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Research of interrelation of empathy level and gender preferences among preschool age children

In the article the authors deal with the interrelation of empathy level and gender preferences. They have made the analysis of social emotions level and types of gender preferences received during an experimental research of preschool age children. The features of formation of a gender and empathy level have been defined. The comparative gender analysis of manifestation of social emotions, sympathy and gladness for others among senior preschool age children has been carried out.

Key words: empathy, gender, gender preferences, preschool children.

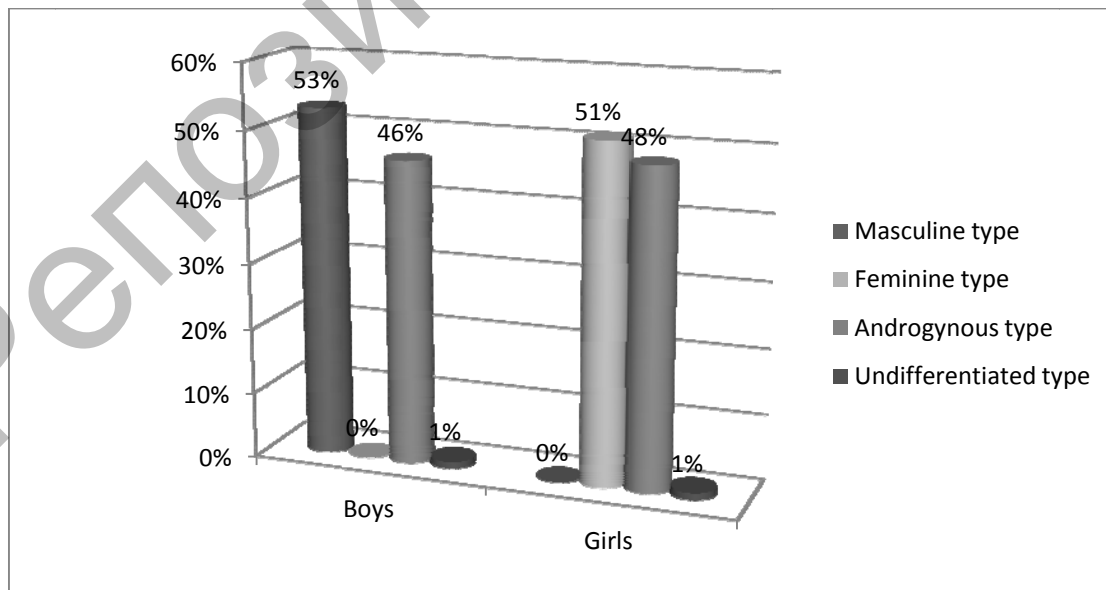
Nowadays the problem of influence of emotional development of a preschool child on gender aspects of socialization of a personality is not studied very well. Insufficient study of this problem determined our choice of a research subject.

We supposed initially that the boys with masculine type of gender preferences possessed the low level of empathy, the girls with feminine type of gender preferences possessed the high level of empathy, boys with feminine type of gender preferences would possess the high level of empathy, girls with masculine type of gender preferences would possess the low level of empathy.

The research was conducted on the basis of secondary school No.86 of Karaganda. The examinees were 60 pupils of zero (reception) classes (30 girls and 30 boys) at the age of 5–6 years old.

For the research of gender preferences we used the projective technique «Teremok» and half-standardized interview of V.E.Kagan aimed at studying gender affirmations among preschool age children. To identify the level of empathy we applied the technique aimed at studying social emotions.

Gender identity is a self-representation of a person as of a man or a woman (rarely as of both, or none of them). This concept is closely connected with the concept of a gender role — external manifestation of a personality which reflect gender identity. Gender identity is a broader concept, the result of combination of internal, external factors and factors of the environment; the gender role is shown in society by means of such observed phenomena as behavior and appearance [1, 2].

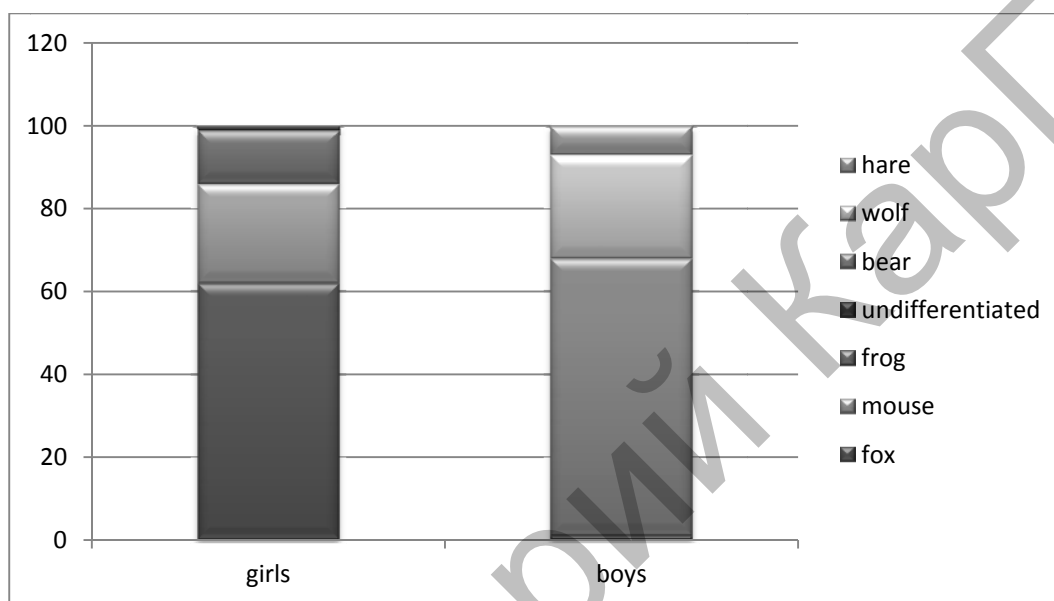


Picture 1. Gender preferences of preschool age children

As we can see on Picture 1, according to the technique «Teremok» the girls have the feminine type of gender preferences, and the boys — masculine. During the experiment we identified children with androgynous type — 46 % among boys and 48 % among girls; undifferentiated type — 1 % among boys, 1 % among girls.

According to N.L.Belopolskaya, formation of children’s identity depends both on intellectual development and personal features, which can be influenced by a social situation of development of a child, his or her experience and other essential factors of his or her life.

The most attractive image for girls is the image of a fox (clever, beautiful) — 62 %, less attractive is the image of a mouse (silent, fast) — 24 %, the third place takes the image of a frog — 13 % (hardworking), and 1 % — children with undifferentiated type (I want to be the house, because it is cozy).



Picture 2. Diagram of role choice according to the technique «Teremok»

The most attractive for boys is the image of a bear — 67 %, because it is strong and kind; the second place on degree of preferences takes the image of a wolf (25 %); 7 % of boys have chosen a hare (fast), 1 % — the boys with undifferentiated gender type.

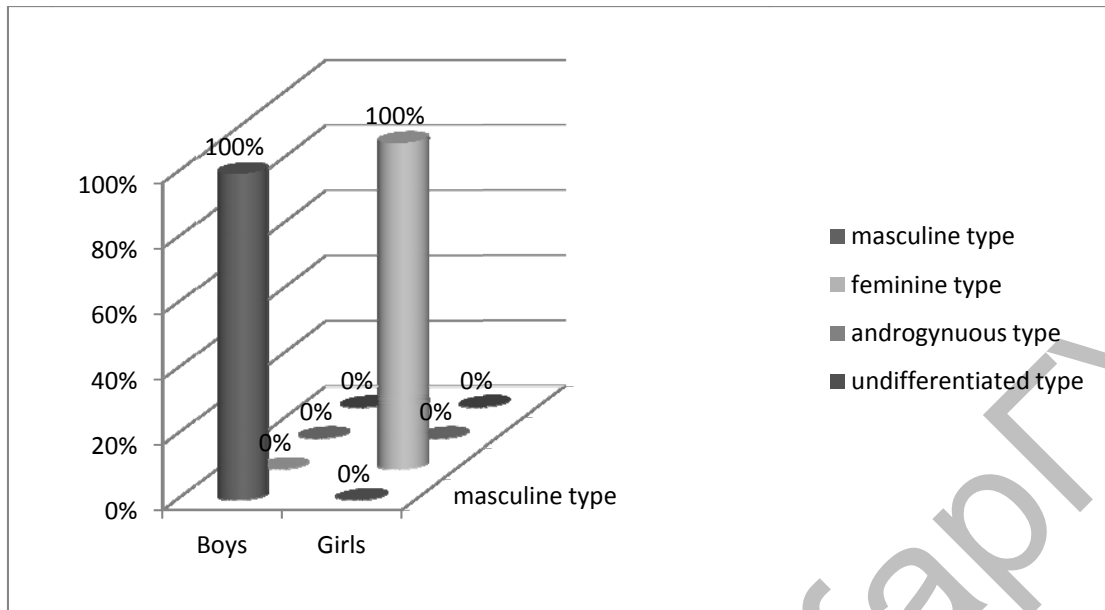
Thus, the gender roles characterize a preschool child by criterion of compliance to the stereotype of his masculine or feminine behavior and find their reflection in the corresponding representations of a preschool child, in valuable orientations of boys and girls (picture 2).

According to the results of the experiment, it is possible to assume that valuable orientations of parents, their social expectations, a manner of treatment of their children, the system of punishments and encouragement affect process of gender socialization of a child.

The results of the interview show that there is some understanding and the importance of the fact that the boys are the real men who assume difficult duties, thus, demonstrating the best male qualities, such as force, endurance, ability to overcome difficulties, while the girls care of creation of beauty, learn to be patient and gentle [2].

Examination was conducted individually. Each child was interviewed was after establishment of contact. The results are presented on picture 3.

Apparently from Picture 3, the girls possess the feminine type of gender preferences, and the boys possess the masculine one. Children with androgynous and undifferentiated types of gender preferences in this selection of examinees were not revealed.

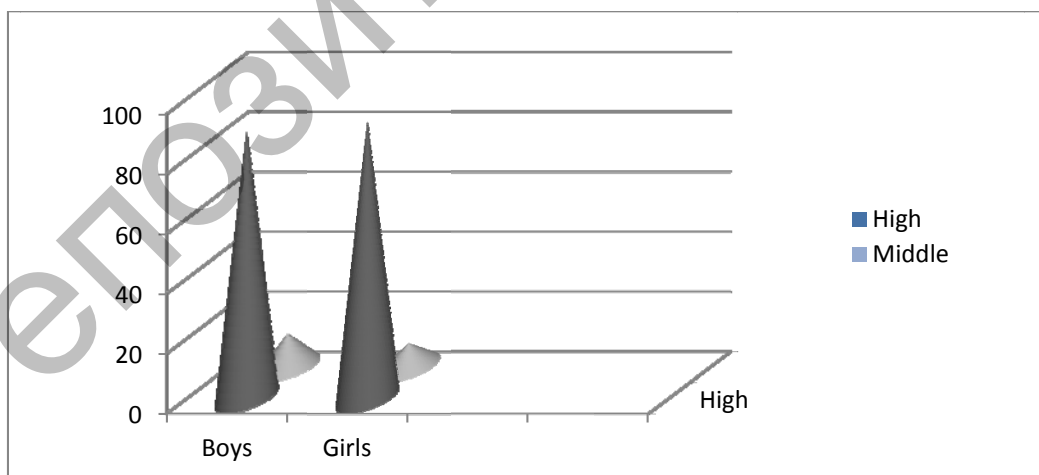


Picture 3. Gender preferences among preschool age children according to the technique of V.E.Kagan

The examinees accurately define the gender roles of preferences in clothes, external features, they distinguish the clothes for boys and girls. The results of this technique showed that at this stage the process of gender and age identification among girls is expressed more strongly than among boys.

Besides, we consider it necessary to note that the female role is presented by the children more differentially, while the male role appears more «indistinct». We explain it that the children constantly observe the performance of a family role by their mothers: upbringing of children (birth of children, care of them); economic function (cooking, cleaning, etc.). In domestic environment children have an opportunity to observe mother’s activity and to take part in education of younger brothers and sisters, in economic affairs of a family.

The male social role, unlike a female one, is not so obvious to children and is less available to imitation. Children of preschool age have no opportunity to observe performance by fathers of professional and public functions, and in daily life of a modern family the function of fathers are presented not so brightly, they do not always reflect the traditional male qualities attractive to boys (courage, force) [3; 168].



Picture 4. The chart of percentage determination of social emotions of preschool age children

The girls’ understanding of feeling of femininity, as well as boys’ understanding of masculinity is present, but it is insufficiently conscious. There is not enough attention to this aspect, and this knowledge is not applied in everyday life.

To study the level of development of empathy at the senior preschool age, we used a technique «Studying of social emotions». The results we presented on picture 4.

As a result of using this technique, the examinees with high and middle levels of development of empathy were revealed, while the children with low level of empathy were not revealed.

This technique allowed to reveal types and tendencies of empathic reactions of children to trouble situations. The questions and situations reflect the most significant sphere of relationship for children of the senior preschool age: with animals, adults and peers. If a preschool child identified himself or herself only with the child, thus he or she empathized only him or her [4].

Thus, we can see that at the senior preschool age on the verbal level children are ready to show empathy: the greatest number of affirmative answers was given in the following situations: assistance to others, infringement of personal interests of a child, manifestation of happiness, assistance to a peer child in a difficult situation. Whereas the greatest number of children's answers with negative emotional orientation were given in the following situations: manifestation of sympathy and assistance to a companion who broke a rule of behavior or instructions of the adult. 15 % of children showed empathy, 35 % of children showed sympathy but didn't help, 50 % of children rendered assistance.

The analysis of experimental results revealed that the true empathy assumes not only high emotional sensitivity, but also a high level of understanding. On the basis of empathy and sympathy there is an impulse to help a person, which induces the child to concrete actions.

Thus, the boys with masculine type possess the high level of empathy, the girls with feminine type possess the high level of empathy. Girls with masculine type possess the low level of empathy. Boys with the feminine level of empathy possess the low level of empathy. Boys and girls with androgynous type and undifferentiated type possess the middle level of empathy.

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Мектеп жасына дейінгі балалардың гендерлік талғамы мен эмпатия деңгейінің өзара байланысын зерттеу

Мақалада гендерлік талғам мен эмпатия деңгейінің өзара байланысы қарастырылған. Мектеп жасына дейінгі балалардың гендерлік талғам типтері мен әлеуметтік эмпатия деңгейін эксперименталды зерттеу барысында алынған мәліметтерге талдау жасалған. Гендер мен эмпатия деңгейінің қалыптасу ерекшеліктері анықталған. Жоғары мектеп жасындағы балалардың аяушылық, тілектес болу сияқты әлеуметтік эмоция көріністері гендерлік тұрғыдан салыстырмалы түрде талданған.

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Исследование взаимосвязи уровня эмпатии и гендерных предпочтений у детей дошкольного возраста

В статье рассматривается взаимосвязь уровня эмпатии и гендерных предпочтений. Сделан анализ полученных в ходе экспериментального исследования уровня социальных эмоций и типов гендерных предпочтений у детей дошкольного возраста. Определены особенности формирования гендера и уровня эмпатии. Проведен сравнительный гендерный анализ проявления социальных эмоций, сочувствия, сорадования у детей старшего дошкольного возраста.

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