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## **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: A KEY ASPECT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN**

This study explores the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in the development of preschool-aged children. The aim of the research is to identify the key components of EI and develop a program for its enhancement. The scientific significance of the work lies in confirming the impact of EI on children's social skills, emotional well-being, and adaptation in society. The methodology includes observing children's behavior, conducting surveys with parents and educators, and testing children's EI levels using standardized techniques. The results demonstrate that children with high EI manage their emotions better, resolve conflicts more effectively, and establish stronger interpersonal connections. This research contributes to understanding the critical role of EI in educational practices, particularly in preparing children for school. The study provides recommendations for parents and educators on fostering EI through games, teaching self-regulation skills, and encouraging emotional empathy. The practical value of the work lies in developing programs and resources to promote EI in preschool children.

**Key words:** preschoolers; development of preschool children; emotional intelligence; child psychologists; development of emotional intelligence of preschoolers.

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## **Эмоционалды интеллект: мектеп жасына дейінгі балалардың дамуындағы негізгі аспект**

Бұл мақалада мектепке дейінгі жастағы балалардың эмоционалдық интеллектісінің (ЭИ) дамуындағы маңызы жан-жақты зерттеледі. Зерттеудің мақсаты – ЭИ негізгі компоненттерін анықтау, олардың балалардың әлеуметтік және эмоциялық дамуына әсерін талдау, сондай-ақ оны дамытуға бағытталған арнайы бағдарлама әзірлеу. Жұмыстың ғылыми маңыздылығы ЭИ-дің балалардың әлеуметтік дағдыларына, эмоционалдық әл-ауқатына және қоғамға бейімделуіне оң әсерін растауда жатыр. Әдістеме балалардың мінез-құлқын түрлі жағдайларда бақылауды, ата-аналар мен педагогтарға сауалнама жүргізуді, сондай-ақ балалардың ЭИ деңгейін стандартталған әдістермен тексеруді қамтиды. Нәтижелер көрсеткендей, жоғары ЭИ-ге ие балалар эмоцияларын жақсы басқарып, қақтығыстарды тиімді шешіп, өз құрдастарымен және үлкендермен оңай байланыс орнатады. Бұл зерттеу ЭИ-дің білім беру тәжірибесіндегі, әсіресе балаларды мектепке дайындаудағы маңызды рөлін тереңірек түсінуге ықпал етеді. Жұмыс ойындар арқылы, өзін-өзі реттеу дағдыларын үйрету, эмоциялық эмпатияны дамыту және тиімді қарым-қатынас құру бойынша нақты ұсыныстар береді. Зерттеудің тәжірибелік мәні – мектепке дейінгі балаларға ЭИ қалыптастыруға арналған әдістемелер, бағдарламалар мен ресурстарды әзірлеу және кеңінен қолдану, сондай-ақ бұл зерттеу нәтижелерін басқа білім беру мекемелерінде қолдану мүмкіндіктерін қарастыру.

**Түйін сөздер:** мектеп жасына дейінгі балалар; мектеп жасына дейінгі балалардың дамуы; эмоционалды интеллект; балалар психологтары; мектеп жасына дейінгі балалардың эмоционалды интеллектінің дамуы.

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### **Эмоциональный интеллект: ключевой аспект в развитии детей дошкольного возраста**

В данной работе исследуется значение эмоционального интеллекта (ЭИ) в развитии детей дошкольного возраста. Цель исследования – выявить ключевые компоненты ЭИ, изучить их влияние на социальное и эмоциональное развитие детей, а также разработать программу для его формирования. Научная значимость работы заключается в подтверждении влияния ЭИ на развитие социальных навыков, способности к адаптации, эмоциональное взаимодействие детей с окружающими. Методология включает наблюдения за поведением детей в различных ситуациях, опросы родителей и педагогов, а также тестирование уровня ЭИ с использованием проверенных методик. Результаты показывают, что дети с высоким уровнем ЭИ лучше понимают свои эмоции, успешно решают конфликты, демонстрируют эмпатию и налаживают отношения со сверстниками. Исследование вносит вклад в развитие образовательной практики, подчеркивая важность ЭИ для подготовки детей к школе. Практическое значение состоит в создании рекомендаций для родителей и педагогов, а также разработке инновационных программ, направленных на развитие ЭИ через игры, тренировки саморегуляции, групповое общение и обучение эмоциональной эмпатии. Полученные результаты помогут более глубоко понять важность ЭИ в воспитательном процессе.

**Ключевые слова:** дошкольники; развитие детей дошкольного возраста; эмоциональный интеллект; детские психологи; развитие эмоционального интеллекта дошкольников.

## **Introduction**

Emotional intelligence (hereinafter, EI), as a skill, is important in creating a person's personality. It contains all kinds of human abilities to recognize, manage and apply their emotions in order to ensure a more effective coordination with the people around them. UNESCO recognizes emotional intelligence as one of the important abilities or skills that determine a person's success, which he will need in the future (Nikulina, 2022). All this confirms the importance of developing EI from an early age. This is explained by the fact that it is preschool age that is important for the development of a person's sphere of feelings and emotions, since it is during this period (3-6 years) the beginning of active emotional development and interaction of the child with other people is noted. During such interactions, preschoolers experience a rich set of emotions.

Such a research topic is relevant because of issues of how much importance there is to the concept that emotional intelligence should be considered in the context of preschool education, taking into account current trends in their development in science and practice. It is also important that the emotional state of a child from preschool age plays an important role and shows his success, both in studies and in adapting to society. The main reasons determining the conduct of the study are insufficiently devel-

oped EI; anxiety; low self-esteem and others (Popova, 2023; Lenkina, 2017).

Currently, children spend little time in nature and devote a lot of time to mobile devices. Parents also spend little time with their children, which leads to a lack of opportunity for them to develop the required emotional state (Lafay, 2023; Luk'yanec, 2019). All of the above reasons can lead to conflicts, both internally and in the children's team.

Research conducted by scientists (Zaharova, 2021) indicates that children with high levels of EI adapt better in society, have better academic achievements and are less prone to stress and anxiety. Emotional intelligence is formed in the child from birth, so it is considered an essential aspect of the educational program, which is carried out within the framework of preschool education. At the same time, the program includes techniques for the development of emotional intelligence skills in children: to understand and manage emotions, empathy, self-regulation, etc (Chernobrovkin, 2021).

The study aims to identify the key components of preschoolers' emotional intelligence development and provide suggestions for enhancing it.

The study's goals were to:

1. examine the key elements of preschoolers' emotional intelligence development;
2. create a program for preschoolers' EI development within the curriculum; and

3. assess the efficacy of programs for preschoolers' EI development.

4. To create suggestions for EI development within the preschool psychology framework.

Research hypothesis: if we develop a program within the framework of preschool psychology, which will include the purposeful development of EI, then this will contribute to improving the socio-emotional skills of preschool children, which will increase their ability to self-regulate and effectively interact with others, which positively affects their readiness for socialization and schooling.

The study's theoretical value is to increase our understanding of preschoolers and their developmental potential.

The study's practical implications include suggestions for parents and teachers as well as a program for preschoolers' EI development.

### Literature review

The research materials were: normative and directive acts, monographs, dissertation research, scientific articles, curricula, methodological recommendations and other sources on the research topic.

The term "emotional intelligence" (EI) is derived from the English term "emotional intelligence" and refers to a person's capacity to identify his own feelings and desires, comprehend the motivations and intentions of others, and control his own emotions as well as those of others (Kosenchuk, 2023; Ivanova, 2022; Gil-Moreno, 2023). According to a group of authors, emotional intelligence should be regarded as the foundation for children's successful and constructive socialization in preschool (Curby, 2022).

Preschoolers' development of emotional intelligence is thought to aim for the following developed properties:

- possessing signs of a positive outlook on life, other people, and the world at large;
- feeling respect for oneself;
- active engagement in interactions with adults and in connections with their peers;
- the capacity to accept other people's interests and engage in negotiations;
- the appropriate way to communicate your emotions;
- the will to settle disputes, among many other things (Anikina, 2020).

Stages of EI development in preschool children:

- upon admission to preschool at an early age (three years), the child has to separate from his family members for the first time. He has a period of adaptation to the conditions of kindergarten and his individuality begins to manifest itself in the form of "I am myself", expressed quite often in open childish negativism towards adults;

- the period of the first socialization, as the preschooler entered a new and more expanded environment, since now his environment is not only family, but also other people, both children and adults. Throughout the preschool period, the child learns to understand his emotions and develops emotionality towards others, gets the necessary communication skills. All this helps the preschooler to establish various social connections. Since he has a transition to the school stage of social and emotional development ahead of him.

According to O.Gonina, the development of EI in preschoolers should be considered according to preschool psychology as an important aspect of their overall mental and social development (2024). At the same time, it is important to take into account the peculiarities of emotional development in preschool age, which are revealed in the textbook on preschool psychology: a preschooler studies social forms that should be used to express his feelings; the role of emotions in the child's activity changes, as emotional anticipation is developed; the child's emotional feelings become more conscious, reasonable, generalized, arbitrary and outside of himself; preschoolers develop feelings of a higher level: intellectual, moral, aesthetic, etc. (Klevaka, 2022).

The views of other researchers and professionals about early childhood EI development programs might also be consulted. For instance, N.V. Miklyeva, O.A. Tikhonova, and N.V. Chudesnikova's (2021) Methodological Manual emphasizes the significance of creating unique programs that require the coordination of the efforts of educators, psychologists, speech therapists, speech pathologists, and parents in order to develop preschoolers' social intelligence in terms of communicative-speech and communicative-cognitive practices.

According to these scholars, the development of higher human feelings—moral, cognitive, humanistic, and aesthetic—in preschoolers is more intense. It is observed that they are becoming more adept at communicating with adults and their peers, which shows up in a variety of group activities. One of the

important forms is considered to be games and especially story-role-playing games, which allows you to develop skills of empathy, sympathy and understanding of the role of camaraderie (Zhubandykova, 2021).

At the same time, it is important to remember that the main source of humane feelings among preschoolers is still considered to be relationships with parents and other close people. And also an important condition is considered to be the successes of early childhood, which helped him to lay close adults as a foundation for the formation of future EI skills. These include such moral feelings as love, kindness, care, attention, etc.

### Materials and methods

The following techniques were employed to accomplish this purpose and complete the tasks that were identified: literary analysis; observations, discussions, anchoring, testing, data analysis, and modeling techniques.

To assess the level of EI in children, questionnaires were conducted among parents (30 people) and educators (10 people).

Questions for educators about each child: How often do children show signs of emotional perception and understanding? How well do children control their emotions? How often do children show empathy and concern for others? How does a child cope with conflicts and difficulties? What are the characteristics of children's behavior in different situations? How do you rate these children? The overall level of development of children in the group.

Parents: How does your child perceive and understand his emotions? How does he deal with negative emotions such as anger or fear? How does your child react to other people's emotions? Does your child have difficulty communicating and interacting with other people? How does your child solve conflicts and problems? How do you assess your child's EI level?

Also, at the same time, children's behavior is monitored and testing to determine the level of EI (tests for recognizing emotions) is carried out. 30 preschool children aged 4-5 years took part in the testing. The children are divided into two groups: experimental and control.

For testing preschoolers' ability to recognize emotions, the following methods were used:

1) K. Izard's methodology, adapted with subtests suitable for preschoolers. These subtests are aimed at recognizing and naming eight basic emotions (joy, interest, sadness, surprise, disgust, anger, fear, and distress).

The first subtest involves matching the emotion depicted in a photograph with a word that identifies a specific emotion.

The second subtest requires independently recognizing an emotion from a photograph and naming it.

The third subtest focuses on recognizing an emotion from a pictogram and naming it, considering its external emotional and facial expressions.

The success index is 24 points, which corresponds to 100% recognition of all emotions across the three tasks. The total score is derived by summing up the points from all three subtests.

The response options are:

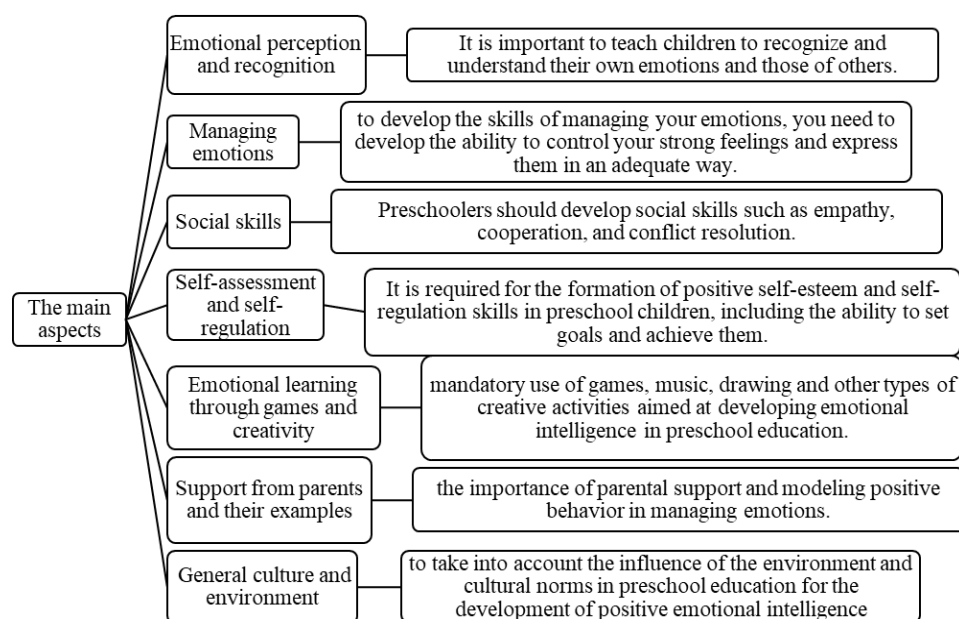
1. Recognizes and correctly names emotions (high level);
2. Recognizes emotions but cannot verbally label them (medium level);
3. Does not recognize emotions and cannot label them verbally (low level).

2) Conversation on "Children's Awareness of Their Own Emotions". This method, proposed by T.A. Danilina, V.Ya. Zedginidze, N.M. Stepina, and I.O. Karelina, assesses the degree to which children are aware of their own emotions. It is conducted in the form of a conversation containing questions about actions, situations, and objects typically associated with emotional experiences.

3) Method by A.A. Oshkina and I.G. Tsygankova: "Observation of Children's Behavior in Natural Conditions". This method is designed to determine the level of development of children's ability to regulate emotions. For each child, a protocol is maintained, recording the observed indicators in points.

### Results and discussion

The analysis of the reviewed sources enabled us to identify the key aspects that can be considered in the context of fostering emotional intelligence (EI) in preschoolers. Provided that these aspects are integrated into various educational programs and methods, they can be directed at enhancing the development of EI in preschoolers. The main aspects are illustrated in Figure 1.

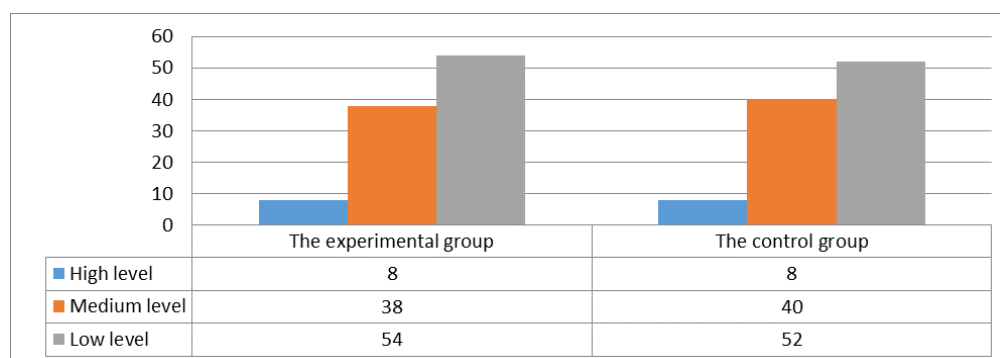


**Figure 1** – Key Aspects of Programmatic Psychological Education for Developing Emotional Intelligence in Preschoolers

According to caregivers, children frequently exhibit emotional perception and understanding of only basic emotions (joy, sadness, and a few others); they comprehend their emotions well, but occasionally struggle, particularly in trying circumstances; they frequently demonstrate concern and empathy for others, but they can also be very self-centered; they deal with challenges and conflicts in a variety of ways, and their success depends on the circumstances; and they generally behave appropriately, but their actions depend on the circumstances, as evidenced by their facial expressions. Caregivers often identify 10% of students with high EI, 60% with medium EI, and 30% with low EI.

Parents' responses include the following: the child has trouble communicating and interacting with others, especially when they are in unfamiliar situations; he recognizes and understands his emotions well, but occasionally requires adult assistance; he copes with negative emotions like anger or fear in a variety of ways, sometimes successfully, sometimes not; he reacts to other people's emotions depending on the situation, but not always understands them; and he can resolve conflicts and problems, but not always. Parents typically assess their children's EI as follows: high- 40%, medium -40%, and low- 20%.

The results of testing children for the level of manifestation of EI, at the ascertaining stage, are shown in Figure 2.



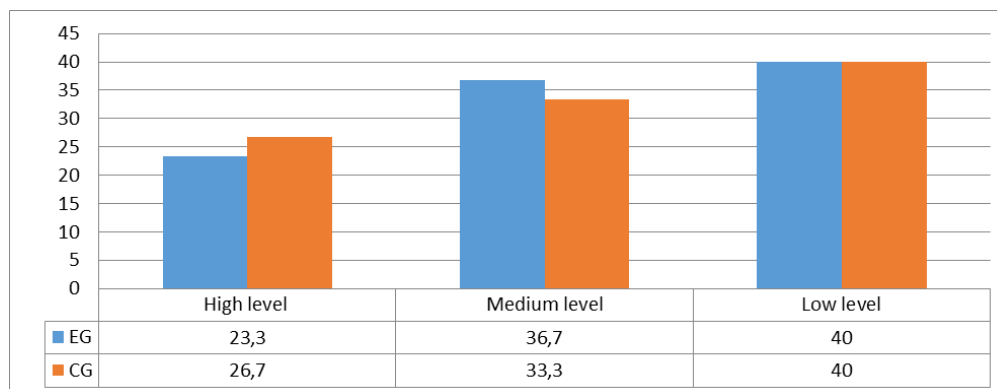
**Figure 2** – The level of EI of children according to the results of testing of parents at the ascertaining stage, in %



It should be noted that the distribution of children in groups is similar. The groups have the same percentage of children with a high level of emotional intelligence (8%). In the experimental group, 54% of children have a low level, which is slightly higher than in the control group (52%). Because of

the slight variation in average level (38% against 40%), we can consider how comparable of children in the two groups were at the start of the experiment.

The results of the diagnosis using the method for “Children’s awareness of their own emotions” are shown in Figure 3.

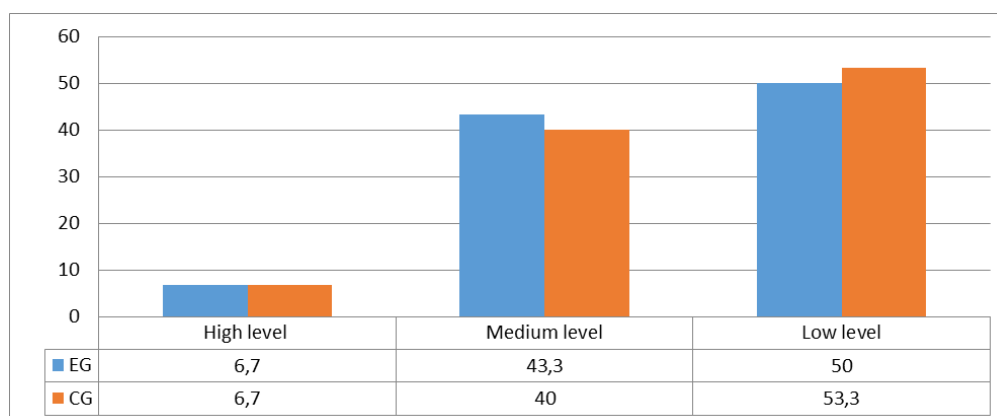


**Figure 3** – The level of children’s awareness of their own emotions according to the method of “Children’s awareness of their own emotions” at the ascertaining stage, in %

It should also be noted the similarity between the groups of children in terms of levels of awareness of their emotions. The differences are insignificant and amount to only 0 to 3.4% for individual levels. In both groups, a low level of awareness of one’s own emotions prevails (40% in the experimental group and 40% in the control group). The

high level of awareness of their emotions is only 23.3% (EG) and 26.7% (KG), which indicates a similarity in the level of awareness of their emotions.

The results of the method “Observation of the child’s behavior in natural conditions” are shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4** – The level of child behavior according to the method of “Observing the child’s behavior in natural conditions” at the ascertaining stage, in %

The indicators of the level of behavior in both groups are very similar, since the difference in average and low levels is minimal and is only 3.3. In

both groups, there are more children with a low level of behavior in natural conditions: 50% (EG), 53.3% (KG). A high level of behavior in natural conditions

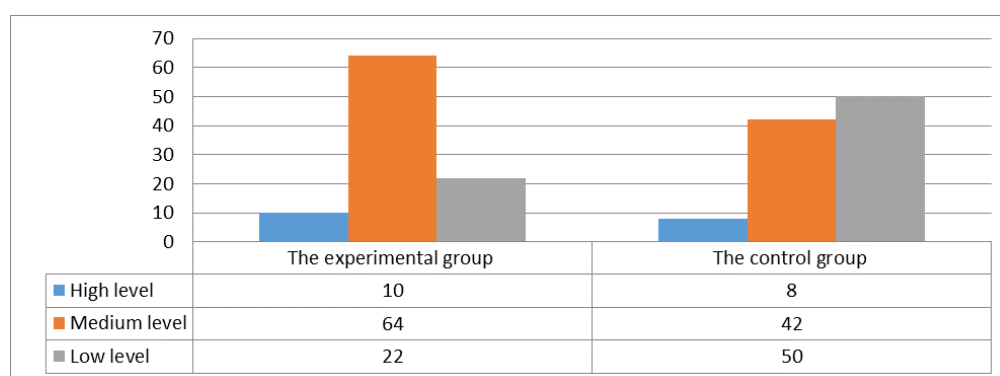
is observed in two children in each group (6.7% each). The findings indicate that most children have an insufficient level of development of social interaction and self-control skills.

After conducting the ascertaining experiment, we conducted a program for the development of emotional intelligence. Techniques for the development of EI in preschool children are defined as: psychohymnastics; discussion of emotions and behaviors from the plots and characters of illustrated books; role-playing games for the development of understanding and emotional flexibility; fairy tale

therapy; organization of collective events; consultations and trainings for parents. In parallel with the techniques, we used a number of tasks (For example: emotional collage; emotional mosaic; emotional relay race; I understand you, etc.).

Following the formative experiment, a control experiment was carried out in which we compared the outcomes of the development program's execution with those of the previous one.

The results of the control testing of children for the level of EI, after the implementation of the EI development program, are shown in Figure 5.

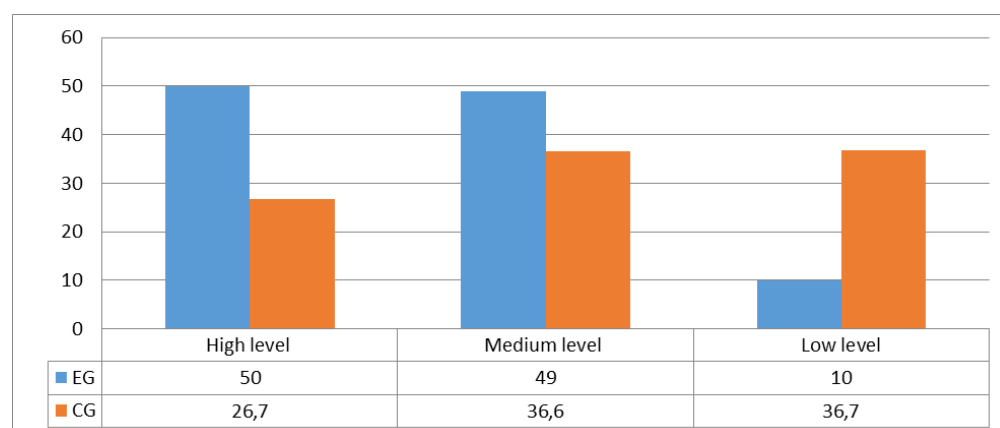


**Figure 5** – The level of EI of children according to the results of a survey of parents at the ascertaining stage, in %

Following the experiment, the experimental group's EI level changed significantly. When a program for preschoolers' EI development was implemented, the percentage of children with a high level rose to 10% (by 2%), the average level also increased to 64% (+26%), and the low level dropped

to 22% (-32%). The markers in the control group stayed constant, with the average level rising by 2% and the low level slightly declining.

The results of the control diagnosis using the method for "Children's awareness of their own emotions" are shown in Figure 6.

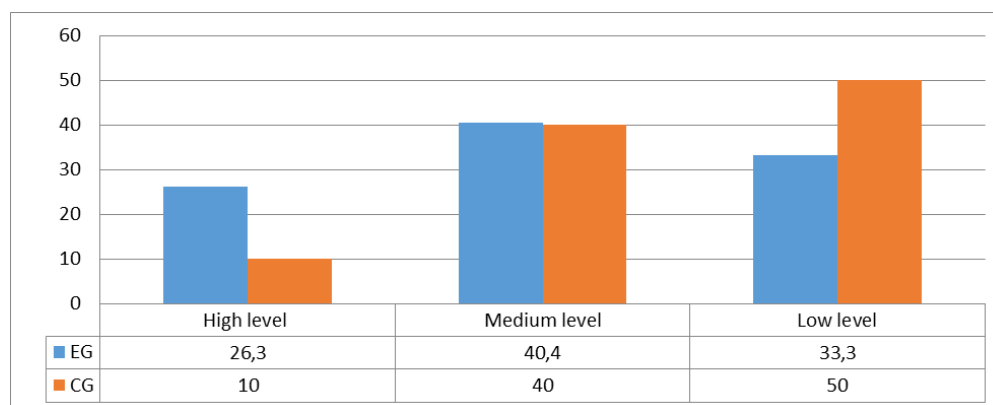


**Figure 6** – The level of children's awareness of their own emotions according to the method of "Children's awareness of their own emotions" at the control stage, in %

The level of children's awareness of their own emotions at the control stage in the experimental group changed more significantly in a positive direction, since half of the children in the group had a high level (an increase of 26.7%). And the low one dropped by 30%. While in the control group,

it remained at approximately the same levels, with a slight increase in the low level in one child to the average.

The results of the control diagnosis using the method for "Children's awareness of their own emotions" are shown in Figure 7.



**Figure 7** – The level of child behavior according to the method “Observation of child behavior in natural conditions” at the control stage, in %

The level of the child's behavior in natural conditions at the control stage in the experimental group also increased: a high level by 19.6%. While the low has decreased by 20%. In the control group, there were slight changes in high and low levels – by 3.3%.

## Conclusion

Thus, we have established that the development of EI in preschoolers is an important indicator of their overall development.

The analysis of the level of emotional intelligence in preschool children showed a more realistic state on the part of educators, while the assessment given by parents is significantly overestimated. Considering that the initial evaluation of preschoolers' emotional intelligence in both groups is more in line with educators' perspectives.

We can make the following deductions thanks to the examination of the experimental and control groups' indicators:

The fraction with a low level decreases while the proportion with high and medium levels rises in the experimental group. Meanwhile, the EI level in the control group stayed essentially constant.

Thus, the hypothesis of the study put forward by us was confirmed. It is important to note that the

development of EI in children aged 4-5 years is important, since it is during this period that the foundations of emotional skills and social adaptation are laid in children.

Based on the data obtained, we also put forward a number of recommendations for involving parents in the process of developing EI in preschool children.

1. Expansion of the educational program of preschool education: to include additional and diverse activities and classes for the development of EI skills. For example, classes on the development of empathy, trainings on emotion recognition, self-regulation, psychological and team games, mini-projects and others.

2. Introduction of new teaching techniques, such as interactive whiteboards and interactive games, behavior simulators that mimic different social settings, media technologies for watching and debating cartoons and audio texts, and more. However, it's crucial that they don't take the place of more conventional approaches like role-playing games, reading books, and chats.

3. The introduction of an individual approach to each child, especially to those who have their own developmental characteristics. They need to develop individual lesson plans for them, as well as regularly organize meetings with their parents to make adjustments or discuss the progress they have made.



4. Development of active cooperation with parents: meetings; individual meetings with a psychologist; participation of parents in preschool activities.

5. Active involvement of parents in the process of EI development.

6. Continuous professional development of teachers–psychologists and kindergarten teachers, which will allow them to gain knowledge and work out experience in the introduction of new methods in the field of preschool psychology.

7. Creating a more comfortable psychological atmosphere in a preschool institution to ensure an atmosphere of safety, trust, respect and support.

8. Development of forms of cooperation with other important specialists (psychologists, speech therapists and speech pathologists), which makes it possible to develop children's EI more comprehensively.

9. To develop special educational and methodological materials on the development of EI for each child's age and taking into account the peculiarities of children's development. Child psychologists and experienced teachers in the field of preschool education must take part in the development process.

All things considered, the study is theoretical and practically significant and can be applied to future research on emotional intelligence and preschool education.

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