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THE ROLE OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD IN REDUCING CHILDREN’S AGGRESSION AND ENHANCING SOCIALIZATION IN MODERN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Abstract: This article provides a scientific and theoretical exploration of the potential of the international Maria Montessori pedagogical system in addressing a critical issue in modern early childhood education: mitigating internal child aggression and facilitating social adaptation. Through the lenses of social pedagogy and humanistic psychology, the study analyzes the heterogeneous (multi-age) structure of the Montessori environment, the core principles of child freedom and independence, and the concept of cosmic education. By contrasting the pedagogical mechanisms of this methodology with the fundamental theories of prominent scholars such as C. Rogers, L. Vygotsky, and D. Sobel, the paper scientifically substantiates the regularities of correcting destructive behavior. It demonstrates how the development of independent decision-making, collective collaboration, and ecological responsibility in children serves as an effective behavioral intervention.

Keywords: early childhood education, socialization, child aggression, heterogeneous environment, zone of proximal development, cosmic education, education of a free individual, ecophilia.

In the new era marked by rapid globalization and the exponential growth of digital technologies, early childhood education systems face the critical task of nurturing individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also possess deep social skills, a sense of responsibility, and the ability to live in harmony with their environment. Reflecting this imperative, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Early Childhood Education and Care” and the State Requirements for the Development of Early Childhood and Preschool Children designate “Social-Emotional Development” as a priority domain. This framework explicitly mandates the cultivation of teamwork, communication culture, tolerance, and a humanistic attitude toward nature in children.

However, contemporary early childhood education methodologies often enforce socialization through rigid disciplinary templates, which can inadvertently trigger internal child aggression or a sense of dependency. From this perspective, a socio-pedagogical re-examination of the Maria Montessori pedagogical system-renowned within the international educational space for its humanistic nature-becomes highly relevant. Consequently, the primary objective of this article is to scientifically substantiate the pedagogical and psychological mechanisms within the Montessori system that reduce child aggression, foster self-awareness within a community, and shape a socio-ecological worldview.

One of the core principles of Montessori pedagogy is granting the child complete freedom in choosing their type of activity, workspace, and partner. Crucially, each piece of material in the classroom exists in only a single copy. If a child desires a material that is currently occupied, they learn to wait, regulate their impulses, or negotiate with their peer. This approach deeply resonates with the person-centered theory advanced by Carl Rogers, the founder of humanistic psychology.

According to Rogers, the healthy development and socialization of an individual rely heavily on internal freedom and self-trust: ”If a child is provided with a safe and free environment to test their capabilities, the skill of independent decision-making (self-actualization) and a sense of social responsibility will naturally emerge without adult intervention” [1, p. 112]. As Maria Montessori emphasized in her works, freedom does not lead the child to misbehavior; rather, it awakens a sense of responsibility toward the community for their actions [2, p. 45]. Because dependency and coercion are absent in this environment, children’s internal psychological tension decreases, resulting in a sharp decline in aggression toward peers.

A defining characteristic of Montessori groups is their heterogeneous structure, where children aged 3 to 6 operate together within the same space. Rather than being artificial, this environment functions as a natural social ecosystem, akin to a family or society. In social pedagogy, this model serves as a flawless practical demonstration of the “Zone of Proximal Development” (ZPD) theory developed by Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky established that a child's development is not limited solely to their independent capabilities, but that they ascend to new social and cognitive stages through social collaboration and communication with more experienced peers [3, p. 204]. In Montessori classrooms, older children (aged 5–6) act as mentors to the younger ones. In this process, older children develop leadership, empathy, and caregiving skills by teaching their knowledge to others. Meanwhile, younger children easily assimilate rules of social behavior through peer-to-peer communication without adult pressure. Consequently, the group dynamics are dominated by mutual assistance and cooperation rather than destructive competition and aggression.

Within the Montessori methodology, nature plays an active role both outside and inside the classroom. Children tend to plants, feed animals, and observe natural phenomena. As M. Montessori wrote: “To isolate the child from nature means to dry up their soul. Only when the child interacts with and cares for living nature do true humanity and morality take shape” [2, p. 71].

David Sobel, a prominent specialist in contemporary environmental education, put forward the theory of “ecophilia” (a child's innate emotional connection and love for nature) in his research on child psychology and environmental relations [4, p. 88]. According to Sobel, if a direct and emotional bond with nature is not cultivated from an early age, children develop apathy toward the environment or “ecophobia” (the fear of nature) in the future. In Montessori practice, small daily tasks, such as watering plants or maintaining pet hygiene, shape an ecological culture not through abstract slogans, but through meaningful labor and collective responsibility.

The concept of “Cosmic Education” developed by Maria Montessori is an integrated pedagogical system that teaches the child the holistic nature of the universe and the interconnectedness of the cosmos, nature, and humanity. As children explore elements of geography, astronomy, biology, and history, they comprehend that every living and non-living entity in the world has its unique place and purpose [5, p. 15]. From the perspective of social pedagogy, cosmic education fosters global socialization. The child perceives themselves not as an isolated, egocentric individual, but as an integral part of the vast universe and the human family. This realization serves as a powerful pedagogical tool to mitigate egocentrism, cultivate humanism, instill tolerance toward other cultures, and foster respect for universal human values.

In conclusion, mitigating aggression in preschool children and ensuring their successful socialization demands the design of a humanistic pedagogical environment that allows for free choice and experiential learning, rather than the forced memorization of social rules. Scientific and theoretical analysis demonstrates that the Maria Montessori system, through its heterogeneous structure and the principle of freedom, possesses high pedagogical potential to eliminate internal psychological tension, enhance independent decision-making, and build empathy.

Within this framework, cosmic education and ecological activities activate the child's innate sense of interconnectedness with the world (ecophilia) and prevent social apathy. Integrating these

core principles of Montessori pedagogy into preschool education organizations in the Republic of Uzbekistan will yield high efficiency in achieving the objectives of the 'Social-Emotional Development" domain of the State Requirements, ultimately nurturing responsible, tolerant, and socially adaptable individuals for society.

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