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## Cultivating values in early childhood: case study in rural and urban contexts

### ВОСПИТАНИЕ ЦЕННОСТНОГО ОТНОШЕНИЯ ДЕТЕЙ К СОЦИОКУЛЬТУРНОЙ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ

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#### Abstract


This article investigates the value attitudes of older preschool children towards socio-cultural reality in urban and rural settings in Russia. Diagnostic studies were conducted with 85 children, utilizing interviews and visual materials to assess their understanding of their social environment, attitudes towards material and spiritual goods, and comprehension of moral actions. Findings indicate that the emotional-value criterion is more developed in children than the operational-behavioral one, with no significant differences observed between urban and rural children. However, parental assistance varied based on location. Children demonstrated an understanding of ecological, aesthetic, and moral values. To further develop the operational-behavioral criterion, projects focusing on historical, local, social, and ethnocultural aspects were implemented, yielding positive results in children's cognitive and social development. The study highlights the importance of early childhood


#### Аннотация

В статье исследуется ценностное отношение детей старшего дошкольного возраста к социокультурной реальности в городских и сельских условиях России. Проведено диагностическое исследование 85 детей с использованием интервью и наглядных материалов для оценки понимания ими социального окружения, отношения к материальным и духовным благам, осмысления нравственных поступков. Результаты показали, что эмоционально-ценностный критерий развит у детей в большей степени, чем операционально-поведенческий, при этом значимых различий между городскими и сельскими детьми не наблюдалось. Дети продемонстрировали понимание экологических, эстетических и нравственных ценностей, однако желание оказать физическую помощь родителям более ярко выражена в сельской местности. Для дальнейшего развития операционально-

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education in fostering value attitudes towards socio-cultural reality and suggests further research directions in this field.

**Keywords:** Child rearing, emotional development, moral development, mental development, socialization, socio-cultural situation.

поведенческого критерия были реализованы проекты, посвященные историческим, местным, социальным и этнокультурным аспектам, что дало положительные результаты в когнитивном и социальном развитии детей. Исследование подчеркивает важность дошкольного образования в формировании ценностного отношения к социокультурной реальности и предлагает дальнейшие направления исследований в этой области.

**Ключевые слова:** воспитание детей, эмоциональное развитие, познавательное развитие, нравственное воспитание, социализация, социокультурная действительность.

## Introduction

The issues of a person's value attitude to the surrounding reality in the modern socio-cultural situation are of particular importance. We find confirmation of this in the provisions of the federal laws such as "The Law on Education in the Russian Federation" (Federal Law No. 273-FZ, 2012), "The Federal educational program for preschool education" (Decree No. 1028, 2022) and by the analysis of educational practice. The main provisions of mentioned documents determine the relevance of domestic traditions of education with a focus on the value bases of human life, education of a highly moral person who shares Russian traditional spiritual values, possesses relevant knowledge and skills, and able to realize his potential in modern society.

The purpose of the study is determination of the features of the value attitude of older preschool children to the socio-cultural reality in urban and rural society.

We first review the relevant literature on values, exploring different perspectives. Then we will describe the research methodology, which is an interview method with preschoolers in city and urban contexts. Then we will present the results of our study by analyzing the children's answers and presenting the forms of working with them on the issue of values formation. Finally, we will discuss the implications of our findings for educational practice and suggest directions for future research.

## Theoretical framework

Value is a special social phenomenon of positive significance in the system of social and historical activity of people. Values are related to real human activity. Values express the social and personal form of being of the phenomena of reality (Ilyichev et al, 1989). Value is a term used in various sciences to indicate the human, social and cultural significance of certain objects and phenomena. Value, characterizing personal meaning, is also defined as a special form of reflection of objects and phenomena in people's minds. But we must remember that values include only positively significant events and phenomena related to social progress. The concept of "value" initially has a positive meaning: value is what we value, what we desire, what we strive for and what we want to achieve. The interiorized values which become personal internal beliefs govern life choices or behavioural evaluation.

The value acquires the motivating force of the motive of activity when a person can clearly formulate the goals of his activity, see its humanistic meaning. And this determines the need to provide opportunities and create conditions in the educational process for testing models of behaviour of the emerging personality on the basis of accepted norms, formation and development of personal qualities. In this regard education can be considered as a socially organized process of forming human values, forming an attitude to sociocultural reality based on accepted values. Attitude, as a special kind of relationship, manifests itself in three main forms: rational (attitude is formed in the course of cognition of things, phenomena, events, etc.), emotional (feelings, emotions), behavioral, in which relationships exist and manifest themselves (Golovanov, 2020).

An attitude towards values is always subjective, an individual formulates his attitude towards the world around him/her, shapes the way of interacting with the world and the degree of preservation of what is important to the individual. Personal experience is acquired through interaction with socio-cultural reality. It is personal experience that underlies value relations, considered as the integral education of a personality. Value relations are stable selective relations with objects of the surrounding world, regulated by objective and subjective values of social significance (Afanasyev, 2010). The development of cultural and value orientations, the building of a hierarchy of values in the child, his spiritual sphere, begins in the pre-school stage. (Stepanova et al., 2022). The categories of "value" and "value attitude" in preschool pedagogy have been the subject of study since the late 80s of the last century.

In the second half of the 20th century, there is a deep reassessment of values. The traditional society is being replaced by a digital civilization, the foundations of civilization are being shaken by an environmental crisis. All this leads to a reassessment of ideas about the criteria of progress, about the means of solving national and interstate conflicts, etc. In our country, at the moment, there is a reassessment of values in all areas, starting from the state structure to the field of education.

When we talk about values, we touch upon the problem of value relations. An integral part of the value relationship to society, which includes a set of relationships to a person, life, society, and Homeland. Based on the highlighted forms of relationship existence, the value attitude of children is formed on the basis of the values of cognition, experience and transformation (Arsenova, 2012).

The problem of value relations is studied in preschool education from different perspectives:

- From the point of view of the development of social value orientation of children, taking into account the interaction of psychological, ethical and philosophical components (Bezrukova, 1999);
- From the perspective of designing a subjective space that provides a child with pedagogical support in the process of self-development and self-knowledge in the aspect of the health (Vodneva, 2003);
- In the process of the child's internalization of universal values corresponding to national cultural traditions (Love for people, Family, Kindness, Work, Peace, Freedom, Conscience, Truth) (Kosmacheva, 2009);
- In the context of the child's socialization at different levels, when the child acquires social experience (Marshitskaya, 2018).

Significant material on the study of children's value attitude to the world around them is presented in the collective monograph "Problems of preschool childhood in the multicultural space of changing Russia. The results of an interregional study" (Gogoberidze, 2010), which highlights the peculiarities of the manifestation of value relations among preschoolers in different areas all over Russian Federation including big cities, industrial centres and towns. The group of researchers pointed an increased interest of preschoolers in material values but a low level of spiritual choices (Stepanova et al, 2022). The analysis of existing research on the problem under consideration shows that the value attitude of older preschool children to sociocultural reality is formed in the process of their socialization, within the framework of cognitive, moral education, and the development of socially significant activity of a preschooler. The child's value attitude to society is formed as a result of learning (accumulation of a system of knowledge about the surrounding world, about the properties of cognizable objects), acquisition (mastering cultural skills, ways of activity in accordance with accepted normative guidelines) and appropriation (introduction into the personal structure of values, building their own hierarchy of values) of the value bases of human life. A value attitude is formed in the process of cognition of historical and cultural values (first of all, one's native land), oneself, one's family, patterns, norms of behavior; emotional feeling, experience, admiration, surprise of the observed, cognizable, accomplished; actions and deeds actually performed. Since for pre-school children the process of cognition begins with the closest, understandable and comprehensible understanding, the study of the process of formation of the value attitude of older pre-school children to the socio-cultural reality is connected with objects and phenomena "close" to the child, with what directly surrounds him - the microsociety, meaningfully highlighting such areas as the history of the small homeland, traditions, morality of relations. The process of forming attitudes to reality takes place under the influence of many factors: both purposeful and spontaneous influences, the experience of which expands the child's personal experience of interacting with the world; whether or not his opinion confirms the correctness of actions performed in specific situations of interaction and communication. And as a result, they allow you to combine and vary your behaviour according to the context of the situation. (Zakharova, 2022).

The effectiveness of the educational process is determined by the formation of a value attitude towards people, the surrounding reality, and building one's behavior in accordance with accepted norms and patterns of behavior based on traditional values. According to a number of researchers, parents and the immediate environment have a greater influence on children in small towns than in megacities, which helps to preserve traditions, but the older generation does not always have a high or sufficient level of education and horizons to be a stimulus for the moral and cognitive growth of children, to understand the demands of modern childhood (Neyasova et al., 2023).

## Methodology

A diagnostic study of children's attitudes was carried out to determine their values towards sociocultural reality. The study involved 85 preschoolers in urban (43) and rural areas (42) in Ulyanovsk region, Russian Federation. The research is a part of our larger study of contemporary childhood and the training for teachers who work with preschoolers (Silakova & Zakharova, 2018; Zakharova et al, 2021). Besides in different aspects of the research topic include 250 children, 20 kindergartens and more than 40 adults – parents and teachers.

We supposed that the socio-cultural situation of children's development in rural and urban societies differs in a number of indicators, and, consequently, the conditions and mechanisms of education and development of value attitude are different.

The number of agents of socialization are less in the cities. The most obvious problem is that communication of the older generation with grandchildren mostly is episodic. But in rural areas, the direct transfer of socio-cultural experience from its holders takes place purposefully in the process of daily communication, when the assimilation and acceptance of value bases takes place.

The next point is that the specifics of the sociocultural situation of growing up in rural areas are characterized not only by closer interaction with nature, but also by practical activities for its preservation. Children are presented with direct examples of nature conservation behaviour and value attitudes. Natural objects (forests, ravines, water bodies), located in the vicinity, organically enter into the natural life of children and with skillful use have a beneficial effect on the emotional development of the child, the formation of his or her mental attitude, the ability to live with nature. Direct personal, practically acquired knowledge (in the process of caring for pets, plants), the child's impressions related to the environment and agricultural work are the most valuable.

The way an urban child learns about the world and the natural environment is most often mediated by television, literature and the Internet, which negatively affects the development of his spirituality and the ecologization of consciousness.

The value of labor, as an important component of human activity, is learned by the child gradually, starting with the fulfillment of assignments and joint participation with elders in labor, accessible and age-appropriate activities. The early involvement of children in work processes that are significant, first of all, for their family, allows them to comprehend the value of labor and its results, educates the value attitude of children to the person of labor, develops activity, independence and responsibility. In rural areas, children spend a significant amount of time outdoors, its motor activity has a beneficial effect on the physical health of children. An early study conducted showed that children prefer outdoor and sport like games. The results show a positive correlation between parents who lead an active lifestyle and their children who prefer active leisure and attend sports clubs (Zakharova & Zakharova, 2018).

Considering the peculiarities of the influence of socio-cultural conditions in urban and rural society, we note the closer connection of the child with folk traditions, elements of folk culture, which are often present in everyday situations.

Considering these trends, we have developed a conversation with children, the answers to which will allow us or not to state the manifestation of the highlighted specifics in the development of children's value attitude, to determine priority orientations, the value bases of children's activities. An interview was developed with 3 thematic blocks of questions, taking into account the children's ability to demonstrate their knowledge of their immediate social environment, the nature of their attitudes towards material and spiritual goods, and their understanding of the nature of moral actions. The interview was conducted

individually, using visual material of old and modern buildings of our city Ulyanovsk (earlier Simbirsk). It was assessed on the independence of the answer, the emotionality of the answer, the understanding of the significance of the action and the explanation of the answer.

## Results

The first set of questions was related to the knowledge of the history of the hometown / village, the attitude towards it, the desire to make it better, more beautiful.

The analysis of the responses showed that 100% of respondents know the modern name of their city, village, 11% of children could not remember the historical name of the city and explain why it was called that way. At the same time, two children from urban preschool organizations expressed their admiration for the old look of the city (according to photos): "I like the old name more because it is magical, mysterious." More than half of the children living in rural areas could not give a positive answer to the question about the historical name of their village. This is largely due to the fact that the rural settlements retained their former name, and the children were unable to navigate the essence of the proposed issue.

All children love their city, village, motivating by the fact that it is "beautiful", "it's fun to walk here", "my home is here". I especially like the fact that it is "big, reliable, my kindergarten is located here." The answers of the children allow us to state the formation of children's identity when they relate themselves to their place of residence, realizing themselves as a member of society. One of the answers ("my city is kind, good") characterizes the child's attitude to the city as a "living" being that also needs care.

In explaining their love for their small homeland, rural children (33%) motivated their positive attitude by the presence of those features that we highlighted earlier and that are characteristic of socialization in rural areas - close interaction with bearers of traditional values - the older generation and proximity to nature: "grandma lives here", "there is a river and a forest".

The children, answering the question about where they like to go, listed parks, places of entertainment, kindergarten. The responses of children attending a rural kindergarten were related to the opportunity to spend time at nature, among other things: "I like to fish with friends", "swim in the river" (26%) children indicated the opportunity to play on the playground with their friends, 53% of children like to go to the store with their parents. We suppose visiting a store is like an outstanding event because in the city we have big beautiful supermarkets where every child wants to buy something. And there are 1-2 small counter-type shops in the villages, which usually do not go as often as in the city, and not only for shopping, but also for communication.

Among the options for the preservation of the city, suggestions were made related to respect for nature, planting flowers so that it "brings joy" of respect for people, and the construction of new houses. Children are aware of the close relationship between the beauty of the environment and the preservation of natural heritage, the preservation of order and stability. There was no particular difference in the responses of rural and urban children to this question. Only some details can be noted: the safety of the village, its beauty depends on the morality of its inhabitants: garbage collection, creating conditions for animals living next to people: "so that dogs and kittens are not homeless" (Arina, 6 years).

The second set of questions allowed us to determine children's priorities in choosing activities, attitudes to devices, knowledge of elements of folk culture traditionally present in a child's life - folk games, fairy tales. Among the children's preferences of favorite activities are construction, games, drawing, one child named folk games. It is significant that when naming their favorite activities, children name games related to research activities (8%). Outdoor games and outdoor games are a priority for children, because "it's boring to sit at the screen" (75%). Children understand that digital technologies make life easier, it is easier to find information with them, but they are already aware of the disadvantages of excessive enthusiasm for computer games: eyes deteriorate, lack of live communication. The responses of children in both urban and rural kindergartens have minor differences. 18% of the children living in the village named computer games among their favorites. The rest preferred street games and "fishing". This once again confirms the influence of socio-cultural specifics on the development of value priorities.

Among the favorite outdoor folk games are the brook, "Zarya-zarnitsa", "Selling pots", "Cossacks-robbers", "Blind Man's Buff". 14% of respondents could not name a single folk game, while almost all



children like to listen and read folk tales, they call "Sister Alyonushka and brother Ivanushka", "Sivka Burka", "Geese -swans", "Princess Frog", etc. A. Pushkin's fairy tales were also considered favorite and often read: that once again confirms the meaning of the great poet's works. There are no differences between the responses of rural and urban children, which allows us to talk about a single educational space of the world of childhood, in which the FOP is implemented, focused on traditional Russian values. At the same time, negative responses related to ignorance of folk culture, lack of interest in it ("boring fairy tales" Demid. 6 years) determine the need to actualize educational work in the field of "immersion" of the child in the space of folk art, using active methods of cognition.

The third set of questions concerned the relationships and real actions of children. An analysis of the responses in the third block showed that all children try to help their parents around the house: vacuuming, cooking when mom gets tired. Some children were really expressive in their answers: "I always help my mother so that she doesn't get tired and can dress up and do her hair more often" (Elizabeth, 6 years) – in the city, but rural children say "I like helping father with tools", "I clean up snow in winter and grass in summer". Here we can highlight the difference in what needs to be done around the house in the city and in the countryside.

Supporting friends is usually done through playing, as the most common response to the suggestion to continue the sentence "With friends we can ..." is to play (90%). According to the children, "a real friend is someone who you can play with, who shares his toys, who gives you sweets". The children have a fairly clear idea of who a friend is. They name children with whom they often play, walk, one child called his father a friend. However, it is difficult to identify the qualities and actions of the children they call friends. Children often describe 'good' in their answers.

The analysis of children's responses took into account the accuracy, correctness, independence of responses, emotional reactions accompanied by conversation, and the activity of children.

**Table 1.**  
*Levels of value perception of preschoolers*

Levels	Number of answers/ %	
	Rural kindergarten	City kindergarten
Optimum	1 / 2,4	2 / 4,7
Medium	21/ 50	23 / 53,5
Minimum	20/ 47,6	18/ 41,8
	42/ 100	43/ 100

The assignment of the levels was carried out on the basis of the selected criteria: cognitive, emotional-value, operational-behavioural (Sharikova, 2019).

As the table "Levels of value perception of preschoolers" shows, despite the specifics of manifestation and the nature of children's responses in rural and urban kindergarten, there are insignificant differences between the identified levels of children's value attitude development. Interviews with children in rural and urban kindergartens revealed an average level of development of values, with a preponderance of emotional and value components, in which aesthetic values (beauty of nature and its protection), values of helping (to an adult, to a friend), values of health were clearly emphasized.

The analysis of the results of the research made it possible to outline the prospects of educational work on development of children's value attitude to socio-cultural reality through project activities, which allows to educate a child as a subject of pedagogical interaction, to develop skills of partnership interaction, to stimulate children's interest in the history of Russia, to socio-cultural values and to activate their cognitive and creative activity, to develop social activity.

The content of the projects was specific in accordance with the living conditions and location of the preschool organization. Historical and local history, social, and ethnocultural projects were developed and implemented. The inclusion of children in the implementation of historical and local history projects enriched the cognitive sphere, developed the cognitive activity of children, formed skills of interaction and cooperation. "Russian Land Holy Defenders" project broadened children's ideas about the historical past of Russia, about the heroes-defenders of the Russian land, such as Alexander Nevsky, Dmitry Donskoy,

Fyodor Ushakov, who were canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church.; it formed the need for preschoolers to show kindness, help and empathy in their relations with adults and peers, honesty, fairness. The social projects took into account the peculiarities of the socio-cultural reality and motivated the children to perform actions and deeds in order to provide real help to others in accordance with their age. The projects "Make the village green", "Our friends" contributed to the development of empathy and a value attitude towards flora and fauna, the desire to help animals and birds in difficult conditions, supported the activity and independence of children in decision-making, formed communicative skills. "The Social Assistance Laboratory" project focused on involving children in activities that provide assistance to people. In order to develop children's independence and activity, the project "Little Ulyanovsk man" was implemented by means of "lessons on the contrary", where children took over the functions of a teacher, told what they know, answered questions of adults, led "excursions" through modern Ulyanovsk on the basis of photographs of famous and beautiful buildings, monuments, parks. During the implementation of the project, children acted not only as guides, but also as architects and designers when designing the layouts of city parks, editors of albums with children's drawings.

Taking into account the negative attitude of some children to folk tales, special attention was paid to the ethno-cultural project focused on the inclusion of children in different types of activities: theatricalized, based on folk works, creation, together with parents, of little children's books illustrating their own fairy tales.

The final diagnostics using conversations, observation and analysis of the results of children's activities showed an improvement in the indicators of children's value attitude to sociocultural reality. Significant changes were observed in the cognitive and behavioral criteria.

## Conclusions

On the basis of the work presented, it can be stated that the value attitude of older preschool children towards the socio-cultural environment is a personal characteristic formed on the basis of cognition, experience, acceptance and transformation of the value bases of human life and manifested in the process of interaction with the outside world. The value attitude is formed in the process of internalization of universal values in socially significant activities. There were no particularly significant differences in the development of value attitudes towards socio-cultural reality among children in rural and urban areas. Aesthetic and moral values prevailed at the stage of cognition. The implementation of projects on knowledge of the history, culture and traditions of the home country contributed to the development of indicators of an operationally effective criterion of value attitudes.

We understand that the assessment of the current state of children's value orientations is important and should be carried out regularly. on the one hand, modern society is changing very quickly, new interests and motives are emerging, on the other hand, it is important to note the trends towards the disappearance of familiar values, for example, folk traditions, which in 1-2 generations will be impossible to restore. And thirdly, the more conscious a preschool child grows, the more likely it is that in the future he will show high social responsibility (Aryabkina et al., 2024).

We made interviews only with children who go to kindergartens because of the special organized process of education and upbringing. So further research can be extended to compare children not attending kindergarten, but working directly with families is the most difficult area.

The results of our work will be used to develop educational programs in kindergartens in the region and methodological recommendations on specialized forms of work with children.

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