial behaviour in children.

Summary and pedagogical recommendations:

The educational process in kindergarten should be directed towards the formation of positive emotions and attitudes such as hope, meaning, awareness, gratitude and striving for meaningful participation. The emphasis should not be on sanctioning or correcting undesirable behaviour, but on reinforcing positive attitudes, self-regulation skills, respect for others, and cooperation. Play - in its role-playing, artistic, and communicative forms - is an essential tool for this development. It satisfies multiple needs of the child and plays a central role

in his development. Through play, children not only experience and express emotions, but also actively develop patterns of behaviour that they transfer to real social situations. In this way, the foundation of emotional-volitional maturity is built - one of the key achievements of pre-school, which prepares the child for personal autonomy and social responsibility.

SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Theoretical contributions:

- An in-depth theoretical exploration of contemporary assumptions, concepts and views on emotional, volitional and social development in preschoolers is provided, as well as a terminological grounding of key concepts such as emotional intelligence, emotional literacy, emotional competence, volitional regulation and prosocial behaviour.
- An author's analysis of the strategic, methodological and normative framework in Bulgaria and Europe related to the overall development of the child - intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, moral and physical - with a focus on the formation of emotional-volitional and social culture in the preschool period.
- A critical analysis of the content of cognitive books used in pre-school education is carried out, highlighting the lack of systematic presence of topics related to emotional-volitional development. This leads to an argued need for the development of structured content aimed at emotional literacy and social skills.

2. Contributions to the practical-applied plan:

- An author's pedagogical model "Little Children with Big Emotions" is developed to stimulate the emotional-volitional development in preschool age, based on play, artistic and communicative strategies, according to the age characteristics and needs of children.
- Original thematic modules and pedagogical situations have been created, aimed at stimulating emotional-volitional development by building awareness, volitional regulation, empathy, intrinsic motivation and prosocial behaviour.
- Testing the model in a real educational environment (kindergarten) proves its effectiveness through quantitative and qualitative analysis of input and output results, reporting positive dynamics in the emotional-volitional development of children.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS OF THE PHD STUDENT

1. Andonova, M., **Educational content to stimulate emotional-volitional development in preschool: a comparative analysis.**

Education and Arts: Traditions and Perspectives, 2022, pp:287-297, ISSN (online):2738-8999

2. Andonova, M., **The family and the kindergarten - main factors for the emotional and social development of the preschool child.**

Qualifications and good pedagogical practices,

In: PENEV, R., PENEVA, L., GEORGIEVA, G. (eds.).

[Electronic resource]: proceedings of pedagogical specialists and doctoral students, [round table, October 2021], pp. 50-54. Sofia. Sofia. Ohridski, ISBN 978-854-92368-4-2.

3. Andonova, M., **Specificity of emotional and social development in preschool age.**

Qualifications and good pedagogical practices.

In: PENEV, R., PENEVA, L., GEORGIEVA, G. (eds.).

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[Electronic resource]: proceedings of pedagogical specialists and doctoral students, [round table, October 2021], pp. 35-40. Sofia. Kl. Ohridski, ISBN 978-854-92368-4-2.