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PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PRESCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

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Abstract

Preschool age is considered one of the most important stages of human development because fundamental cognitive, emotional, social, and communicative abilities are formed during this period. Understanding psychological characteristics of preschool children is essential for developing effective educational approaches and creating supportive learning environments. The present study aims to analyze the psychological peculiarities of preschool children and identify the factors influencing their cognitive and socio-emotional development. The study employed theoretical methods, including analysis, synthesis, and comparison of contemporary psychological and pedagogical literature. The findings indicate that preschool children possess unique developmental features, including high cognitive curiosity, emotional sensitivity, rapid language acquisition, imaginative thinking, and increased social interaction. Furthermore, play-based and digital educational activities significantly contribute to cognitive development and social adaptation. The results emphasize the importance of implementing child-centered educational strategies that consider developmental psychology principles in preschool education.

Keywords: preschool age, child development, developmental psychology, cognitive development, emotional development, social interaction, language acquisition, preschool education, child-centered learning, psychological characteristics.

Introduction

Early childhood represents a critical period in human development during which the foundations of personality, cognition, communication, and social behavior are established. Preschool age generally covers the period from three to six years and is characterized by intensive physical, intellectual, and emotional growth. Developmental psychologists consider this stage highly sensitive because children's experiences during these years significantly influence their future learning abilities and personality formation.

The rapid development of modern educational technologies and increasing multicultural interactions have generated new challenges and opportunities in preschool education. Educational institutions increasingly recognize the importance of understanding children's psychological characteristics in order to provide appropriate pedagogical support and ensure comprehensive development. Effective educational interventions should correspond to children's developmental needs and individual psychological features.

Numerous scholars, including Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, and Jerome Bruner, emphasized the significance of preschool years in cognitive and social development. Their theories demonstrate that children actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment and social experiences. Consequently, the study of preschool psychology remains highly relevant for educators, psychologists, and policymakers.

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The purpose of this article is to investigate the psychological characteristics of preschool age children and determine their implications for educational practice.

Materials and Methods

The present study employed qualitative theoretical research methods. Scientific literature on developmental psychology, preschool education, and child development was systematically reviewed and analyzed.

The research methods included:

1. Analysis of scientific and pedagogical literature;
2. Comparative analysis of classical and contemporary psychological theories;
3. Synthesis of empirical findings reported in previous studies;
4. Generalization and interpretation of theoretical concepts.

The theoretical framework of the study was based on developmental theories proposed by Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson, and contemporary studies concerning preschool education and developmental psychology.

Results

The analysis revealed several essential psychological characteristics of preschool children.

Cognitive Development

Preschool children demonstrate intensive cognitive growth. Their thinking gradually progresses from simple sensory experiences to elementary logical operations. According to Piaget, preschool children are in the preoperational stage of cognitive development, characterized by symbolic thinking and active imagination.

Children at this age exhibit strong curiosity and constantly ask questions about their surroundings. Their ability to memorize information develops rapidly, particularly when learning occurs through visual and interactive experiences. Attention span remains relatively short; therefore, educational activities should be dynamic and engaging.

Emotional Development

Emotional development is one of the central characteristics of preschool age. Children experience emotions intensely and express their feelings openly. Emotional regulation skills are still developing, which explains frequent changes in mood and behavior.

Preschool children strongly depend on positive emotional support from adults. Warm relationships with parents and teachers significantly influence their self-esteem and emotional security. Positive emotional experiences contribute to the development of empathy, confidence, and social competence.

Social Development

Social interaction expands considerably during preschool years. Children begin to understand social norms and behavioral expectations. Communication with peers becomes increasingly important and contributes to the formation of cooperation skills.

Children gradually learn to share, negotiate, resolve conflicts, and understand the feelings of others. They begin developing social identities and become aware of similarities and differences among individuals.

Language Development

Language acquisition progresses rapidly during preschool years. Vocabulary increases substantially, and children develop increasingly complex grammatical structures. Communication abilities improve through interactions with adults and peers.

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Language development significantly influences cognitive and social growth because language serves as a primary instrument for thinking, learning, and social participation.

Development of Imagination and Creativity

Preschool children possess exceptionally active imagination and creativity. Pretend play becomes a dominant activity through which children explore social roles, emotions, and relationships. Creative activities stimulate problem-solving abilities and contribute to emotional expression.

Play enables children to experiment with different situations and develop cognitive flexibility. Consequently, play-based learning approaches are considered particularly effective in preschool education.

Discussion

The findings confirm that preschool age is characterized by interconnected cognitive, emotional, social, and linguistic development. These developmental domains cannot be considered independently because progress in one area influences development in others.

The study supports Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive growth. Communication with adults and peers creates opportunities for acquiring new knowledge and developing higher psychological functions.

The results also correspond with Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. Preschool children actively seek opportunities for initiative, creativity, and exploration. Educational environments that encourage independence and experimentation positively influence children's self-confidence and motivation.

Furthermore, contemporary educational research indicates that digital educational resources, when appropriately designed and supervised, may effectively support preschool development. Interactive multimedia tools can stimulate curiosity, increase motivation, and facilitate language learning. However, digital technologies should complement rather than replace direct human interaction and play experiences.

The findings suggest that educational practices should be developmentally appropriate and should integrate emotional support, active learning, social interaction, and creative activities.

Conclusion

Preschool age represents a unique developmental period characterized by rapid psychological changes and the establishment of fundamental cognitive and socio-emotional competencies. Preschool children demonstrate high curiosity, emotional responsiveness, rapid language acquisition, active imagination, and increasing social awareness.

Understanding these psychological characteristics is essential for organizing effective educational processes and creating environments that support holistic child development. Educational strategies for preschool children should prioritize play-based learning, emotional security, communication, creativity, and social interaction.

The study emphasizes the necessity of applying child-centered pedagogical approaches that consider developmental psychology principles and individual characteristics of preschool children. Future research may focus on the influence of digital educational resources and multicultural educational environments on the psychological development of preschool children.

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