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DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY
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The relationship between irony comprehension, behavior regulation and theory of mind in preschool age

N.E. Veraksa, L.F. Bayanova, E.S. Oshchepkova ✉

Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ maposte06@yandex.ru

Abstract

Context and relevance. Cultural-historical psychology makes it possible to describe the phenomenon of irony and the specific features of its comprehension in terms of social and cultural norms. In recent years, the search for effective tools of children's socialization has increasingly turned to the study of how children understand irony, particularly irony used as an indirect evaluation of a child's behavior. The regulation of preschoolers' behavior is associated with rules transmitted by adults in social developmental situations, which determine children's cultural congruence. It is assumed that understanding of irony is related to theory of mind, which makes it relevant to study behavioral regulation both in the context of irony comprehension and in connection with theory of mind. **Objective.** To identify the relationship between irony comprehension, the level of behavioral regulation in children expressed as cultural congruence, and indicators of their theory of mind development. **Hypothesis.** Children's understanding of irony is related to their cultural congruence as well as to their theory of mind. **Methods and Materials.** The study involved 75 preschoolers from Kazan ($M = 59,02$; $SD = 3,1$; 35 boys). Cultural congruence was assessed using the Cultural Congruence Questionnaire; irony comprehension was measured with tasks translated and adapted for this study; theory of mind was assessed using the respective subtest from the NEPSY-II battery. To identify the nature of the relationships, Spearman's correlation analysis was applied. **Results.** The findings show that five-year-old children's understanding of irony is associated with their parents' assessments of the cultural congruence factors "obedience" and "safety". The level of theory of mind development demonstrated a significant correlation with the cultural congruence factor "self-control". **Conclusions.** Preschool children's comprehension of irony opens new avenues for studying the metacognitive, communicative, and emotional domains of personality. The revealed interconnections among irony comprehension, cultural congruence, and theory of mind provide a foundation for developing new approaches to the practice of supporting behavioral regulation in preschool children.

Keywords: irony, cultural congruence, rule, theory of mind, behavioral regulation, implicature, preschool age

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Взаимосвязь понимания иронии, регуляции поведения и теории сознания в дошкольном возрасте

Н.Е. Веракса, Л.Ф. Баянова, Е.С. Ощепкова ✉

Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова, Москва, Российская Федерация

✉ maposte06@yandex.ru

Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Культурно-историческая психология позволяет описать феномен иронии и особенности ее понимания с точки зрения социальных и культурных норм. В поисках эффективных инструментов социализации детей в последние годы обращаются к теме понимания детьми иронии, направленной на непрямую оценку поведения ребенка. Регуляция поведения дошкольника связана с правилами, транслируемыми взрослыми в социальной ситуации развития и определяющими культурную конгруэнтность детей. Предположительно, понимание иронии связано с теорией сознания, в связи с чем актуально изучение регуляции поведения, как в контексте понимания иронии, так и в связи с теорией сознания. **Цель.** Выявить взаимосвязь понимания иронии, уровня регуляции поведения детей, выраженной в культурной конгруэнтности, и показателей уровня развития их теории сознания. **Гипотеза.** Понимание детьми иронии взаимосвязано с их культурной конгруэнтностью, а также с теорией сознания. **Методы и материалы.** В исследовании приняли участие 75 дошкольников г. Казани ($M = 59,02$; $SD = 3,1$; из них 35 мальчиков). Культурная конгруэнтность оценивалась с помощью опросника на культурную конгруэнтность; понимание иронии — с помощью заданий, переведенных и адаптированных для данного исследования; теория сознания оценивалась с помощью одноименного субтеста батареи NEPSY-II. Для выявления характера взаимосвязей после проверки допустимости данного метода применялся корреляционный анализ Спирмена. **Результаты.** Согласно полученным данным, понимание иронии детьми пяти лет связано с оценками их родителей по таким факторам культурной конгруэнтности этих детей, как «послушность» и «безопасность». Уровень развития теории сознания имеет значимую корреляционную связь с фактором культурной конгруэнтности «самоконтроль». **Выводы.** Понимание иронии детьми дошкольного возраста открывает новые возможности для изучения метакогнитивной, коммуникативной и эмоциональной сфер личности. Взаимосвязь понимания иронии, культурной конгруэнтности и теории сознания позволяет в перспективе формировать новые подходы в практике развития регуляции поведения детей дошкольного возраста.

Ключевые слова: ирония, культурная конгруэнтность, правило, теория сознания, регуляция поведения, имплицатура, дошкольный возраст

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Introduction

In line with the ideas of cultural-historical psychology, in recent years the task of creating practices that facilitate child development has become increasingly relevant — practices that, in the discourse of L.S. Vygotsky, are known as those contributing to the formation of a “new” person (Vygotsky, 1982). The search for such practices inevitably leads to the analysis of the social situation of development and the means available in the annals of culture that contribute to optimal communication between child and adult. In this context, irony may be considered as a cultural practice, as

a type of humor that is undoubtedly a product of the cultural-historical development of society. I. Dombrovskaya, when describing the psychological cultural genesis of humor within the framework of L.S. Vygotsky’s concept, notes that in what is funny for a child, “...development proceeds from the interpsychological to the intrapsychological, from the reaction of laughter to the laughter and amusing actions of an adult to the ability to independently find and create the funny” (Dombrovskaya, 2022, p. 28). Irony, acting as a communicative means that simultaneously contains two modes of communication — a normative situation and a situation involving a violated rule — primarily

facilitates the creation of opportunities for “meaningful use of a communicative means” (Soldatenkova, 2025, p. 36). Irony comprehension in ontogenesis develops under certain conditions of interaction between child and adult; therefore, the question of whether children understand implicature (the unexpressed meaning of a phrase or text reconstructed from context) appears highly ambiguous. The relevance of studying irony and humor in general is determined by the circumstance that, in the social situation of child development at the early stages of ontogenesis, there is a search for effective forms of transmitting cultural norms. Humor and irony, as one of its forms of manifestation, may be considered among such forms (Bayanova et al., 2025). A number of researchers write that there exists an acute social demand for research on humor in childhood. Thus, A.A. Korsak and E.M. Ivanova note that “...over recent decades, studies of the sense of humor in psychology have achieved significant success; however, understanding of the mechanisms of its development in childhood lags considerably behind the fundamental studies in this field” (Korsak, Ivanova, 2025, p. 12). The relevance of studying irony is also associated with the demand for early diagnosis of ASD and the development of programs for social skills development (Song et al., 2024).

According to Paul Grice, in communicative implicatures it is important not what a participant in dialogue says, but how they say it (Grice, 1975). Irony is a vivid example of such a communicative implicature. F. Köder and I. Falkum point out that irony presupposes a “thought about a thought”, i.e., a second-order metarepresentation, and that to grasp it, the listener must be able (a) to understand the utterance and (b) to recognize the speaker’s dismissive attitude toward that thought (Köder, Falkum, 2021).

There are differing opinions regarding the age at which children begin to understand irony (Banasik, Bokus, 2019; Massaro et al., 2013). The earliest age at which understanding of irony has been detected is 3–4 years, as noted in a number of studies (Loukusa, Leinonen, 2008). Russian authors O.B. Chesnokova and G.S. Svetova write that understanding of irony develops in the range from 6 to 11 years of age; the authors associate this with the development of intelligence and the capacity for reflection (Chesnokova, Svetova, 2016). However, there are researchers who express doubt regarding understanding of irony even at the age of eight, when children poorly understand the hidden meaning of ironic utterances (Nicholson et al., 2013). The factors that might contribute to the development of irony comprehension in children, as stated by F. Köder and I. Falkum, have been insufficiently studied (Köder, Falkum, 2021). Among the predictors contributing to understanding of irony, or more broadly to a child’s pragmatic competence, the primary ones identified are

theory of mind (Song et al., 2024) and executive functions (Oshchepkova et al., 2025), particularly the development of inhibitory control (Kyriacou, K der, 2024; Smith J. et al., 2024; Valles-Capetillo E. et al., 2025). However, it is important to note that irony comprehension, as well as pragmatic competence in general, presupposes extracting the meaning of an utterance within a social context (Kortava, 2024). Studies concerning metacognitions (Veraksa et al., 2024) and psychological well-being (González-Arratia López-Fuentes et al., 2025) have shown that cognitive regulation of activity is necessary for a child’s social development. As for the regulation of children’s behavior through their adherence to social norms, as well as the interrelation of this normative cultural congruence with the development of speech comprehension in a social context, particularly understanding of irony, this aspect of the approach to irony comprehension remains very limited in research, and the present study is intended to fill this gap and analyze the relationship between irony comprehension and both the child’s level of theory of mind development and their social skills and representations.

The age at which irony is introduced into communicative discourse with a child depends to a greater extent on the cultural traditions of irony use as such. Among studies of irony in children are works devoted to the peculiarities of irony comprehension in French-speaking children (Bucci, Premeti, 2024), Italian-speaking preschoolers (Massaro et al., 2013), as well as children speaking Finnish (Loukusa et al., 2008), Polish (Banasik, Bokus, 2019), and Chinese (Kuang et al., 2024).

The study of irony comprehension in Russian-speaking preschool children appears to be a new task not only within developmental psychology but also in the cross-cultural sense due to the absence of studies on this topic.

Normative bias of irony

Researchers in the field of pragmatics define the meaning of irony through its normativity. There is an opinion that irony possesses such a property as “normative bias” (K der, Falkum, 2021). In an ironic utterance, according to Wilson and Sperber (2012), it is usually indicated that the state of affairs does not correspond to certain expectations based on norms, and the speaker’s norm-based expectations have been violated (Wilson, Sperber, 2012). Thus, irony is a special means by which culture, represented by the adult, conducts a dialogue with the child, pointing out the discrepancy between the child’s behavior and what is expected. Children’s assimilation of norms occurs by no means solely through direct instructions and prohibitions. Already at the age of three, children spontaneously infer social norms based on observations of adult behavior (Schmidt et al., 2016).

L.S. Vygotsky's thesis that the development of the psyche is determined by culture is well known (Vygotsky, 1984). The cultural context is referred to as the "developmental niche", which contains rules and values (Super, Harkness, 1997). The developmental niche influences the formation of socially desirable behavior, as demonstrated by a number of studies (Albert, Trommsdorff, 2014). The developmental niche, as the context of a child's psychological development containing norms and values, is only potentially included in the social situation of development, since cultural-historical psychology interprets the social situation of development as a "...system of relations between a child of a given age and social reality" (Vygotsky, 1984, p. 244). As V.T. Kudryavtsev rightly notes, when studying developmental processes, it is important to remember that "...it is not the individual child who develops, but the 'child–adult' interaction" (Kudryavtsev, 1999). Irony, as a fact of communication between adult and child, has a specific function in the process of transmitting cultural norms.

The regulation of children's behavior is associated with rules indicating certain boundaries that limit the spontaneity of the child's activity. The very situation with a given rule is normative, since a cultural norm in the form of a rule has been transmitted into such a situation (Veraksa, 2000). The normative nature of culture was formed conventionally — people agreed on the rules according to which they were to live and interact. Naturally, a child's socialization is associated with the assimilation of cultural norms and the formation of behavioral patterns in accordance with rules. According to A.R. Luria, the methods of behavioral regulation with respect to rules assimilated by the child through interaction with adults during the preschool years represent a kind of building block for the creation of higher-order cognitive control mechanisms (Luria, 2002). In preschool childhood, rules related to self-care dominate, when children are required to clean up their toys (Bayanova, Mustafin, 2016). If a child has formed behavioral patterns corresponding to rules typical for their age, then one speaks of their cultural congruence. Cultural congruence is the outcome of experiencing the social situation of development, where regulation of behavior is formed through interaction with an adult — what L.I. Bozhovich calls "involuntary voluntariness", allowing the child to internalize the rule in a normative situation (Bozhovich, 1982). We emphasize that cultural congruence not only presupposes compliance with an individual rule, but is a regulatory personality characteristic manifested in the conformity of a child's behavior to a system of rules typical for a given age.

The formation of cultural congruence in preschoolers as the ability to regulate behavior in accordance with rules occurs in child–adult interaction. At the same time, the adult uses various means of communication to transmit the rule, including implicatures. It is important

to identify the extent to which understanding irony is associated with cultural congruence — the ability to regulate behavior with respect to typical rules — as well as to identify the relationship between irony comprehension and cultural congruence with theory of mind. This task is determined by the circumstance that theory of mind denotes the metacognitive ability to understand both one's own mental states and the mental states of other people (Albert et al., 2014). Theory of mind, as a model of the mental, includes a number of intellectual characteristics — the capacity for decentration and understanding the intentions and thoughts of others, metacognitive ability, establishing cause-and-effect relationships, the ability to understand figures of speech, and the ability to differentiate between real and imaginary planes of reality. The research goal of identifying the relationship between irony comprehension, cultural congruence, and theory of mind can be achieved given baseline data — namely, understanding of irony by Russian-speaking five-year-old children, since such results have not previously been obtained.

The hypothesis of our study is that cultural congruence, as a reflection of a child's assimilation of social norms, will be interconnected with the child's ability to understand speech in an indirect meaning, i.e., relying on the social context and social situation. We assume that among the identified factors of cultural congruence — obedience, safety, self-care, and self-control — obedience and safety may be most strongly associated with understanding implicatures, since it is these factors that, according to the questionnaire structure (Bayanova, Mustafin, 2016), reflect the child's psychological and age-related readiness to follow the rules implied by the given context. As for theory of mind, as a construct reflecting the capacity for decentration and the ability to switch from one's own perspective to another person's perspective, according to our hypothesis it will be most strongly associated with the "Self-control" scale.

Materials and methods

Sample

The study involved 75 preschool children aged five years (age in months: $M = 59,02$; $SD = 3,1$) attending kindergartens in Kazan. The sample included 35 boys and 40 girls. Informed parental consent was obtained for each child who participated in the study. The study was conducted in a comfortable environment for the children.

Study design

To assess irony comprehension, children were presented with diagnostic materials in the form of stories depicted in pictures and involving the child's evaluation of the literal or opposite meaning of an utterance (K der,

Falkum, 2021). The stories were structured as follows: a parent depicted in the picture tells the child what is expected of them. For example, a mother asks a boy to clean his room. A question is used to check whether the participants understood the parents' expectations, and if not, the children were told the story again with reference to the corresponding picture. Then the child in the picture either fulfills or violates the parent's expectations; for example, the boy cleans his room or leaves it messy. In response, the parent either praises or criticizes the child using one of the following types of utterances: literal praise (for example: "That's great! You cleaned up very well"), literal criticism (for example: "That's bad! You still didn't clean up!"), and ironic criticism (although the child still did not clean up, the parent says: "Well done! Excellent cleaning"). The participant had to determine what emotion the parent was experiencing: whether the parent approved or disapproved of the child regardless of the literal utterance. The child chose between two emoticons — a smiling face and a sad face — thereby demonstrating understanding or misunderstanding of irony. The method consisted of 12 stories, 3 of which specifically represented ironic parental remarks. In the diagnostic assessment, children could receive from 0 to 3 points for irony comprehension.

The method for determining cultural congruence in preschoolers (Bayanova, Mustafin, 2016) is a checklist for parents in which they evaluate the degree to which their child's behavior corresponds to typical normative behavioral rules. The method diagnoses the ability to regulate behavior with respect to rules — cultural congruence according to four factors: "obedience, compliance with adults' expectations", "safety", "self-care, hygiene", and "self-control".

Theory of mind as a model of the mental was diagnosed using the "Theory of Mind" (ToM) methodology (NEPSY-II subtest) (Korkman et al., 2007). This method is aimed at diagnosing the development of various

components of theory of mind. The method consists of a series of tasks aimed at decentration, the emotional component, and the logical-verbal component, including understanding figurative meanings of words. The method consists of 21 tasks for which children may receive from 1 to 3 points. The maximum score is 28.

The main variable of interest was irony comprehension. The results for this variable were distributed non-normally (Shapiro-Wilk $W = 0,809$; $p < 0,001$); therefore, the use of Pearson correlation would have been statistically unjustified. Instead, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was applied, since it does not assume normality of data and is robust to discreteness and platykurtic distributions. The jamovi software package was used (The jamovi project, 2021).

Results

As a result of Spearman's correlation analysis, significant relationships were identified between irony comprehension, certain aspects of cultural congruence marking the regulation of a child's behavior in normative situations typical for their age, and theory of mind. The obtained results are shown in the Table.

Discussion

Thus, when testing our hypothesis regarding the relationship between cultural congruence, the level of theory of mind development, and irony comprehension in children, Spearman's correlation analysis showed that the most significant relationships (at the $p < 0,001$ level) were identified between irony comprehension and such characteristics of children's cultural congruence as obedience ($\rho = 0,37$) and adherence to safety norms ($\rho = 0,46$). As for theory of mind, it was found to be

Table

The relationship between indicators of irony comprehension, cultural congruence, and theory of mind in preschool age (N = 75)

Параметры	Irony comprehension	Cultural congruence (score)	Obedience	Observance of safety rules	Self-care	Self-control
Cultural congruence (score)	0,34**	-				
Obedience	0,37***	0,722***	-			
Observance of safety rules	0,46***	0,764***	0,608***	-		
Self-care	0,08	0,658***	0,632***	0,445***	-	
Self-control	0,06	0,623***	0,406***	0,43***	0,61***	-
Theory of mind	0,03	0,163	0,178	0,056	0,185	0,268*

Note: «*» — correlation is significant at the $< 0,05$ level (two-sided); «**» — correlation is significant at the $p < 0,01$ level (two-sided); «***» — correlation is significant at the $p < 0,001$ level (two-sided).

significantly associated with such a characteristic of cultural congruence as self-control ($\rho = 0,268, p < 0,05$).

The results of the correlation analysis reveal a relationship between irony comprehension and two factors of cultural congruence — obedience and safety. The obedience factor includes rules of behavioral regulation related to adults' expectations. Preschoolers with high indicators of behavioral congruence with respect to rules of interaction with adults understand irony better. Adherence to rules related to safety is also associated with irony comprehension. These facts may indicate that implicature in communication with preschool children is used more often in situations involving the presentation of rules related to safety and interaction with adults than in situations related to self-care and self-control.

The obtained results made it possible to answer a number of questions important for studying the characteristics of irony comprehension in preschool children. Alongside previous studies conducted with preschoolers from different countries, including Poland, Finland, France, and Italy, irony comprehension was also identified in a sample of Russian-speaking Russian preschoolers. More than half of the respondents (74,3%) demonstrated irony comprehension, whereas approximately one quarter of the five-year-old children in the sample did not understand irony (25,7%). Considering that the main characteristic of irony is its normative bias, we assumed that irony comprehension is associated with the regulation of behavior in a normative situation with a given rule — with cultural congruence. The research objective also included a factor associated with the rational capacity to analyze situations — theory of mind.

In the present study, regarding theory of mind, the conclusions of E.A. Sergienko were confirmed, namely that at the age of 5–6 years the child reaches the level of “...a naïve subject, when one's own model of the mental can not only be separated from the model of the mental of the Other, but also the possibility emerges of mentally influencing it; the model becomes situationally independent” (Sergienko et al., 2009, p. 79). In the model obtained by us, a correlation was found between theory of mind scores and the “self-control” factor of cultural congruence.

The study as a whole confirms the thesis that irony possesses the property of normative bias and contains knowledge about cultural norms, which in turn constitutes a key unit for analyzing behavior. In the cultural-historical concept, L.S. Vygotsky draws attention to the comic in children's behavior at the end of preschool age, when the child clowns around, pretends to be a jester, and wants to appear funny to others (Vygotsky, 1984), thus entering into a peculiar dialogue with others. This dialogue resembles play, in which, according to V.T. Kudryavtsev, there exists an “ontogenetic precedent”, manifested in what L.S. Vygotsky called the child's at-

tempt in play to “...make a leap above the level of their ordinary behavior” (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 220). In this sense, the study of irony in connection with play activity opens new possibilities for investigating the child's subject qualities, since both irony and play involve a rule as a unit of behavioral organization and the maintenance of this rule in two contexts.

The fact of the relationship between irony comprehension, theory of mind, and behavioral regulation has prospects for development in practical work with children related to rule assimilation, socialization, and the formation of executive functions, which requires the inclusion of plots with ironic content in preschool education programs.

The interdisciplinarity of irony as a subject of research is evident; precisely such an approach, from both psychologists and linguists, opens prospects for posing the problem of irony in terms of its ambiguous content. The study of irony has potential for investigating communication as one of the causes of communication barriers. Studies of irony in connection with children's decoding of text meanings during reading appear promising (Barich et al., 2025).

Conclusion

The conducted study showed that five-year-old children are capable of understanding situations containing implicit, ironic meaning. At the same time, irony comprehension is associated with a number of factors of cultural congruence as a regulatory ability expressed in the conformity of the child's behavior to the rules imposed upon them. The factors “obedience” and “safety”, which unite normative situations involving rules concerning compliance with adults' expectations and safe behavior, have significant correlational relationships with preschool children's irony comprehension. Theory of mind is associated with such a factor of cultural congruence as self-control, which is explained by the reflexivity and metacognitive property of self-control, involving the child's capacity to analyze their own actions and behavior. Thus, the research hypotheses were fully confirmed. Irony comprehension as part of pragmatic competence, or the understanding and use of speech in a social context, is indeed associated with children's cultural congruence. The development in children of such an aspect of cultural congruence as safety (or adherence to safety rules established by adults) makes a particularly significant contribution to irony comprehension.

Limitations. These findings should be interpreted with caution due to potential response biases inherent in parent-report measures. Future work will employ direct observational or physiological methods to corroborate the results.

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Information about the authors

Nikolai E. Veraksa, Doctor of Sciences (Psychology), Professor, Department of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3752-7319>, e-mail: neveraksa@gmail.com

Larisa F. Bayanova, Doctor of Sciences (Psychology), Associate Professor, Researcher at the Department of Psychology of Education and Pedagogy, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7410-9127>, e-mail: balan7@yandex.ru

Ekaterina S. Oshchepkova, Candidate of Sciences (Philology), Researcher at the Department of Psychology of Education and Pedagogy, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6199-4649>, e-mail: maposte06@yandex.ru

Информация об авторах

Николай Евгеньевич Веракса, доктор психологических наук, профессор кафедры психологии образования и педагогики, факультет психологии, Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова (ФГБОУ ВО «МГУ им. М.В. Ломоносова»), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3752-7319>, e-mail: neveraksa@gmail.com

Лариса Фаритовна Баянова, доктор психологических наук, доцент, научный сотрудник кафедры психологии образования и педагогики, факультет психологии, Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова (ФГБОУ ВО «МГУ им. М.В. Ломоносова»), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7410-9127>, e-mail: balan7@yandex.ru

Екатерина Сергеевна Ощепкова, кандидат филологических наук, научный сотрудник кафедры психологии образования и педагогики, факультет психологии, Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова (ФГБОУ ВО «МГУ им. М.В. Ломоносова»), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6199-4649>, e-mail: maposte06@yandex.ru

Contribution of the authors

Nikolai E. Veraksa — ideas; annotation, planning of the research; control over the research.

Larisa F. Bayanova — data collection and analysis; writing and design of the manuscript

Ekaterina S. Oshchepkova — conducting the experiment; application of statistical methods for data analysis; visualization of research results.

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Development of infants born to mothers with normal and impaired reproductive function in the context of the social situation of development

I.A. Zolotova^{1, 2}, S.V. Trushkina² ✉

¹ Yaroslavl State Medical University, Yaroslavl, Russian Federation

² Russian Mental Health Research Centre, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ trushkinasv@gmail.com

Abstract

Context and relevance. For children in the first months of life, the basis of the social situation of development (SSD) is their involvement in the mother – child relationship. Conception and pregnancy achieved through assisted reproductive technologies (ART) often result in a chronic stressful situation for the woman, which can negatively affect the development of her maternal attitude. Communication with a close adult is the leading activity of a child in the first six months of life, and its disruption affects the overall development of children from these dyads. **Objective.** To compare the indicators of motor and emotional development in three-month-old children conceived with and without the use of reproductive technologies. **Hypothesis.** The social situation of development (SSD) in children born to mothers who used assisted reproductive technologies (ART) differs significantly from that in children born to mothers who did not, which is reflected in indicators of motor and emotional development as early as three months of age. **Methods and materials.** The study included 83 mother–child dyads with infants aged 3 to 3,8 months. In 20,5% of cases, the children were conceived using assisted reproductive technologies (ART). The research methods employed were clinical, experimental-psychological, and statistical. **Results.** The hypothesis was confirmed: children born with the use of assisted reproductive technologies (ART) differed from their peers with statistical significance in the level of motor skills development, despite approximately comparable indicators of physical health. **Conclusions.** The conditions of conception, pregnancy, and the postpartum period create a high risk of emotional disturbances and a shift in priorities in interaction with children for women who conceived through assisted reproductive technologies (ART). The social situation of development (SSD) for children is determined by these factors and may, in some cases, be considered emotionally deficient. Minimal differences in the level of physical health indicate that features of social interaction are the primary causes of delays in motor skills.

Keywords: assisted reproductive technologies, social situation of development, infancy, mother-child relationships, motor development, social-emotional development

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Развитие младенцев от матерей с сохранной и нарушенной репродуктивной функцией в контексте социальной ситуации развития

И.А. Золотова^{1, 2}, С.В. Трушкина² ✉

¹ Ярославский государственный медицинский университет, Ярославль, Российская Федерация

² Российский научный центр психического здоровья, Москва, Российская Федерация

✉ trushkinasv@gmail.com

Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Для детей первых месяцев жизни основной социальной ситуации развития выступает включенность в материнско-детские отношения. Зачатие и вынашивание ребенка при помощи вспомогательных репродуктивных технологий нередко оборачивается для женщины хронической стрессовой ситуацией, что может негативно сказываться на становлении ее материнского отношения. Общение с близким взрослым является ведущей деятельностью ребенка в первом полугодии жизни, и его нарушение сказывается на общем развитии детей из этих диад. **Цель:** сравнить показатели двигательного и эмоционального развития у детей в возрасте трех месяцев, зачатых с применением репродуктивных технологий и без них. **Гипотеза:** социальная ситуация развития у детей, рожденных матерями с применением вспомогательных репродуктивных технологий и без них, имеет существенные различия, что отражается на показателях двигательного и эмоционального развития уже к трехмесячному возрасту. **Методы и материалы.** 83 материнско-детские диады, возраст детей от 3 до 3,8 мес., в 20,5% случаев были зачаты искусственным путем. Методы исследования: клинический, экспериментально-психологический, статистический. **Результаты.** Гипотеза подтвердилась: дети, рожденные с применением вспомогательных репродуктивных технологий, статистически достоверно отличались от сверстников по уровню развития двигательных навыков при приблизительно равных показателях физического здоровья. **Выводы.** Условия зачатия, протекания беременности и послеродового периода создают для женщин с искусственным зачатием высокий риск эмоциональных нарушений и смещения приоритетов во взаимодействии с детьми. Социальная ситуация развития для детей определяется этими факторами и может в ряде случаев рассматриваться как эмоционально дефицитная. Минимальные различия в уровне физического здоровья указывают на особенности социального взаимодействия как основные причины задержек двигательных навыков.

Ключевые слова: вспомогательные репродуктивные технологии, социальная ситуация развития, младенческий возраст, материнско-детские отношения, двигательное развитие, социально-эмоциональное развитие

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Introduction

The concept of “social situation of development” (SSD) was introduced into scientific circulation by L.S. Vygotsky, who defined it as a system of significant connections and relationships in a child that guide the course of their development at a given age. For infancy, he described SSD as the child's maximum dependence on an adult, combined with minimal means of communication for communicating their needs (Vygotsky, 1984). According to this logic, the dialectical contradiction inherent within the situation was viewed as the driving force behind the infant's development, primarily in the direction of speech development as a means of communication with an adult. However, modern knowledge

of infant development indicates the existence of broad pre-verbal communicative capabilities, which in reality alleviates the severity of this contradiction and, therefore, necessitates a new approach to the problem of SSD for this age. For children in the first months of life, it is determined, first of all, by inclusion in mother-child relationships and the experience of deep community with a close adult (Lisina, 2009; Smirnova, 2024).

The foundations of a dyadic approach to understanding infant mental development were laid a century ago by classic psychoanalytic scholars. These ideas gained widespread currency throughout the twentieth century. Despite the differences in interpretations of early childhood development, the recognition that its normal course is impossible without close interaction with a close adult

remains a fundamental feature of classical psychoanalysis, neo-Freudianism, cultural-historical psychology, the activity approach, attachment theory, perinatal psychology, the concepts of Daniel Stern and Stanley Greenspan, and others (Mukhamedrakhimov, 2003). A modern scientific approach to the social development of children in the first year of life must inevitably be based on concepts of dyadic mother-child relationships.

The specific content of an infant's social connections directly depends on the mother's parenting position—her value orientations, the educational strategies and tactics of routine care and interaction with the infant based on them, as well as on the gender-role structure of the family and the intra-family situation as a whole. In the modern world, these characteristics exhibit a very wide variability. Thus, within the framework of attachment theory (without using the term “social situation of development”, of course), extensive experimental material has been used to demonstrate how the characteristics of interpersonal interactions within the mother-child dyad shape various types of behavioral and emotional responses, goal-directed activity, and mental representations in children, and also influence the child's overall development and level of mental health. In the works of E.O. Smirnova, the concept of a “deficient sociocultural situation of development” was developed, leading to disturbances in the development of fine and gross motor skills, speech, and spatial representations in young and preschool children (Karabanova, 2022). In a psychological and sociological study by V.S. Sobkin and his co-authors demonstrated that young children from two-parent and single-parent families experience different maternal influences, which impacts their personal development. The authors of the study advance the idea that, in today's social order, we should not focus on a single, universal SSD within a given age range, but rather on a set of typical social developmental situations (Sobkin, Marich, 2002).

In light of the above, the specifics of raising a child conceived through modern conception technologies deserve special attention. Assisted reproductive technologies (ART) are a range of medical procedures aimed at assisting in the conception and birth of a child in cases of infertility. These technologies involve manipulation of sperm, eggs, or embryos to help a couple conceive, carry, and deliver a child. Despite its widespread use, having a child through ART is not a common occurrence in the life of a modern family and has significant differences from natural childbirth. These differences can be summarized as follows.

A diagnosis of female infertility can itself be a factor in a woman's emotional instability, contributing to the development of so-called “reproductive inferiority syndrome”. A prolonged, unsuccessful wait for pregnancy, the resulting exacerbation of family problems, unsuccessful attempts at ART accompanied by intense disappoint-

ment and emotional pain, and a high risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth—all of this often leads to persistent emotional disturbances and neurotic states that persist into the postpartum period (Golyshkina et al., 2021; Zolotova, Malafeevskaya, 2023). Furthermore, an “obsession” with the idea of motherhood can have a paradoxical consequence, when a woman's primary interest is focused on the pregnancy and birth of a child, without recognizing the need for further deep involvement in the processes of care and upbringing. The listed factors can contribute to the formation of dysfunctional relationships in the mother-child system and affect the mental health and development of the child (Zolotova, Khazova, 2025).

According to several studies, children conceived through ART are more likely than other children in the general population to experience increased sensitivity and excitability, unstable autonomic responses, sleep and appetite disturbances, general motor disinhibition, and delayed speech development (Solovyeva, 2014). However, the impact of ART conception on children's subsequent development has been insufficiently studied. Most studies, both in Russia and abroad, focus on the physical health rather than the mental development of these children, and the results obtained have been highly contradictory. Furthermore, children are examined primarily in preschool or school age, less frequently in early childhood, and very rarely in the first months after birth (Solovyeva, 2014; Bokhan et al., 2024), which is partly due to the difficulty of accessing groups of children of this age for research and a number of ethical issues.

Purpose of the study: to compare the indicators of motor and emotional development in children aged three months, conceived naturally and using ART.

Hypothesis: The social developmental situation of children born to mothers using assisted reproductive technologies and without them has significant differences, which is reflected in their motor and emotional development indicators by the age of three months.

Materials and methods

The study involved 83 mother-child dyads (166 people in total).

Sample of children

The average age of the children at the time of the examination was 3,3 months, including 37 boys (44%) and 46 girls (56%). All children were born full-term at 37–41 weeks of gestation.

Inclusion criteria were children aged 3 to 3,8 months; exclusion criteria included the presence of serious physical health conditions that could negatively impact psychophysiological development.

Sample of mothers

The mothers ranged in age from 21 to 45 years (average age 34 years). Of these, 17 women (20,5%) conceived using ART, while 66 (79,5%) conceived naturally. The overall sample of mothers was matched for family social adaptability and socially acceptable attitudes toward children. Clinical interviews determined whether the mothers desired a child, and 100% of them responded affirmatively to the question about the conscious decision to conceive. All women signed a voluntary informed consent form to participate in the scientific study.

Inclusion criteria included consent to have their child examined by a clinical psychologist; exclusion criteria included family social distress, undesirability of the child, and dysfunctional parental attitudes.

Research methods

1. Clinical method: a medical examination of the child to determine their current somatic condition and health status at the time of the examination.

2. Experimental psychological method, including:

— a clinical interview with women in the form of a semi-structured interview to obtain anamnestic data on conception, pregnancy, and childbirth, to identify the desire for childbirth, the specifics of planning for both the most recent and previous pregnancies on the part of both the mother and the father, and the presence of difficulties in caring for and interacting with the infant;

— an empirical assessment of the development of motor, emotional, and social skills in three-month-old children by conducting diagnostic tests to determine the development of the relevant skills. I.A. Zolotova's original methodology, developed in accordance with the objectives of the study, was used.

3. A statistical processing method including descriptive statistics and comparative analysis using Fisher's * angular transformation and Pearson's 2.

The developed methodology utilized the most representative criteria for normative psychosocial development of infants (Griffiths R, 1996; Kustova et al., 2018; Keshishyan, 2020; Trushkina, 2021). The degree of development of motor skills, emotional development, and social skills was assessed on a scale from 0 to 2 points: 0 points—skill not developed; 1 point—skill in the developmental stage; 2 points—skill fully developed.

Contents of experimental tests

Development of motor skills.

1. While lying on the stomach, briefly lifts the head, holding it for at least 3 seconds.

2. While lying on the stomach, lifts the head 45 degrees and holds it for several minutes.

3. Straightens the legs from a flexed position.

4. Opens and closes the hand.

5. Turns the head toward a sound while lying on the back.

6. While lying on the stomach, supports the forearms bent at an acute angle.

7. Supports the head well in an upright position.

8. While lying on the stomach, lifts the head 90 degrees and holds it for several minutes.

9. While lying on the back, keeps the head in the mid-line.

10. Folds the hands together.

11. Moves the half-open palm toward the offered object. Attempts to touch the object, swinging it.

12. Tries to roll from back to side.

13. Lying on stomach, supports himself on forearms bent at a right angle.

14. Lying on back, lifts head when traction is applied to arms.

15. Rolls from back to stomach or from stomach to back.

16. Keeps their palm open.

17. Examines, feels, grasps and holds rattles, and puts them in their mouth.

Development of the emotional sphere and social skills.

1. The child notices the adult's address and attempts to establish eye contact.

2. Fixes gaze.

3. Social smile (communication smile, in response to an adult's address).

4. Reacts to sound with concentration (fixed gaze or cessation of movements).

5. Turns head toward sound.

6. A special smile addressed to a close, significant adult.

7. Full animation complex (a special emotional-motor response to an adult's address, including concentration, smiling, vocalizations, and motor animation).

8. Emotions of joy in the form of squeals or laughter.

9. Begins to transmit negative emotions (displeased when a toy is taken away).

10. Protests when losing an adult's gaze or when the adult is about to leave.

11. Turns toward a voice upon hearing their name.

Progress of the study

The study was conducted at a regional children's clinical hospital in the Central Region over the course of one year. In the first stage of the study, a representative sample of 83 mother-child dyads was recruited through clinical interviews. Respondents were divided into two groups based on their method of conception: the ART group (using assisted reproductive technologies) and the NC group (using natural conception). The ART group included 17 dyads, while the NC group included 66 dyads. The interviews were conducted by a clinical (perinatal) psychologist.

In the second stage, 83 apparently healthy children with no clinical signs of infection or somatic, neurologi-

cal, or mental disorders were examined. These children were classified into the “ART” and “NC” groups. The study plan included: 1) an assessment of their somatic status and confirmation of their health status at the time of the study (conducted by a pediatrician); 2) an assessment of their motor and emotional development (conducted by a clinical psychologist).

The examination of each dyad lasted approximately 40 minutes.

In the third stage, the results were analyzed using statistical methods.

Results

Results of clinical interviews with mothers

Clinical interviews with mothers, in addition to the aforementioned data on the unconditional desire for a child, yielded a number of qualitative findings. For example, the narratives of 87% of mothers who conceived through ART indicated they experienced severe anxiety about motherhood. They typically stated: “Anxiety never leaves me”, “I’m constantly afraid of something, worried that something will go wrong with the baby”, and “I’m afraid I won’t be able to cope, so I trust my mother to raise me”. Frequently, stories were told of the fears that accompanied the months of pregnancy and motherhood: fear of revealing the secret of artificial conception, fear of misunderstanding and judgment from friends and family, fear of losing the child. In some cases, low self-esteem or lingering feelings of guilt, for example, over the loss of the ability to conceive naturally, were present. In the NC group, signs of anxiety-phobic disorders were observed significantly less frequently, occurring only in isolated cases, and their overall emotional state was noticeably more stable. Furthermore, a striking difference in preferred conversation topics was observed between the ART and NC groups: women with natural conception were more likely to discuss their child with the specialist (their health, behavioral characteristics, joys and difficulties interacting with them, etc.), while mothers with artificial conception were more willing to engage in conversations about themselves or their family situation.

Results of the examination of children

The results are presented as follows:

1. The child’s health status (as an indicator of physical health);
2. The level of motor skill development;
3. The level of emotional development and communication skills.

Children’s physical health level

Based on the pediatric examination results, 82% of children in the overall sample were classified in health group 2 and 18% in health group 3. Health group 2 is the most common among children of this age in the region. It allows for minor functional deviations in children’s physical health and is considered favorable for subsequent successful psychophysical development. Health group 3 also does not limit children’s normal development during infancy; however, it requires monitoring by specialists: pediatricians, neurologists, cardiologists, and perinatal (clinical) psychologists. In the sample examined, children with health group 3 had low birth weight (40%), neonatal jaundice (40%), and congenital heart disease without circulatory impairment (20%).

The distribution of children by physical health groups in the ART and NC groups is reflected in Table 1.

As Table 1 shows, the distribution of children across health groups, although minor, differs between the ART and NC groups. Using Fisher’s exact coefficient, the difference between groups was determined to be $p \leq 0,1$, which corresponds to a trend.

The level of psychophysiological development of children.

To analyze differences in children’s development across areas (motor, emotional, and communication skills), this study adopted quantitative criteria for “optimal development” and “obvious developmental delay”. Development in a given area was considered optimal if a child scored between 90% and 100% of the maximum score on all tests. Cases with a score of 70 percent or less of the maximum score were considered overt developmental delay. The authors emphasize that these criteria were used solely as a basis for group comparison in this study and cannot be recommended for clinical use until they are statistically validated in larger child samples.

Differences in physical health groups in three-month-old children conceived through ART and naturally

Table 1

Group	The proportion of children classified as health group 2, %	The proportion of children classified as health group 3, %
ART (Assisted reproductive technologies)	76,5	23,5
NC (Natural conception)	83,5	16,5
Overall for the sample	82,0	18,0

The percentages of children with optimal and delayed development in the areas studied are given in Table 2.

As follows from Table 2, in the ART and NC groups the number of children with both the most and the least successful development differs.

Differences in cases with “optimal development” were assessed using Fisher’s angular transformation coefficient. Differences in motor development were statistically significant at $p \leq 0,05$, and in socio-emotional development at $p \leq 0,1$.

Differences in cases of “obvious delay” were analyzed using the Pearson chi-squared test, as the Fisher angular transformation is inapplicable to proportions with a zero value. Differences in motor development were statistically significant at $p \leq 0,01$, and in socio-emotional development at $p \leq 0,1$ (with 1 degree of freedom).

Table 3 shows the levels of statistical differences in the state of physical health and psychophysiological development of children from the ART and NC groups.

Thus, the study confirmed the hypothesis: children born to mothers who used assisted reproductive technologies and those who conceived naturally show statistically significant differences by the age of three months in the level of motor (to a greater extent) and socio-emotional (to a lesser extent) development, with minor differences in physical health indicators.

Discussion

First, the study showed that three-month-old infants conceived through ART and naturally have some differences in their physical health, but statistical methods only confirm these differences at the trend level. Similar conclusions were reached in previous studies by international psychologists and clinicians (Kelly-Vance, 2004; Klemetti, 2006; Djuwantono et al., 2020; Lo, Weng, Tsai, 2022; Pinborg, Wennerhol, Bergh, 2023; Angel et al., 2025). Russian researchers are divided on the likelihood of reduced physical health in children conceived through ART. Some authors point to the frequency of physical health problems in these children (Zyuzikova et al., 2018), while the opposing view is as follows: “The in vitro fertilization procedure does not negatively impact the health of children born from singletons and multiple pregnancies” (Malyshkina et al., 2019, p. 44).

Furthermore, the study revealed statistically significant differences in psychophysiological development indicators between children conceived naturally and via ART. The aforementioned insignificance of differences in physical health suggests that their cause lies in the specifics of maternal influences. Thus, 87% of women in the ART group reported a markedly unstable emotional state, lasting from the moment they entered the in vitro fertilization protocol until the interview, i.e., until the baby reached three

Table 2

Indicators of development of motor and emotional-social skills in three-month-old children conceived with the help of ART and naturally

Group	Motor sphere		Social-emotional sphere	
	Proportion of children with optimal level of development, %	The proportion of children who are clearly lagging behind in their development, %	Proportion of children with optimal level of development, %	The proportion of children who are clearly lagging behind in their development, %
(Assisted reproductive technologies)	66	17	68	5
NC (Natural conception)	87	0	85	0

Table 3

Statistical analysis of differences between groups

Indicator	Name of the statistical criterion	The meaning of the statistical criterion	Level of significance of differences between groups
Physical health level	Fisher angular transform	0,65	0,1
Optimal development of the motor sphere	Fisher angular transform	1,86	0,05
Optimal development of the emotional-social sphere	Fisher angular transform	1,50	0,1
Obvious delay in motor development	X ² Pearson	12,15	0,01
Obvious lag in the development of the emotional and social sphere	X ² Pearson	1,01	Not significant

months of age. On average, the period of chronic stress among the study participants lasted from one and a half to three years. Its intensity varied depending on the course of the *in vitro* fertilization process, the woman's personal characteristics, the level of family support, and other circumstances. The problem of affective distress in women with a history of impaired reproductive function is recognized by many domestic and foreign authors and is widely discussed (Osipenko, 2020; Golyshkina, 2021; Solovieva, 2021; Zolotova, Malafeevskaya, 2023). It is reasonable to conclude that these particular characteristics of mothers in the ART group (likely in combination with other factors) could have had a negative impact on the mental development of their children. The scientific literature documents two main pathways for such influences. The first is the course of pregnancy under unfavorable emotional conditions. A link has been established between prenatal depression and chronic anxiety in mothers and subsequent impaired the mental development in children. Long-term developmental consequences have been observed in children conceived through ART, including a noted decline in cortical function at ages 5-8 (Surkova et al., 2025). The second way in which the mother's emotional state negatively impacts the child's development during the perinatal period is through disruption of the mother-child relationship (Zolotova, Khazova, 2025). Numerous studies in perinatal psychology, the systemic family approach, psychoanalysis, attachment theory, and other fields have devoted detailed discussions to this issue.

This study noted an interesting phenomenon: the mother's immediate value of the child (as an object of love and care, as a developing individual) is replaced by the value of the mere fact of the child's birth and existence. In routine childcare practices, this could lead to the mother's desire to limit her involvement with the child, reduce or even delegate her responsibilities for the child's upbringing. Thus, statements like this were heard in the conversations: "I've already accomplished the task—I became a mother, now I want to relax". Similar distortions in the need-motivational structure of the maternal sphere were previously noted in a study of the attitudes toward young children in women with deviant maternal behavior (Trushkina, 2025). The theoretical developments of G.G. Filippova allow us to regard these phenomena as "inculcating values" that hinder the formation of optimal mother-child relationships and dyadic interaction (Filippova, 2002).

Finally, the high incidence of motor developmental disorders in children in the ART group appears unexpected at first glance. It would seem that interaction with an anxious or under-engaged mother would have a greater impact on the child's emotional and communication skills. However, the obtained

result is entirely consistent with the position of the founders of the cultural-historical and activity-based approaches — L.S. Vygotsky, A.V. Zaporozhets, D.B. Elkonin, V.V. Davydov, M.I. Lisina and others, who argued that it is communication with an adult that is the leading activity in the first half of life, and it determines the development of other types of activity. Experiments by the Lisina school (Meshcheryakova, 1975) demonstrated that increasing the duration and intensity of emotionally charged interactions with adults resulted in children "... mastering grasping sooner, engaging in longer and more varied activities with toys they came across, freeing themselves earlier from impulsive, unproductive methods of examining objects, and mastering more precise and better-controlled actions involving the combined use of the eyes, hands, and mouth" (Lisina, 2009, p. 170). A lack of interaction with an interested and supportive close adult is a significant factor in delayed motor development in three-month-old infants.

Conclusion

1. The study shows that the specific conditions of conception, pregnancy, and the postpartum period when using ART create a high risk for women to develop chronic stress, emotional disturbances, and a shift in priorities in the formation of their maternal motivational sphere.

2. The social developmental situation for her child is largely determined by these factors and can in most cases be considered emotionally deficient.

3. The results obtained in the study indicate that the development of basic motor skills in children conceived through ART is delayed by three months of age compared to children conceived naturally.

4. In terms of physical health, all the children examined differed only slightly, which allows us to see the main reasons for the differences in the characteristics of social influences.

5. This interpretation of the results obtained in the study is entirely consistent with the postulates of the cultural-historical and activity-based approaches, but has scientific novelty in understanding the characteristics of the development of children conceived using ART.

6. A more complete understanding of the picture of the influence of the characteristics of the social situation of development on the development of children conceived artificially requires additional research.

Limitations. We concede that an increase in the sample size may lead to changes in the observed level of differences in the formation of motor and emotional-communicative skills between three-month-old infants conceived naturally and those conceived via ART.

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Information about the authors

Irina A. Zolotova, Candidate of Sciences (Psychology), Associate Professor, Associate Professor of the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy, Yaroslavl State Medical University, Yaroslavl, Russian Federation; Senior Researcher, Department of Interdisciplinary Research of Children's Health and Development, Mental Health Research Center, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5041-0082>, e-mail: iazolotova@mail.ru

Svetlana V. Trushkina, Candidate of Sciences (Psychology), Leading Researcher, Department of Medical Psychology, Russian Mental Health Research Center, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0628-2136>, e-mail: trushkinasv@gmail.com

Информация об авторах

Ирина Александровна Золотова, кандидат психологических наук, доцент, доцент кафедры психологии и педагогики, Ярославский государственный медицинский университет (ФГБОУ ВО ЯГМУ), Ярославль, Российская Федерация; старший научный сотрудник, отдел междисциплинарных исследований здоровья и развития детей, Научный центр психического здоровья (ФГБНУ РНЦПЗ), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5041-0082>, e-mail: iazolotova@mail.ru

Светлана Валерьевна Трушкина, кандидат психологических наук, ведущий научный сотрудник, отдел медицинской психологии, Российский научный центр психического здоровья (ФГБНУ РНЦПЗ), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0628-2136>, e-mail: trushkinasv@gmail.com

Contribution of the authors

Zolotova I.A. — research ideas, planning and conducting the research; data collection and analysis, writing and design of the manuscript.

Trushkina S.V. — research ideas, application of statistical, mathematical or other methods for data analysis; writing and design of the manuscript.

All authors participated in the discussion of the results and approved the final text of the manuscript.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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From beliefs to behaviors: parental correlates of mobile device use among children

P. Bozzato¹ ✉, N. Leanza¹, M. Croce²

¹ University of Insubria, Como-Varese, Italy

² University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI), Manno, Switzerland

✉ paolo.bozzato@uninsubria.it

Abstract

Context and relevance. Mobile device use in school-aged children is understudied, especially in relation to family factors, despite Vygotskian perspectives emphasizing social and cultural mediation in development. **Objective.** To examine how parental demographics, attitudes, and behaviors are associated with children's mobile device use during middle childhood. **Hypothesis.** Parents' own device use, beliefs about mobile apps, parental norms, and household structure were hypothesized to be associated with children's mobile use. **Methods and Materials.** A cross-sectional online survey was conducted with 969 Italian parents of children aged 6–10. Measures included sociodemographics, parents' and children's device use, and parental screen norms. Multiple regression analyses were applied. **Results.** Children's use was significantly associated with parents' own device use, parent gender, the presence of older siblings, and parental norms. Parents' positive attitudes were associated specifically with children's smartphone use, whereas parental concerns were weakly negatively associated with smartphone use. Parental norms emerged as the strongest and most consistent correlate across all device types. Lower parental education was associated with greater use of smartphones, tablets, and video game consoles, and lower subjective socioeconomic status was linked to higher tablet use. At the child level, older age was associated with greater smartphone, tablet, and laptop use, whereas boys reported higher use of laptops and video game consoles, and girls higher use of tablets. **Conclusions.** Consistent with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, children's digital routines appear closely intertwined with individual characteristics, parental beliefs and modeling, and household structures.

Keywords: children, parents, sociocultural theory, mobile devices, screen time

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От убеждений к поведению: связь родительских установок и поведения с использованием мобильных устройств детьми

П. Боццато¹ ✉, Н. Леанца¹, М. Кроче²

¹ Университет Инсубрии, Комо-Варезе, Италия

² Университет прикладных наук и искусств Южной Швейцарии, Манно, Швейцария

✉ paolo.bozzato@uninsubria.it

Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Несмотря на ключевую роль социального и культурного опосредования в развитии, согласно теории Л.С. Выготского, использование мобильных устройств детьми школьного возраста все еще остается малоизученной областью — особенно в контексте влияния семейных факторов. **Цель.** Изучить, как демографические характеристики, установки и поведение родителей связаны с

использованием мобильных устройств детьми в среднем детстве. **Гипотеза.** Факторами, предсказывающими использование мобильных устройств детьми, являются: использование устройств родителями, их взгляды на мобильные приложения, семейные ценности и правила, а также структура семьи. **Методы и материалы.** Было проведено кросс-секционное онлайн-анкетирование с участием 969 итальянских родителей детей в возрасте от 6 до 10 лет. В рамках исследования собирались сведения о социально-экономических условиях, времени использования устройств, как родителями, так и детьми, а также о правилах родителей по контролю за использованием мобильных устройств. Для анализа данных были применены методы множественной регрессии. **Результаты.** Использование устройств детьми было связано с использованием устройств их родителями, полом родителя, наличием старших братьев или сестер, а также ценностями родителей. Положительное отношение родителей напрямую ассоциировалось с частым использованием смартфонов детьми, тогда как беспокойство родителей имело слабую отрицательную связь с использованием мобильных устройств. Ценности и правила родителей оказались наиболее важными и устойчивыми предикторами для всех видов устройств. Низкий уровень образования родителей связывался с большим временем, проведенным за смартфонами, планшетами и игровыми консолями, а низкий субъективный социально-экономический статус — с более частым использованием планшетов. Более старший возраст детей был связан с увеличением времени использования смартфонов, планшетов и ноутбуков. Также было установлено, что мальчики чаще используют ноутбуки и игровые консоли, а девочки — планшеты. **Выводы.** Опираясь на социокультурную теорию Л.С. Выготского, мы можем сделать вывод о том, что цифровые привычки детей определяются не только их личными характеристиками, но и семейной структурой, убеждениями родителей и подражанием их поведению.

Ключевые слова: дети, родители, социокультурная теория, мобильные устройства, экранное время

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Introduction

The widespread adoption of mobile devices — such as smartphones, tablets, and video game consoles — has transformed children’s everyday environments, raising both concerns and opportunities across developmental fields. Recent data show that 30% of children aged 8–9 own a smartphone, a figure that rises to 70% among 12–13-year-olds and nearly 90% among those aged 14 and older (Rideout, Robb, 2021). In Italy, 51% of 9–10-year-olds use smartphones (Mascheroni, Ólafsson, 2018).

Although extensive research has focused on early childhood, far fewer studies have systematically examined mobile device use in school-age children (6–10 years), despite their growing digital autonomy (Danet, 2020). This study addresses that gap by examining how parents’ and children’s demographics, together with parents’ beliefs and behaviors, are associated with children’s use of mobile devices during middle childhood.

This work is grounded in Vygotsky’s (1978; 1986; 1987) socio-cultural theory, which emphasizes the formative role of caregivers and cultural tools in child development. As Ivich (2024) argues, digital media — like books or writing systems — can function as “psychological tools,” mediating attention, language, and cognition. From this perspective, mobile technologies should not be viewed as inherently harmful or beneficial but rather as cultural artifacts whose developmental impact depends on how they are integrated into socially mediated experiences.

Studies have shown that mobile devices, when used in educational contexts, can enhance literacy, numeracy, and creative thinking (Doron, Derby, 2017; Dorris et al., 2024). Touchscreen tablets, in particular, support early literacy by mimicking traditional learning tools (Neumann, Neumann, 2017). These tools can also foster metacognitive awareness and problem-solving — functions that Vygotsky attributes to internalized social interaction. In this light, digital engagement can represent a form of “artificial development” (Ivich, 2024) when guided by supportive adults.

At the same time, concerns about excessive and poorly regulated screen exposure persist. Research has linked prolonged screen time to decreased academic performance, attention problems, and internalizing and externalizing symptoms (Liu et al., 2022; Miyashita et al., 2023). Physical effects include sedentary behavior and disrupted sleep (Zou et al., 2023). Such risks highlight the need to examine how family context shapes children’s digital routines.

Parental characteristics — such as education, income, family structure, and screen habits — are consistently associated with children’s technology use (Nagata et al., 2022; Beynon et al., 2024; Tulviste et al., 2024). For example, children from lower-income or less-educated households are more likely to have unsupervised access to devices such as televisions or game consoles (Atkin et al., 2014; Tandon et al., 2012). Maternal screen use has also been shown to be associated with children’s screen exposure, even in infancy (Nagata et al., 2025).

Beyond demographics, parental attitudes and beliefs about technology are strongly associated with children's screen time. According to Vygotsky, these attitudes function as culturally mediated psychological tools that guide learning. Parents who view screen time as beneficial may reinforce it through co-use and positive modeling (Chiong, Shuler, 2010; Takeuchi, 2011). Conversely, negative attitudes may result in digital restriction or passive "babysitting" practices (Vandewater, Bickham, Lee, 2006). These differing "digital climates" reflect broader family values and influence how children internalize screen-related behaviors.

Several studies highlight strong associations between parental norms, subjective beliefs, and children's media use. For instance, Lauricella, Wartella and Rideout (2015) and Reid Chassiakos et al. (2016) found that parents' perceived appropriateness of screen time correlates with children's actual media use. Cingel and Krcmar (2013) observed that parents with positive attitudes toward digital media had children with greater screen exposure, especially in early childhood. This suggests that parental beliefs operate independently of structural factors such as age or education.

Guided by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, we conceptualize parents' internalized beliefs and individual norms regarding children's mobile device use as culturally mediated psychological tools that are transmitted and gradually internalized through everyday interactions. On this basis, the present study examines how these norms, together with parents' and children's demographic characteristics, are associated with children's mobile device use during middle childhood. Building on these considerations, the present study addressed two research questions:

RQ1: Are parents' demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, education, perceived socioeconomic status), parents' attitudes toward mobile apps, and children's characteristics (e.g., gender, age, co-residence with one or both parents, presence of older siblings) associated with children's mobile device use?

RQ2: Is the amount of mobile device use that a parent believes is appropriate — controlling for child age, parental education, and household composition — associated with children's actual mobile device use?

Materials and methods

Participants and procedure

The present study employed a cross-sectional design with an Italian convenience sample. Data were collected anonymously via a self-administered online survey, accessible through a link, following informed consent.

Recruitment strategies included collaborations with primary schools and community organizations, as well as dissemination via social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp). Inclusion criteria were: (a) residence in Italy; (b) sufficient knowledge of Italian; (c) being a parent of a child aged 6–10 years; and (d) voluntary survey completion with consent for data

use in scientific publications. Exclusion criteria included: (a) failure to provide informed consent and (b) incomplete survey responses. No incentives were offered.

Of the 1122 parents initially recruited, 969 (86,4%) met the criteria and completed the survey. The final sample comprised 696 mothers (71,8%) and 273 fathers (28,2%), with a mean age of 43,5 years ($SD = 7,18$).

Measures

A questionnaire tailored to the local context was developed, drawing on and slightly modifying tools from previous studies. It consisted of four sections:

Socio-demographic sheet. Participants reported their age, gender, country of origin, educational level, and perceived social status. Educational levels were coded as follows: 1 = *middle school diploma or less*, 2 = *high school diploma*, 3 = *university degree*, 4 = *doctoral or post-graduate degree*. Perceived social status was measured using the MacArthur Subjective Social Status Scale — Adult Version (Adler et al., 2000), with a 10-rung ladder indicating social standing. Parents with more than one child aged 6–10 were asked to select one and report that child's gender and age, co-residence with one or both parents, and presence of older siblings.

Child's and parent's mobile device use. Parents reported their own and their child's daily use of mobile devices (smartphone, tablet, laptop, and video game console), using a time scale ranging from 0 minutes to over 3 hours, with 15- and 30-minute intervals, based on formats used in prior studies (e.g., Cingel, Krcmar, 2013). Responses were converted into minutes for analysis.

Parents' perceived positive effects and concerns about children's use of apps. Parents rated both perceived positive effects and concerns using two sets of 5-point Likert scales (1 = *no effect/concern*, 5 = *very high effect/concern*), plus a "Don't know" option. Items addressed five domains: (a) motor development; (b) cognitive development (e.g., attention, reasoning, intelligence, memory); (c) language and communication; (d) social interaction; and (e) emotional understanding and expression. The positive effects scale ($M = 14,08$, $SD = 3,83$, $\alpha = 0,81$) and the concerns scale ($M = 12,11$, $SD = 3,83$, $\alpha = 0,80$) both demonstrated good reliability. Total scores were calculated by summing responses, with higher scores reflecting greater perceived effects or concerns.

Parental individual norms for children's mobile device use. Parents indicated the amount of daily screen time they considered appropriate for their child for each device type, using the same time intervals as in the use section.

Statistical analysis plan

Descriptive statistics were first computed for all variables. Correlational analyses were then conducted to examine associations among variables. Finally, two separate sets of regression analyses were conducted to identify variables significantly associated with the outcomes and to address the two research questions. The first examined the influence of parental and child demographic variables and parental attitudes, while the sec-

ond focused on parental individual norms, treated as a distinct and proximal correlate. This approach allowed clearer interpretation of effects and avoided multicollinearity among conceptually related variables.

Given the cross-sectional design, these analyses estimate statistical associations rather than causal effects; accordingly, all results are interpreted as correlational. Data normality was evaluated using skewness and kurtosis indices, following Hair et al. (2010). Multicollinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) and tolerance values. All independent variables showed tolerance values above 0,40 and VIF values below 2,00, indicating no concerns with

multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2010). Analyses were performed using SPSS Statistics version 26.0.

Results

Participants' socio-demographic characteristics

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, including gender, age, country of origin, educational level, parental education levels, and perceived social status. The table also reports characteristics of the children, including gender, age, co-residence with one or both parents, and the presence of older siblings.

Table 1

Socio-demographic characteristics of parents and their children

Parameters	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Parent gender</i>				
Father	273	28,2		
Mother	696	71,8		
<i>Parent's age</i>			43,5	7,1
28–35 years	158	16,3		
36–43 years	391	40,4		
44–51 years	244	25,2		
52–60 years	176	18,2		
<i>Parent's country of origin</i>				
Italy	871	89,9		
Other country	98	10,1		
<i>Parent's educational level</i>			2,1	,9
Middle school diploma or less	262	27,0		
High school diploma	433	44,7		
University degree	187	19,3		
Doctoral or postgraduate degree	87	9,0		
<i>Perceived social status</i>			5,6	1,3
Very Low (1–2)	6	,6		
Low (3–4)	177	18,3		
Moderate (5–6)	551	56,9		
High (7–8)	224	23,1		
Very High (9–10)	11	1,1		
<i>Child characteristics</i>				
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	429	44,3		
Female	540	55,7		
<i>Age</i>			8,27	1,5
6 years	160	16,5		
7 years	170	17,5		
8 years	176	18,2		
9 years	178	18,4		
10 years	285	29,4		
<i>Co-residing with</i>				
Two Parents	774	79,9		
One Parent	195	20,1		
<i>Co-residing older siblings</i>				
Yes	569	58,7		
No	400	41,3		

Note: «*n*» — sample size; «*M*» — mean; «*SD*» — standard deviation.

Findings on children's and parents' use of mobile devices

Participants reported their own average daily use of mobile devices, as well as that of their child. According to parents' reports, 642 children (66,3%) use smartphones, 599 (61,8%) use tablets, 522 (53,9%) use laptops, and 513 (52,9%) use video game consoles. On average, children use smartphones for 39,4 minutes per day ($SD = 46,10$), tablets for 37,4 minutes ($SD = 43,6$), laptops for 22,1 minutes ($SD = 28,9$), and video game consoles for 31,0 minutes ($SD = 42,4$).

Only three parents reported not using a smartphone; 966 (99,7%) indicated regular use. Additionally, 486 parents (50,2%) reported using a tablet, 909 (93,8%) used a laptop, and 305 (31,5%) used a video game console. On average, parents used smartphones for 106,8 minutes per day ($SD = 38,8$), tablets for 26,9 minutes ($SD = 38,9$), laptops for 41,6 minutes, and video game consoles for 10,9 minutes ($SD = 18,1$).

Correlations among the study variables

Table 2 reports correlations among the main study variables, based on composite indices of total child and parent mobile use, and total parental norms (mean scores across smartphone, tablet, laptop, and video game console use).

Associations between parents' demographic characteristics, attitudes toward apps, and children's characteristics and children's mobile device use (RQ1)

To address RQ1, four simultaneous multiple regression analyses were conducted — one for each device type — following an examination of the correlations among the variables. Only children who were reported to use a given device were included in the corresponding analysis. As shown in table 3, the regression results revealed significant associations between parents' and children's demographic characteristics, their attitudes toward children's use of mobile technology, and children's actual use of such devices.

Associations between parental norms and children's mobile device use (RQ2)

To explore RQ2, a series of multiple regression analyses were conducted. As shown in table 4, individual parental norms regarding mobile device use were significantly associated with children's actual use across all device types, even when controlling for child age, parental education, and household composition. The strongest associations were observed for smartphones ($\beta = 0,58$) and tablets ($\beta = 0,43$), followed by video game consoles ($\beta = 0,24$), and laptops ($\beta = 0,22$).

Table 2

Zero-order correlations among the main study variables

Parameters	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Child's device use ^a	—											
2. Parent's device use ^a	0,26**	—										
3. Individual norms about the use of mobile device ^a	0,41**	0,08**	—									
4. Parent's gender	−0,22**	−0,31**	−0,07*	—								
5. Parent's educational level	−0,07*	−0,10**	−0,22**	−0,05	—							
6. Perceived social status	0,04	−0,01	−0,07*	−0,11**	−0,12**	—						
7. Child's gender	−0,18**	−0,01	−0,20**	−0,01	0,16**	−0,05	—					
8. Child's age	0,19**	0,07*	0,39**	−0,08*	−0,03	0,02	−0,01	—				
9. Number of parents co-residing with the child	−0,16**	0,02	−0,06	−0,07*	0,07*	−0,24**	−0,03	−0,20**	—			
10. Co-residing older siblings	0,23**	−0,01	0,31**	−0,01	0,14**	0,02	−0,23**	0,11**	0,03	—		
11. Perceived positive effect	0,31**	−0,03	0,38**	0,09**	−0,05	−0,09**	−0,15**	0,07*	0,01	0,30**	—	
12. Concerns	−0,19**	−0,01	−0,05	−0,04	0,04	0,07*	−0,07*	−0,03	0,17**	−0,11**	−0,07	—

Note: «a» — Composite indices represent total child and parent mobile use and total parental norms, computed as the mean of smartphone, tablet, laptop, and video game console use; «*» — correlation is significant at the 0,05 level (two-sided); «**» — correlation is significant at the 0,01 level (two-sided).

Table 3

Regression analyses of demographic variables and parents' attitudes toward mobile apps in relation to children's time on mobile devices (standardized coefficients)

Parameters	Smartphone ^a	Tablet ^b	Laptop ^c	Video game console ^d
Parent gender	–0,21***	–0,14***	0,01	0,02
Parent's educational level	–0,16***	–0,20***	–0,06	–0,09
Perceived social status	0,07	–0,17***	–0,03	–0,04
Number of parents co-residing with the child	–0,13***	–0,05	–0,08	–0,18***
Co-residing older siblings	0,25***	0,13***	0,15**	0,22**
Parent's mobile device use	0,19***	0,54***	–0,03	0,14**
Perceived positive effects	0,19***	0,06	–0,06	0,03
Concerns	–0,08*	0,03	0,03	–0,01
Child gender	0,06	0,07*	–0,16**	–0,29***
Child age	0,17***	0,07*	0,19***	–0,06
R ²	0,35	0,43	0,12	0,21

Note: «a» – $n = 642$; «b» – $n = 599$; «c» – $n = 522$; «d» – $n = 513$; Parent/child gender: 0 = male; 1 = female; «*» – correlation is significant at the 0,05 level (two – sided); «**» – correlation is significant at the 0,01 level (two-sided); «***» – correlation is significant at the 0,001 level (two – sided).

Table 4

Regression analyses of parental norms in relation to children's time on mobile devices (standardized coefficients)

Parameters	Smartphone ^a	Tablet ^b	Laptop ^c	Video game console ^d
Child's age	0,06	–0,01	0,11*	–0,05
Parent's educational level	–0,08*	–0,12**	–0,01	–0,16***
Number of parents co-residing with the child	–0,12***	–0,02	–0,08	–0,09*
Individual norms about the use of mobile devices	0,58***	0,43***	0,22***	0,24***
R ²	0,41	0,22	0,10	0,11

Note: «a» – $n = 642$; «b» – $n = 599$; «c» – $n = 522$; «d» – $n = 513$; «*» – correlation is significant at the 0,05 level (two-sided); «**» – correlation is significant at the 0,01 level (two – sided); «***» – correlation is significant at the 0,001 level (two-sided).

Discussion

Factors associated with increased mobile device use among children (RQ1)

Overall, our findings reveal significant variations in how parental demographics and attitudes, along with children's characteristics, are linked to differences in the frequency and type of mobile device use among children. Notably, the presence of older siblings was strongly associated with the use of every device examined, likely due to modeling behavior or shared device use. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that having siblings can facilitate earlier and more autonomous access to digital technology (Alder, Elias, 2025; Papadakis, Zaranis, Kalojiannakis, 2019) and can be interpreted within Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development. Through co-use, demonstrations, and shared play, older siblings likely provide social scaffolding that enables children to perform digital activities they could not yet manage independently, thereby accelerating their digital competencies.

Furthermore, parents' own use of mobile devices was significantly associated with increased use of smartphones, tablets, and video game consoles by their children. However, no such association was found for laptops. This pattern sug-

gests that children are more likely to model parental behaviors involving devices commonly used for entertainment or informal communication – such as smartphones and tablets – rather than laptops, which may be used more privately or for work-related tasks, and thus are less visible or engaging for imitation. In line with this, parents' positive attitudes toward mobile apps were associated with greater child use of smartphones, whereas no significant associations emerged for tablets, laptops, or video game consoles, underscoring the specific role of parental beliefs in reinforcing smartphone use. Conversely, parental concerns were weakly but significantly negatively associated only with smartphone use, suggesting that heightened concern may be linked to slightly lower levels of children's smartphone use.

However, this pattern appears weaker than the stronger associations with parental modeling and positive beliefs. Taken together, these results are consistent with previous literature highlighting the strong associations between parents' attitudes and practices and children's digital engagement (Griffith, 2023; Lee, Kim, Kim, 2022).

Parent gender was also significantly associated with children's device use: mothers reported lower smartphone and tablet use by their children compared to fathers, which may reflect differences in mediation styles

and technology-related norms across maternal and paternal roles. This finding aligns with previous studies. For instance, Valcke et al. (2010) found that mothers were more likely to adopt restrictive and authoritative mediation approaches — characterized by both high control and emotional warmth — in their regulation of children's internet use. Similarly, Livingstone (2007), in a UK-based study, reported that children perceived rules and controls set by mothers as stricter and more consistent than those set by fathers, who tended to engage in more passive or distant supervision strategies.

The combined influence of parents and older siblings on children's mobile device use aligns closely with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes learning as a socially mediated process. Parents, through their own device use and positive attitudes, function as key models and mediators, structuring access to technology and the implicit norms governing its use. Their behaviors provide children with opportunities for observational learning and shared activity, facilitating the internalization of digital tools as part of the developmental environment. At the same time, older siblings act as more capable peers within the child's Zone of Proximal Development, supporting the acquisition of new digital skills through co-use, demonstration, or imitation. This dual scaffolding — by adults and more experienced peers — illustrates how children's digital habits are co-constructed in everyday interactions, advancing their development through socially guided engagement with technology.

Lower parental education levels were associated with greater use of smartphones and tablets by children, suggesting that in families with fewer educational resources, mobile devices may play a more central role in children's daily routines. This finding aligns with broader research indicating that higher parental education is associated with more regulated or delayed media exposure (Cingel, Krcmar, 2013; Jiménez-Morales, Montaña, Medina-Bravo, 2020; Pons, Bennasar-Veny, Yañez, 2020). For instance, Jiménez-Morales, Montaña and Medina-Bravo (2020) found that children of mothers with lower educational levels and occupational status were more likely to consume content via smart devices. Similarly, Pons, Bennasar-Veny and Yañez (2020) showed that maternal education was inversely related to children's recreational screen time, with both direct and indirect effects mediated by family environmental factors.

Parental perceived socioeconomic status showed a significant negative association with children's tablet use, but was unrelated to smartphone, laptop, or video game console use. This partly contrasts with previous findings in the literature, which more consistently report socioeconomic differences in children's engagement with digital media. One possible explanation is that subjective social perceptions may not capture the structural and material conditions influencing children's media habits as effectively as objective indicators such as income or education. For example, Koivusilta, Lintonen, and Rimpelä (2007) found that adolescents from lower-income families used mobile phones more frequently than their more advantaged peers. Similarly, Tandon et al. (2012) reported that children from low-income

households had greater access to electronic media like televisions, DVD players, and video games, but less access to physical play equipment. Pons, Bennasar-Veny, and Yañez (2020) also showed that lower maternal education was associated with greater recreational screen time, both directly and through mediating family factors. These discrepancies highlight the potential limitations of relying solely on self-perceived social status measures in predicting digital media use among children.

The number of parents in the household was significantly associated with children's smartphone and video game console use, with children from single-parent households showing higher levels of use. No such associations were observed for tablets or laptops. This pattern may reflect greater reliance on accessible entertainment technologies in single-parent families, possibly due to fewer resources for alternative activities or less time for joint supervision. In two-parent households, by contrast, device use may be more diversified or more strictly monitored, particularly for devices like video game consoles that are often subject to parental regulation. Prior research supports this interpretation: Cingel and Krcmar (2013) found that children in single-parent homes consumed more educational and non-educational media overall, while Gentile and Walsh (2002) noted that children of unmarried parents spent more time with screen media. Additionally, Livingstone (2003) observed that computer use is often more purpose-driven and regulated in families with greater parental involvement, which may explain the relatively lower use of certain entertainment-oriented devices in two-parent households.

Finally, the results show that among child-level characteristics, age and gender are significantly associated with device use. Specifically, older children are more likely to use smartphones, tablets and laptops, suggesting developmental factors and increasing autonomy in digital engagement (Choi, King, Duerden, 2023; Cingel, Krcmar, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2020). In terms of gender, boys are significantly more likely than girls to use laptops and video game consoles, whereas girls show greater use of tablets. These patterns reflect both normative developmental trajectories and gendered media preferences, as stated in previous research (Chang, 2025; Pew Research Center, 2020).

Parental norms and children's actual mobile device use (RQ2)

The findings clearly demonstrate that parents' individual norms regarding appropriate mobile device use are the strongest and most consistent correlates of children's use across all device types — particularly for smartphones and tablets, where the effects are largest. This observation aligns with prior research: Cingel and Krcmar (2013) found that positive parental attitudes and perceived norms about preschool media use were strong predictors of children's actual screen time, outweighing concerns or negative attitudes. Our results suggest that parents' internalized beliefs — what Vygotsky would conceptualize as culturally mediated psychological tools — appear to play a foundational role in shaping children's digital routines. These norms are

expressed not only through explicit rules but also enacted via co-use, access decisions, and modeling behaviors. From a Vygotskian perspective, this reflects how higher psychological functions are socially constructed: parents mediate between cultural expectations and children's cognitive development, providing a framework within which children learn to use digital tools. Extending previous findings, our study indicates that these internalized norms remain strongly associated with media use well beyond the preschool years, underscoring the enduring role of mediated learning and scaffolding in digital contexts.

The inverse associations between parental education level and children's use of smartphones, tablets, and video game consoles suggest that parents with higher educational attainment are more likely to regulate their children's access to digital devices. This aligns with prior studies indicating that higher-educated parents tend to impose more structured and intentional media environments, promoting educational content while restricting recreational screen time (Calvert et al., 2005; Rideout, Hamel, 2006). Similarly, the significant negative effect of the number of co-residing parents — observed for smartphone and video game console use — suggests that children in two-parent households may experience more shared supervision, coordinated limit-setting, or diversified access to digital resources. Previous findings (Cingel, Krcmar, 2013) also show that children from single-parent households tend to consume more screen media.

Interestingly, child age was unrelated to smartphone, tablet, and video game console use, but it was significantly associated with greater laptop use. This partly contrasts with much of the developmental literature, which often emphasizes age-related increases across multiple device types. The selective association with laptops may reflect that these devices are more closely tied to schoolwork and educational purposes, which naturally expand with age. From a Vygotskian perspective, this pattern underscores that development is not solely driven by age-based maturation, but by the socially organized environment — especially shaped by parents' norms, beliefs, and behaviors — that guides children's engagement with mobile technologies (Vygotsky, 1978).

Taken together, these findings reinforce the idea that parental norms and structural household factors act as sociocultural tools in Vygotsky's sense, regulating not only access to mobile devices but also the broader developmental context in which digital competence is formed. Parents do not merely allow or restrict access — they mediate and model technology use, shaping the child's digital development through guided participation and culturally rooted expectations.

Conclusions

This study investigated associations between parental demographics, attitudes, individual norms, and mobile device use among school-age children, addressing two central research questions. The results demonstrate that children's digital routines are not merely the out-

come of individual characteristics such as age or gender, but emerge from a complex interplay of parental behaviors, household structures, and normative beliefs. Parents' own device use and their internalized norms were consistently associated with children's use across device types, while parents' positive attitudes toward mobile apps were specifically associated with greater smartphone use. Lower parental education was also linked to greater use of smartphones, tablets, and video game consoles, and the presence of older siblings significantly contributed to children's engagement, reinforcing the social scaffolding of digital practices.

Overall, the results largely, though not fully, confirm the hypotheses outlined in the introduction, with some expected associations only partially supported. In particular, they underscore the central role of parents' own device use and their internalized norms, and they align with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that children's development is mediated by cultural tools and social interactions. Within this framework, parents and siblings act as cultural mediators who guide children's engagement with technology in everyday routines, contributing to the ways in which digital tools are integrated into children's developmental experiences.

The significance of this research lies in highlighting mobile technologies as psychological tools whose impact depends on the social and cultural environments in which they are embedded. Beyond developmental psychology, these findings speak to broader debates on digital literacy, equity in educational opportunities, and the intergenerational transmission of cultural practices in the digital age.

Limitations. Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the use of a convenience sample of Italian parents of 6–10-year-old children — predominantly mothers — limits the generalizability of the findings. As such, the results reflect cultural norms and family structures specific to this context, and caution is warranted when extrapolating them to families in other cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic settings, where patterns of mobile device access and parental mediation may differ. Moreover, reliance on self-reported data may introduce social desirability and recall biases, and the use of self-perceived social status may not adequately capture objective socioeconomic conditions influencing children's mobile device use. In addition, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences; accordingly, the relationships observed should be interpreted as correlational associations rather than causal effects. Finally, the absence of direct behavioral measures of children's media use represents a further methodological constraint.

Future research should consider longitudinal approaches to explore how parental norms and family dynamics influence children's digital trajectories over time. In addition, integrating observational or device-tracking data could provide a more accurate and nuanced picture of children's digital practices. Cross-cultural comparisons could further illuminate how socio-cultural contexts modulate the relationship between parental mediation and children's technology use.

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Information about the authors

Paolo Bozzato, Master of Science (Psychology), PhD in Law and Humanities, Adjunct Professor of Developmental Psychology, Department of Human Sciences, Territory and Innovation (DiSUIT), University of Insubria, Como-Varese, Italy, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2836-9152>, e-mail: paolo.bozzato@uninsubria.it

Nicolas Leanza, Master of Science (Psychology), Psychologist Consultant for Learning Disabilities, University of Insubria, Como-Varese, Italy, e-mail: nicolas.leanza@uninsubria.it

Mauro Croce, Master of Science (Psychology), Adjunct Professor of Psychology, Department of Business Economics, Health and Social Care (DEASS), University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI), Manno, Switzerland, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6355-026X>, e-mail: macro.cuore@gmail.com

Информация об авторах

Паоло Боццато, магистр психологических наук, кандидат юридических и гуманитарных наук, адъюнкт-профессор возрастной психологии, факультет гуманитарных наук, Департамент гуманитарных наук и территориальных инноваций, Университет Инсубрии, Комо-Варесе, Италия, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2836-9152>, e-mail: paolo.bozzato@uninsubria.it

Николас Леанца, магистр психологических наук, психолог-консультант в области трудностей в обучении, Университет Инсубрии, Комо-Варесе, Италия, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8267-9807>, e-mail: nicolas.leanza@uninsubria.it

Мауро Кроче, магистр психологических наук, адъюнкт-профессор психологии, факультет бизнес-экономики, Департамент здравоохранения и социальной защиты, Университет прикладных наук и искусств Южной Швейцарии, Манно, Швейцария, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6355-026X>, e-mail: macro.cuore@gmail.com

Contribution of the authors

Paolo Bozzato — ideas; planning of the research; annotation, writing and design of the manuscript; data collection and analysis; application of statistical methods for data analysis.

Nicolas Leanza — ideas; visualization of research results; writing — review and editing;

Mauro Croce — ideas; control over the research; writing — review and editing; supervision of the research.

All authors participated in the discussion of the results and approved the final text of the manuscript.

Вклад авторов

Паоло Боццато — идеи; планирование исследования; аннотация, написание и оформление рукописи; сбор и анализ данных; применение статистических методов для анализа данных.

Николас Леанца — идеи; визуализация результатов исследования; рецензирование и редактирование.

Мауро Кроче — идеи; контроль над исследованием; рецензирование и редактирование; руководство исследованием.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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According to the regulations of the University of Insubria and national legislation, ethical approval was not required for anonymous survey research that does not collect identifiable personal data. Written informed consent for participation in this study was obtained from all the participants.

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The association between family digital rules and the development of emotion comprehension in preschool children

A.N. Shatskaya^{1,2} ✉, K.S. Tarasova¹, A.N. Veraksa^{1,2}, E.A. Chichinina¹

¹ Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation

² Federal Scientific Center of Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ arina.shatskaya@mail.ru

Abstract

Context and relevance. The pervasive engagement of modern preschoolers with the digital environment calls for a nuanced understanding of how family practices mediate its impact on child development. **Objective.** Moving beyond simplistic measures of screen time, this study analyzes the relationship between child-reported parental digital mediation and the annual growth in emotion comprehension during the preschool years. **Hypothesis.** Child-reported parental digital mediation (i.e., time limits, content restrictions, and rules governing the conditions of digital activity) serves as a significant predictor of the annual increase in emotion comprehension in preschoolers. **Methods and materials.** The sample included 1512 children ($M = 5,7$ years; $SD = 4,11$ months) assessed at the first time point in senior kindergarten groups, with a follow-up assessment of 1339 children ($M = 6,6$ years; $SD = 4,5$ months) one year later in preparatory groups. At both stages, children's emotion comprehension was assessed. Children also reported on family digital rules (time limits, content restrictions, and rules-conditions), while parents reported on their child's screen time. **Results.** No significant associations were found between any type of digital rule and the gain in emotion comprehension. This pattern was identical for boys and girls, despite boys demonstrating significantly higher screen time. Screen time itself also did not predict growth in emotion comprehension. **Conclusions.** The mere presence of digital rules, even when reported by the child, does not predict emotional development in preschool age. From the perspective of cultural-historical psychology, a formal rule not accompanied by emotional interaction with an adult is not internalized and remains an external constraint. The study highlights the need to shift the research focus from the existence of rules to the quality of their internalization within joint adult-child activity.

Keywords: emotional development, parental mediation, digital capital, screen time, preschoolers

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Связь семейных цифровых правил с развитием понимания эмоций в дошкольном возрасте

А.Н. Шатская^{1, 2} ✉, К.С. Тарасова¹, А.Н. Веракса^{1, 2}, Е.А. Чичина¹

¹ Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова, Москва, Российская Федерация

² Федеральный научный центр психологических и междисциплинарных исследований,

Москва, Российская Федерация

✉ arina.shatskaya@mail.ru

Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Повсеместное вовлечение современных дошкольников в цифровую среду требует тонкого понимания того, как семейные практики опосредуют ее влияние на развитие ребенка. **Цель.** Выходя за рамки упрощенных показателей экранного времени, проанализировать связь между воспринимаемой детьми родительской цифровой медиацией и годовым приростом понимания эмоций в дошкольном возрасте. **Гипотеза.** Воспринимаемая детьми родительская цифровая медиация (наличие временных и контентных ограничений, а также правил, регламентирующих условия цифровой активности) выступает значимым предиктором годового прироста понимания эмоций дошкольниками. **Методы и материалы.** Выборка включала 1512 детей ($M = 5,7$ лет, $SD = 4,11$ месяцев), обследованных на первом этапе в старших группах детских садов, с повторным обследованием 1339 детей ($M = 6,6$ лет, $SD = 4,5$ месяцев) через год в подготовительных группах. На обоих этапах проводилась диагностика уровня понимания эмоций. Также дети сообщали о наличии семейных правил использования цифровых устройств (ограничения времени, контентные ограничения и правила-условия), родители — об экранном времени ребенка. **Результаты.** Не было выявлено значимых связей между цифровыми правилами и приростом понимания эмоций. Этот паттерн оказался идентичным для мальчиков и девочек, несмотря на то что мальчики демонстрировали значимо более высокое экранное время. Экранное время также не выступило значимым предиктором развития понимания эмоций. **Выводы.** Наличие цифровых правил, даже если они осознавались ребенком, само по себе не является значимым предиктором эмоционального развития в дошкольном возрасте. С позиций культурно-исторической психологии, формальное правило, не сопровождаемое эмоциональным взаимодействием со взрослым, не интернализуется и остается внешним ограничителем, не затрагивающим аффективно-смысловую сферу ребенка. Исследование подчеркивает необходимость смещения фокуса с изучения наличия правил на анализ качества их интернализации в совместной деятельности ребенка и взрослого.

Ключевые слова: эмоциональное развитие, родительская медиация, цифровой капитал, экранное время, дошкольный возраст

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Introduction

Contemporary research places significant emphasis on the study of emotion comprehension in childhood. This construct is defined as the ability to consciously recognize the causes and consequences of one's own emotions and those of others, including the recognition, description, explanation, prediction, and regulation of their expression (Pons, Harris, 2000). In developmental psychology, it is considered an integral part of theory of

mind — a system of representations of mental phenomena that underpins social cognition (Sergienko, 2014). Although its foundations are laid in early childhood, emotion comprehension develops most intensively during the preschool years (Veraksa et al., 2021). A high level of emotion comprehension is associated with peer popularity, success in joint play and conflict resolution, academic achievement, and school readiness (Franco et al., 2017). Conversely, insufficient development is linked to difficulties in social adaptation (Pons, Harris, 2000),

an increased risk of anxiety and depression, and aggressive behavior (Trentacosta, Fine, 2010).

The immersion of preschoolers in the digital environment has created a new developmental context, extending parent-child interaction into the digital domain. Within the socio-cognitive framework of digital socialization, grounded in Vygotsky's cultural-historical approach, digital devices are understood as cultural tools mediating mental functions and social interaction (Soldatova, Chigarkova, Ilyukhina, 2025). In early childhood, the use of digital technologies is primarily mediated by adults; in the preschool years, however, children increasingly use devices independently (Smirnova, 2019). In most developed countries, children aged 3–6 use personal devices, and their daily screen time often reaches three hours (Veraksa et al., 2024). Numerous studies link high screen time to developmental risks (Lakicevic et al., 2025; Veraksa et al., 2024). At the same time, a growing consensus in the scientific community suggests that this approach is overly simplistic: the key factor is the quality and context of interaction with technology (Shatskaya et al., 2023), calling for new theoretical approaches.

Among the key concepts explaining the role of qualitative characteristics of children's digital experience is parental digital mediation. This is a key dimension of modern digital parenting, encompassing strategies through which parents guide, regulate, and discuss children's interactions with digital media (Rudnova et al., 2023). The main goals of mediation are regulating screen time (Kucirkova, Livingstone, 2017), protection from online risks (Smahel et al., 2020), and fostering children's digital literacy (Jeffery, 2021). The structure of mediation includes two key dimensions: parental control (limits and rules) and parental support (discussing content, emotional involvement) (Beyens, Keijsers, Coyne, 2022). Their combinations form more specific strategies: active mediation (discussion and guidance), restrictive mediation (rules and limits), authoritarian supervision (monitoring via passwords), monitoring (checking after use), and technical control (filters and software) (Ho et al., 2020).

Research demonstrates the contrasting role of parental digital mediation. Active mediation is associated with reduced risks of cyberbullying and childhood depression, whereas restrictive mediation and parental control are associated with increased risks (Beyens, Keijsers, Coyne, 2022). Restrictive strategies are also negatively related to opportunities for socialization and learning (Livingstone et al., 2017), while parents' development of children's digital literacy contributes to cognitive and academic skills (Soyoo et al., 2024). However, the link between digital mediation and emotional development remains largely unexplored: most studies focus on cognitive effects (Chigarkova, Soldatova, 2026). As Nabi and Wolfers (2024) note, the question of how digital experience

affects emotional development has yet to receive adequate attention. The present study aims to address this gap.

Evidence on the relationship between emotional development and digital experience is contradictory. On one hand, risks associated with high digital activity in preschool age have been identified: excessive screen time is linked to emotional lability (Ofli et al., 2021); prolonged device use at age 4 predicts lower emotion comprehension at age 6 (Skalick et al., 2019) and impairments in emotion regulation at age 8 (Cerniglia et al., 2021). Andoniou (2025) notes that children intensively engaged with digital technologies may lack depth of reflection and emotional competence. These effects may be explained by the displacement of live communication and the impoverishment of social signals necessary for emotion recognition (Nabi, Wolfers, 2022). On the other hand, Nabi and Wolfers (2022) found no correlations between screen time and emotional intelligence or emotion regulation. Moreover, active parental mediation, parental digital literacy practices, co-use of media, and discussion of characters' emotions improve children's emotional skills (Morelli et al., 2022; Soyoo et al., 2024). Thus, the nature of parental mediation acquires key importance. Yet, research directly linking parental mediation to emotion comprehension in preschoolers remains scarce.

The significance of parental mediation of children's digital activity is grounded in several theoretical frameworks. On one hand, it rests on Bourdieu's concept of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), complemented by the notion of digital capital — the ensemble of resources, competencies, and attitudes for effective technology use (Ragnedda, 2018). In this context, parental mediation, especially structured control, acts as a behavioral manifestation of the family's digital capital. On the other hand, within the cultural-historical approach, digital technologies are viewed as new mediational tools combining both instrumental and symbolic properties (Smirnov, 2023; Veraksa et al., 2024). The system of rules set by parents can be understood as a symbolic-mediational tool for behavior (Smirnov, 2023). Through internalization, these rules transform external control into a mechanism for mastering one's own behavior, fostering the volition necessary for understanding and regulating emotions (Veraksa et al., 2020).

The existing literature does not allow definitive conclusions about the link between digital experience and emotional development due to several methodological limitations. As Nabi and Wolfers (2022) point out, the dominance of cross-sectional designs precludes analyzing the contribution of digital practices to the gain in emotional indicators. Sole reliance on parental reports risks common method variance

and social desirability bias, while child reports remain underutilized (Rudnova et al., 2023). The scarcity of longitudinal studies, lack of control for baseline emotional development and key covariates (age, screen time), and neglect of gender as a potential moderator (Duek, Moguillansky, 2020) further constrain the interpretation of data. Only isolated studies simultaneously consider quantitative and qualitative aspects of digital experience (Toth et al., 2025). Finally, most research focuses on problematic behavior in adolescents and adults, while the emotional development of preschoolers, particularly emotion comprehension, remains on the periphery.

The present longitudinal study aims to overcome the outlined limitations. Focusing on the establishment of rules for digital activity as a dominant parental mediation strategy (Goh, Bay, Chen, 2015), we examine the association between the presence of three types of family digital rules – time limits, content restrictions, and rules-conditions – and the annual gain in emotion comprehension from the senior to the preparatory preschool groups, separately for boys and girls. A key distinction from most prior work is the use of child, rather than parental, reports regarding rules. This approach minimizes social desirability bias and reflects the actual context of regulation as perceived by the child. Given the contradictory nature of previous findings and the absence of studies linking child reports of digital rules to the dynamics of emotion comprehension, we do not propose directional hypotheses. This exploratory study seeks to clarify whether the child's perception of the family's digital mediation structure contributes to emotional development in the preschool years.

Methods and materials

Sample and procedure

At the first data collection time point (Time 1), the study involved 1512 children attending senior kindergarten groups in Moscow (mean age = 5,7 years, SD = 4,11 months; 51,5% girls). One year later, at the second time point (Time 2, preparatory kindergarten groups), 1339 children were re-assessed (mean age = 6,6 years, SD = 4,5 months; 51% girls). The primary outcome measure was the gain in emotion comprehension, calculated as the difference between each child's individual assessment scores at Time 2 and Time 1. During Time 1, parents also completed a questionnaire reporting their child's typical daily screen time. Concurrently, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with the children concerning their use of digital devices. Children's participation was voluntary; they could stop the tasks at any time and received a small incentive (a sticker) upon completion.

Measures

Emotion comprehension. Children's emotion comprehension was assessed using the Test of Emotion Comprehension (TEC; Pons, Harris, 2000), adapted for the Russian-speaking sample and demonstrating reliable psychometric properties (Veraksa et al., 2021). The test evaluates three components of emotion comprehension: external (recognition of emotions, understanding external causes, and the role of desires), mental (understanding hidden emotions and the influence of beliefs), and reflective (understanding mixed feelings and the role of morality in emotion regulation). An integral score for emotion comprehension is calculated based on task performance.

Child reports of parental digital mediation. Data on children's perceptions of rules were obtained through individual semi-structured interviews (average duration 7–10 minutes). Following informed consent from parents and verbal assent from the child, the interviewer conducted an audio recording. The interview began with general questions about the child's leisure activities, familiarity with digital devices, preferred types of digital activity, and purposes for using gadgets. Subsequently, the child was invited to describe any rules, prohibitions, or conditions set by parents or other family members regarding the use of digital devices – for example, concerning the duration of gadget use, permissible content of games and applications, and situations in which device use is allowed or restricted.

Verbatim transcripts of the interviews were analyzed using categorical coding. Based on children's responses, three dichotomous variables were identified: 1) time restrictions (e.g., “I can only play for 30 minutes”); 2) content restrictions (e.g., “I'm not allowed to watch shooter games”); 3) rules-conditions (e.g., “I can't play before bed” or “turn off the game when guests arrive”). To enhance reliability, four trained coders, blind to other data, independently coded each transcript. A final code was assigned only when at least three coders agreed. All transcripts achieved an agreement level of ≥ 3 out of 4, ensuring 100% consensus.

Screen time. Parents were asked to report the total time their child typically spends in front of digital device screens (tablet, smartphone, computer, television), separately for weekdays and weekend days. The average daily screen time (in minutes) was calculated using the formula: $((\text{weekday time (min)} \times 5) + (\text{weekend time (min)} \times 2)) / 7$.

Data analysis strategy

To assess the relationship between preschoolers' digital experience and the annual gain in emotion comprehension, two generalized linear models (Gaussian family, identity link function) were constructed separately for boys and girls. The dependent variable

in both models was the gain in emotion comprehension. All models controlled for baseline emotion comprehension (Time 1), child's age, and daily screen time. The key predictors were three binary variables: the presence or absence of time restrictions, content restrictions, and rules-conditions for using digital devices. All continuous predictors (baseline emotion comprehension, age, screen time) were standardized to z-scores ($M = 0$, $SD = 1$).

A comprehensive check of linear model assumptions was performed separately for each model. For the girls' model, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged from 1,03 to 1,42; the Breusch-Pagan test indicated no violation of homoscedasticity ($\chi^2 = 5,89$, $p = 0,436$); the Shapiro-Wilk test confirmed the normality of residuals ($W = 0,988$, $p = 0,687$); and the Durbin-Watson test showed no autocorrelation ($DW = 2,01$, $p = 0,716$). For the boys' model, VIF values ranged from 1,05 to 1,37; the Shapiro-Wilk test also confirmed normality of residuals ($W = 0,984$, $p = 0,370$); no autocorrelation was detected ($DW = 1,99$, $p = 0,828$); and the Breusch-Pagan test revealed no heteroscedasticity ($\chi^2 = 16,0$, $p = 0,06$). Cook's distance analysis did not identify any influential observations (maximum values 0,069 and 0,140, respectively).

Descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis), the Shapiro-Wilk test for normality, Student's t-test for independent groups (for gender differences in emotion comprehension scores and gain), the Mann-Whitney U test (for screen time, due to its non-normal distribution), and the chi-square test for categorical variables were also used. Effect sizes were calculated for all comparisons (Cohen's d for the t-test, rank-biserial correlation for the Mann-Whitney U test). All analyses were per-

formed using R (version 4.4.0) and Jamovi (version 2.6.44).

Results

Descriptive statistics for the study variables, presented separately for boys and girls, are shown in Table 1.

To test for gender differences, different statistical criteria were used depending on the shape of the variable distributions, assessed by skewness and kurtosis values (Table 1). For emotion comprehension (Time 1, Time 2) and its gain, whose distributions were considered close to normal (skewness and kurtosis not exceeding |1|), Student's t-test for independent samples was applied. The results revealed no significant gender differences for any of these measures: emotion comprehension at Time 1 ($t(2109) = -1,044$, $p = 0,297$, Cohen's $d = -0,045$), at Time 2 ($t(1867) = -1,183$, $p = 0,237$, Cohen's $d = -0,055$), or for the gain in emotion comprehension ($t(1393) = 0,998$, $p = 0,319$, Cohen's $d = 0,053$). For daily screen time, whose distribution significantly deviated from normal (skewness > 1 , kurtosis > 3), the Mann-Whitney U test was used. A significant difference between boys and girls was found ($U = 64,285$, $p = 0,023$, rank-biserial correlation = $-0,095$), with boys demonstrating higher screen time levels compared to girls.

Furthermore, 36,7% of children reported the presence of time limits, 5,5% reported content restrictions, and 70,9% reported rules-conditions for using digital devices. The chi-square test revealed no significant gender differences in the frequency of time limits ($\chi^2(1) = 0,561$, $p = 0,454$), rules-conditions ($\chi^2(1) = 0,380$, $p = 0,538$), or content restrictions ($\chi^2(1) = 3,06$, $p = 0,080$).

**Descriptive statistics for the main variables of both study waves
(Time 1, N = 1512, and Time 2, N = 1339)**

Table 1

Parameter	Sex	M (SD)	Median	Min	Max	Skewness (Std. Error)	Kurtosis (Std. Error)
Emotion comprehension (Time 1)	Boys	15,196 (2,6)	16	7	21	-0,353 (0,16)	-0,303 (0,32)
	Girls	15,847 (2,64)	16	8	22	-0,265 (0,168)	-0,424 (0,335)
Emotion comprehension (Time 2)	Boys	16,613 (2,68)	17	7	21	-0,551 (0,192)	0,012 (0,381)
	Girls	17,224 (2,34)	17	11	22	-0,267 (0,197)	-0,244 (0,391)
Gain in emotion comprehension	Boys	1,378 (3,07)	2	-6	9	-0,155 (0,199)	-0,234 (0,396)
	Girls	1,366 (2,04)	1	-7	10	0,051 (0,212)	0,428 (0,420)
Daily screen time	Boys	205,51 (136,31)	176	0	909	1,41 (0,13)	3,10 (0,25)
	Girls	187,91 (137,04)	154	0	986	1,46 (0,13)	3,36 (0,25)

Results for girls

The multiple regression model for girls was statistically significant ($R^2 = 0,538$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0,493$, $\chi^2(6) = 121$, $p < 0,001$) (Table 2). After controlling for baseline emotion comprehension (Time 1), age, and parental reports of daily screen time, none of the digital rule indicators reached statistical significance. The only significant predictor was baseline emotion comprehension, demonstrating a negative relationship with the gain. Neither the presence of family digital rules nor parental reports of daily screen time were significant predictors of the gain in emotion comprehension.

Results for boys

Similarly, the model for boys was statistically significant ($R^2 = 0,512$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0,477$, $\chi^2(8) = 149$, $p < 0,001$) (Table 3). After controlling for baseline level, age, and screen time, none of the digital rule indicators showed significant associations with the gain in emotion comprehension. Baseline emotion comprehension (Time 1) again emerged as the only significant negative predictor. Just as with girls, the presence of family digital rules and parental reports of daily screen time were not significant predictors of the gain in emotion comprehension.

To check the robustness of the obtained results, an additional regression analysis was performed. Models with sequential inclusion of each of the three types of digital rules (time limits, content restrictions, rules-conditions), both without and with control for daily

screen time, revealed no significant effects of the rules on the gain in emotion comprehension for either girls or boys (all $p > 0,05$). The change in explained variance after adding the rules was not significant (R from 0,001 to 0,004). Models that included interaction effects between baseline emotion comprehension and each of the rules also showed no statistically significant effects (for girls, all $p > 0,9$; for boys, p from 0,132 to 0,727). Thus, the absence of an association between family digital rules and the annual gain in emotion comprehension is a robust result, independent of model specification.

Discussion

Contemporary research on children's digital activity is shifting focus from the duration of screen time to its qualitative context, particularly the features of parental mediation aimed at structuring the child's interaction with technology. This longitudinal study focused on the contribution of the child's perception of family digital rules to their emotional development during the preschool years.

The results showed that none of the three types of rules (time restrictions, content restrictions, rules-conditions) were associated with the annual gain in emotion comprehension. This pattern was identical for boys and girls, despite boys having significantly higher screen

Table 2

Results of linear regression for the gain in emotion comprehension in girls

Predictor	Coefficient	SE	95% CI	z	p
Constant	1,544	0,635	[0,299; 2,789]	2,43	0,018
Emotion comprehension (Time 1)	-1,272	0,143	[-1,553; -0,992]	-8,892	< 0,001
Daily screen time	-0,077	0,139	[-0,350; 0,196]	-0,554	0,581
Age	0,009	0,141	[-0,267; 0,284]	0,063	0,95
Time limits	0,459	0,339	[-0,206; 1,124]	1,352	0,181
Content limits	0,14	1,226	[-2,263; 2,542]	0,114	0,91
Rules-conditions	0,075	0,342	[-0,595; 0,744]	0,218	0,828

Note: CI — confidence interval. All continuous predictors (age, screen time, baseline emotion comprehension at Wave 1) were standardized (z-scores). Statistically significant effects ($p < 0.05$) are highlighted in bold.

Table 3

Results of linear regression for the gain in emotion comprehension in boys

Predictor	Coefficient	SE	95% CI	z	p
Constant	1,53	0,318	[0,906; 2,153]	4,807	< 0,001
Emotion comprehension (Time 1)	-1,331	0,155	[-1,635; -1,026]	-8,56	< 0,001
Daily screen time	-0,174	0,157	[-0,481; 0,133]	-1,11	0,27
Age	0,222	0,155	[-0,081; 0,526]	1,436	0,155
Time limits	0,103	0,369	[-0,620; 0,827]	0,28	0,78
Content limits	0,465	0,562	[-0,638; 1,567]	0,826	0,411
Rules-conditions	-0,106	0,38	[-0,851; 0,639]	-0,278	0,782

Note: CI — confidence interval. All continuous predictors (age, screen time, baseline emotion comprehension at Wave 1) were standardized (z-scores). Statistically significant effects ($p < 0.05$) are highlighted in bold.

time. Total screen time, often a focus of parental control (Goh, Bay, Chen, 2015), also did not emerge as a significant factor.

The only consistent predictor was baseline emotion comprehension: the higher the initial scores, the smaller the annual gain. This aligns with the findings of Nabi and Wolfers (2022) regarding the absence of direct correlations between digital activity and emotional competencies, as well as evidence that parental preference for a structured environment, expressed through the introduction of rules, may be significant for cognitive development but not for the child's emotional sphere (e.g., Rudnova et al., 2024).

The absence of significant associations between digital rules and the gain in emotion comprehension points to the limitations of an approach based on the external structuring of digital activity. From the perspective of cultural-historical psychology, a sign (a rule established by parents) becomes a means for the child to master behavior only within a situation of live, emotionally rich interaction with an adult (Vygotsky, 1983). However, most digital games and applications do not involve such interaction; a “digital rift” (Smirnov, 2023) occurs – the adult withdraws from the child's event field. The unity of affect and intellect as a necessary condition for development (Zaporozhets, 1985) arises in the joint activity of adult and child, because affect is linked to orientation toward another person (Smirnov, 2023), during which the child internalizes the cultural model of emotions (Oshchepkova, Kartushina, Bukhalenkova, 2021). This dense mutual activity is absent in digital forms of activity. Moreover, digital activity appropriates the adult's function as a model of action, providing the child with a rigid script and relieving them of the need to experience their action as an act of personal agency. The device becomes active – a functional inversion occurs (Smirnov, 2023), depriving the child of a genuine act of mediation. A rule formally introduced without discussion and shared experience, without being imbued with emotional significance, is not internalized and remains an external constraint.

On the other hand, excessive structuring of the environment may deprive children of the opportunity to exercise initiative and autonomy (Smirnova, 2019), which are necessary for the development of socio-emotional skills (Polivanova, Ostroverkh, Strukova, 2022). A highly structured parenting style with an extensive system of formal rules may even reduce children's self-regulation (Liu et al., 2020), which underlies emotion comprehension. Finally, the effect of rules may depend on their combination with other parameters of digital experience (type of content, nature of activity), the quality of co-use of media, and parental emotional mentoring (Morelli et al., 2022), factors not accounted for in the current models.

The digital environment creates a new social situation of development. According to Vygotsky, it should be characterized by *perezhivanie* (emotional experience) related to digital devices. In this case, it would be legitimate to expect a connection between the child's emotional development and the characteristics of the digital environment. However, our results did not reveal such a connection. Interaction with digital devices can be understood as the child's inclusion in a digital cultural space, whose products are addressed to children. The logic of interaction with cultural objects presupposes the unity of affect and intellect as a condition for successful activity (Zaporozhets, 1985). According to Vygotsky, this unity manifests in the fact that “...every emotion is served by the imagination and is expressed in a whole series of fantastic representations and images” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 198–199). He also considered the process of energy expenditure: “Energy expenditure occurs predominantly at one of two poles – either on the periphery or in the center” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 200). At the periphery, energy is expended during motor reactions; in the center, in the form of *perezhivanie*: “...art is a central emotion... the emotions of art are intelligent emotions” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 201). When interacting with art, *perezhivanie* is central in nature, whereas interaction with a digital device concentrates energy on the periphery, reducing energy expenditure on *perezhivanie*. Consequently, establishing regulations for device use stimulates manipulations rather than *perezhivanie*, attenuating emotional reactions.

The strengths of this study include the following. First, it was the first study on a Russian sample of preschoolers to examine the link between child-reported digital rules and the dynamics of emotion comprehension using a longitudinal design. A key distinction from most prior research was the move away from exclusive reliance on parental reports and the use of child interviews, which helped minimize social desirability bias and reflect the actual context of digital regulation as perceived by the child (Rudnova et al., 2023). Conducting separate analyses for boys and girls allowed us to account for gender as a potential moderator (Duek, Moguillansky, 2020). Furthermore, controlling for baseline emotion comprehension, age, and screen time enabled us to isolate the contribution of the qualitative aspect of digital experience.

Conclusion

Thus, this study demonstrates that parental digital mediation in the form of introducing formal digital rules regulating children's digital activity (time and content restrictions, as well as rules defining the conditions for digital activity) is not, in itself, directly associated with

advantages in preschoolers' emotional development. Daily total screen time also does not emerge as a significant predictor of the dynamics of emotion comprehension in the preschool years. The observed pattern was identical for boys and girls, despite boys exhibiting significantly higher daily screen time. In this connection, the prospects for future research lie in analyzing the mechanisms of internalization of family digital rules and identifying additional moderators that mediate their influence on the child's emotional development.

Future research directions should also consider the style of parent-child relationships and the extent of parental involvement in co-use of media — factors of joint activity that may prove to be stronger predictors of emotion comprehension than formal rules. Furthermore, subsequent studies require a shift from examining the mere presence of rules to analyzing the mechanisms of their internalization and the adult's role as an emotional mentor. As practical recommendations for specialists in psychological-pedagogical support, we propose refocusing educational work with parents: moving from simply

informing about the need for screen time limits and introducing formal rules toward developing competencies in emotional mentoring, co-experiencing digital activities, and creating a flexible environment that supports the child's initiative, rather than a rigidly structured set of regulations for digital activity.

Limitations. This study has several limitations. First, although child reports are a valuable source of information about the perceived context, they may not fully reflect the actual frequency and flexibility of rule application. Second, we did not differentiate between device types or the nature of digital activity, which may serve as important moderators, as the focus of the study was limited to examining the direct association between rules and emotional development. Third, data on family digital rules were collected only at the first time point (Time 1). Parental mediation strategies could have changed over the course of the year, which was not accounted for in this study. Future research should employ repeated measurements of rules to analyze the dynamics of mediation and its impact on children's emotional development.

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Information about the authors

Arina N. Shatskaya, Researcher, Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Interdisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7283-8011>, e-mail: arina.shatskaya@mail.ru

Kristina S. Tarasova, Candidate of Sciences (Psychology), Researcher, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9072-8761>, e-mail: christinap@bk.ru

Alexander N. Veraksa, Doctor of Sciences (Psychology), Head of the Laboratory of Childhood Psychology and Digital Socialization, Federal Scientific Center of Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7187-6080>, e-mail: veraksa@yandex.ru

Elena A. Chichinina, Researcher, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7220-9781>, e-mail: alchichini@gmail.com

Информация об авторах

Арина Николаевна Шатская, научный сотрудник, Федеральный научный центр психологических и междисциплинарных исследований (ФГБНУ «ФНЦ ПМИ»), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7283-8011>, e-mail: arina.shatskaya@mail.ru

Кристина Сергеевна Тарасова, кандидат психологических наук, научный сотрудник, Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова (ФГБОУ ВО «МГУ имени М.В. Ломоносова»), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9072-8761>, e-mail: christinap@bk.ru

Александр Николаевич Веракса, доктор психологических наук, заведующий лабораторией психологии детства и цифровой социализации, Федеральный научный центр психологических и междисциплинарных исследований (ФГБНУ «ФНЦ ПМИ»), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7187-6080>, e-mail: veraksa@yandex.ru

Елена Алексеевна Чичинина, научный сотрудник, Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова (ФГБОУ ВО «МГУ имени М.В. Ломоносова»), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7220-9781>, e-mail: alchichini@gmail.com

Contribution of the authors

Arina N. Shatskaya — research ideas; annotation, writing and design of the manuscript; research planning; application of statistical, mathematical or other methods for data analysis; research supervision.

Kristina S. Tarasova — data collection and analysis; writing and design of the manuscript; research planning; application of statistical, mathematical or other methods for data analysis; research supervision.

Alexander N. Veraksa — research planning; writing and design of the manuscript.

Elena A. Chichinina — data collection and analysis; writing and design of the manuscript.

All authors participated in the discussion of the results and approved the final text of the manuscript.

Вклад авторов

Шатская А.Н. — идеи исследования; аннотирование, написание и оформление рукописи; планирование исследования; применение статистических, математических или других методов для анализа данных; контроль за проведением исследования.

Тарасова К.С. — сбор и анализ данных; написание и оформление рукописи; планирование исследования; применение статистических, математических или других методов для анализа данных; контроль за проведением исследования.

Веракса А.Н. — сбор и анализ данных; написание и оформление рукописи.

Чичинина Е.А. — сбор и анализ данных; написание и оформление рукописи.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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The phenomenon of children's storytelling: acquiring and creating culture

O.A. Shiyan ✉, I.B. Shiyan, A.N. Iakshina

Moscow City University, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ olgablues@gmail.com

Abstract

Context and relevance. Constructing developmental education requires an understanding of the patterns of child development and an analysis of those childhood activities that constitute the intrinsic value of childhood and enable children to solve age-related problems. This article analyzes the phenomenon of children's storytelling — the creation of stories by preschoolers within the framework of educational practices, in which adults write down stories created according to the child's idea and then act them out or listen to them together with other children. **Objective.** To determine how storytelling relates to the key activities of preschool age. **Research questions.** How are play and storytelling related? How are experimentation and storytelling related? What is the uniqueness of storytelling as a childhood activity of intrinsic value? **Methods and materials.** Theoretical analysis of Russian and international sources and its correlation with examples of children's storytelling. **Results.** The analysis revealed similarities between storytelling, play, and experimentation in terms of supporting children's ideas and initiative, as well as the opportunity to experiment in a safe space. At the same time, storytelling creates unique opportunities for the transformation of experiences and for the construction of the child's identity as a subject of action through experimentation with narrative structures: the “landscape of consciousness” and the “landscape of action”. **Conclusions.** Children's storytelling, which includes play and experimentation with speech but is not reducible to them, unfolds within the child's zone of proximal development. The narrative form becomes a unique cultural tool for transforming experiences and constructing one's identity as a subject of action. Storytelling creates conditions for the emergence of prerequisites for artistic creativity, allowing the child to simultaneously master cultural norms and create something new.

Keywords: storytelling practices, narrative form, story, play, experimentation, artistic creativity

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Феномен детского сочинительства: освоение культуры и культуротворчество

О.А. Шиян ✉, И.Б. Шиян, А.Н. Якшина

Московский городской педагогический университет, Москва, Российская Федерация

✉ olgablues@gmail.com

Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Построение развивающего образования требует понимания закономерностей детского развития и анализа тех детских деятельностей, которые составляют самоценность детства и позволяют решать задачи возраста. Статья посвящена анализу феномена детского сочинительства — создания историй дошкольниками в рамках образовательных практик, когда взрослые записывают истории, созданные по детскому замыслу, а затем разыгрывают или прослушивают их совместно с другими

детьми. **Цель.** Определить, как сочинительство соотносится с ключевыми деятельностями дошкольного возраста. **Исследовательские вопросы.** Как соотносятся игра и сочинительство? Как соотносятся экспериментирование и сочинительство? В чем уникальность сочинительства как самоценной детской деятельности? **Методы и материалы.** Теоретический анализ отечественных и зарубежных источников и соотнесение его с примерами детского сочинительства. **Результаты.** Анализ показал сходство сочинительства с игрой и экспериментированием в отношении поддержки детского замысла и инициативы и возможности совершать пробы в безопасном пространстве. При этом сочинительство создает особые возможности для трансформации переживаний и построения ребенком своей идентичности как субъекта действия за счет проб с нарративными структурами: «ландшафтом сознания» и «ландшафтом действия». **Выводы.** Детское сочинительство, включающее игру и экспериментирование с речью, но не сводящееся к ним, разворачивается в зоне ближайшего развития ребенка. Нарративная форма становится особым культурным средством для трансформации переживаний и построения своей идентичности как субъекта действия. Сочинительство создает условия для возникновения предпосылок художественного творчества, позволяя ребенку одновременно осваивать культурные нормы и создавать новое.

Ключевые слова: практики сочинительства, нарративная форма, история, игра, экспериментирование, художественное творчество

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Introduction

Developing educational environments requires an understanding of the mechanisms of child development. L.S. Vygotsky's proposition that culture creates nothing beyond what is given by nature but transforms nature in accordance with human purposes (Vygotsky, 2025) implies the importance of analysing those forms of children's activity that are intrinsically valuable in childhood and enable children to address age-related developmental tasks. Such analysis provides a basis for designing educational practices and identifying children's zone of proximal development. One important developmental task of the preschool years is considered to be the child's construction of identity as an agent of action (Smirnova, 2022; Elkoninova, 2014; Erikson, 2024). Within this context, the phenomenon of children's storytelling is of particular interest, since stories created by children have become the subject of dedicated scholarly attention over the past four decades. J. Bruner described narrative construction as a distinct mode of thought, different from formal-logical thinking, through which people organise and make sense of their experience, as well as generate possible worlds and hypotheses (Bruner, 1968). The concept of narrative is sometimes understood broadly as any organised account of events from a particular point of view; in this sense, narrative may form part of everyday conversation or play. Following S. Engel and other authors, however, we distinguish stories as narratives that are intentionally told (Engel, 1999; Nicolopoulou et al., 2022).

Beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s, practices aimed at supporting children's storytelling (hereafter

referred to as narrative practices, NP) emerged almost simultaneously in different countries (see Paley, 2016; Backman-Nord, Staffans, Nyback, 2023; Zhuravleva, 2015). Despite considerable variation, these practices share several essential features: storytelling is voluntary and takes place during children's free activity; adults regularly write down children's stories as dictated by the child (in individual notebooks or shared books); and the recorded stories are then re-enacted or listened to collectively within the preschool group.

Children's storytelling as supported within narrative practices is, in some respects, a paradoxical phenomenon. On the one hand, without sustained adult participation – recording stories, creating conditions for children to listen to one another, and so forth – storytelling does not typically become a stable spontaneous practice within a children's group. On the other hand, when adults provide such support, children engage in storytelling actively and with great enthusiasm, as though this mode of action were already familiar to them. This is evidenced by a substantial body of research, including ethnographic studies drawing on teachers' diaries, video observations, and other materials (Backman-Nord et al., 2023; Cremin, ed., 2017). As the Finnish researcher Liisa Karlsson observed metaphorically, adults have discovered "...a bubbling spring of children's narrative culture" (Riihelä, 2002).

Thus, children's storytelling may be understood as an activity that is organic to the preschool years while, like other culturally mediated ways of acting, requiring certain forms of "scaffolding" that enable this capacity to become visible (Wood, Bruner, Ross, 1976). In this case, such scaffolding includes a responsive adult who trans-

lates oral text into written form; the presence of listeners — a “community of storytellers”; and the opportunity to hear or re-enact one’s story together with others. “The word wants to be heard, understood, responded to, and again to respond to the response” (Bakhtin, 2020, p. 37). These words of M. Bakhtin capture an essential feature of the social situation of children’s storytelling.

On this basis, we considered it appropriate to focus our analysis not on the educational conditions that support the production of children’s stories, but on the psychological content of children’s storytelling itself as it emerges within narrative practices, in order to understand which developmental tasks it helps children to address.

Materials and methods

To address the research questions, we conducted a theoretical analysis of literature and considered its findings in relation to examples of children’s storytelling. The examples include children’s stories presented in published sources, as well as stories created in preschool groups where narrative practice forms part of everyday life. In these groups, there is an established tradition whereby children, during free activity, may choose to invent a story and dictate it to the teacher. The child first draws the story and then dictates its content to an adult, who writes it down. Subsequently, some of the stories are re-enacted, while others are read aloud in the group circle, according to the children’s wishes.

Results

Storytelling as acquiring narrative form

Children are immersed in the world of narratives — adults’ stories, fairy tales, and animated films — from almost the very beginning of life. Gradually mastering the principles of narrative construction, they begin to create stories of their own.

J. Bruner distinguishes between the “landscape of action” and the “landscape of consciousness” within narrative (Bruner, 1968). The landscape of action reflects the sequence of events constructed by the author; this sequence forms the plot of the story. The landscape of consciousness represents the points of view expressed within the narrative — the perspectives of the narrator and the characters through whose eyes reality is perceived.

Research on the effects of narrative practices of this kind, conducted over the past forty years in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Nordic countries, Russia, and elsewhere, suggests that children’s participation influences not only the development of narrative abilities (in particular decontextualised speech) and emergent literacy skills (including phonological

awareness, letter knowledge, early reading, and writing words), but also the development of readiness for written language as a holistic means of addressing another person through text (Nicolopoulou et al., 2022; Pesco, MacLeod, 2024; Broström, 2002; Nicolopoulou, Cole, 2009; Nicolopoulou et al., 2015). In addition, such narrative practices have been shown to support the development of play and imagination, social competence, and self-confidence, fostered through the experience of being heard by others (Backman-Nord, Staffans, Nyback, 2023; Iakshina, Smirnova, 2024). G. McNamee emphasises that re-enacting stories is an important part of the practice: storytelling combined with dramatic enactment has a stronger effect on language development than storytelling without enactment (McNamee et al., 1985). The practice of story dictation and dramatization has also been described as an approach that helps overcome the false dichotomy between play and learning (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2024).

Analysing the effects of narrative practices from the perspective of oral and written language development is entirely justified. However, in order to understand the contribution of storytelling to the developmental tasks of the preschool years, it is important to consider it in relation to two key forms of preschool activity: play and experimentation.

The aim of this study is to determine how storytelling relates to the key forms of activity in the preschool years.

The research questions are as follows:

- How is storytelling related to play?
- How is storytelling related to experimentation?
- What is unique about storytelling as an intrinsically valuable form of children’s activity?

Play and storytelling: points of convergence and distinction

It is no coincidence that L. S. Vygotsky’s works on the development of psychological systems and on play appeared at the same time: play activity emerges as a space for meaning-making. “In play, the child learns his or her own ‘I’: creating fictive points of identification — centres of the ‘I’; hence the social nature of the self. This is the basis of freedom” (Vygotsky, 2025, p. 228).

Play and storytelling are not identical, and the difference lies not only in what is immediately visible. In play, the process itself is of primary importance, whereas in storytelling the text begins to emerge for children as a meaningful outcome (Cremin et al., 2016). Play does not require — and sometimes does not welcome — an audience, while storytelling is fundamentally addressed to a listener (Novlyanskaya, 2010; Paley, 2016). A. Nicolopoulou points to the different developmental roots of play and storytelling: although both have a narrative basis, the development of character and plot unfolds differently in play and in stories. On this basis, Nicolopoulou proposes the possibility of a productive interaction

between mature play and storytelling, in which each enriches the other (Nicolopoulou, 2007).

At the same time, comparing play and children's stories reveals important shared characteristics. First, as in play, stories reflect children's *perezhivanie* as their inner relation to a situation (Vygotsky, 2025), and they allow generalised desires to be enacted within a field of meaning (Ryabkova, 2024). The themes children address in stories concern the most significant aspects of preschool children's relationship with the world and are likewise reflected in children's play themes: belonging and identity, power relations, danger and protection, care, and friendship (Kucirkova, 2017; Broström, 2002).

Whereas J. Piaget understood play, like other symbolic activities, primarily as a means of assimilating reality — one whose significance diminishes with the development of formal intelligence — the cultural-historical tradition emphasises the creative and transformative power of play. In stories, as in play more broadly, experience is not only reflected but transformed. Ethnographic studies and case analyses (Paley, 2016; Cremin et al., 2017; Lee, 2022; Bruce, McNair, Whinnett, 2020) show that children develop alternative possibilities for events within stories, using storytelling as a means of working through emotions. The following series of stories created by Polina (3 years 6 months) provides an example:

16 January: "This is a maze. It is difficult to get through." 17 January: "This is a maze. It is not difficult to get through. And this is a person who is not afraid of monsters, not afraid to go all the way round." 31 January: "This is a maze. It is unclear how to get through it. The end!"

Moving through the maze symbolises some difficult situation unknown to us but experienced by the child. We can see the child reinterpreting this experience and constructing a new relationship to it. V.F. Vasilyuk emphasised the role of verbal description in transforming the *perezhivanie* that underlies a situation (Vasilyuk, 2024). Composing and recomposing stories, selecting words, and using expressive means allow children not only to create an imaginary situation in which *perezhivanie* emerge, but also to regulate their intensity.

Second, both the expression and transformation of experience are mediated through symbolic means: as in play, children create an imaginary space within stories in which action unfolds.

"Once there was a little man. And he was very big. And he wanted to become small. And then he became a little king" (Alyosha, aged 4).

L.S. Vygotsky's words that "the child cries in play as a patient, but rejoices as a player" (Vygotsky, 2025) can, to a considerable extent, also be applied to children's stories. For example, when creating frightening stories, children often laugh, as storytelling becomes an active process of overcoming fear (Shiyan, 2022).

At the same time, the possibilities created through play are not merely reproduced in stories but acquire a

new quality through a specific medium — language and narrative structures. These possibilities are connected above all with the "landscape of consciousness" created within stories. In imaginative play, children identify with other characters or even with objects; through transformation they may begin to walk, speak, or act differently (Kravtsov, Kravtsova, 2019). In stories, explicit descriptions of characters' feelings and thoughts emerge relatively late, around the ages of five or six (Nicolopoulou, 2007). However, stories offer children another distinctive means of constructing character — personification.

From a very early age, beginning around three or four, children turn all kinds of objects into protagonists of their stories. Play also involves a form of dual subjectivity, where the child enters another consciousness while creating a role. In stories, however, these possibilities expand because language as a symbolic tool offers greater flexibility: it allows children to personify objects and phenomena of many different kinds and transform them into agents — beings who act, and therefore beings with whom relationships of cooperation or confrontation become possible.

"Once there was lava, and it met a cross" (Alyosha, 2 years 11 months).

Even numbers may become characters: "Once there was 1 December, and it met 2 December" (Polina, aged 5). Or phenomena: "Once there was a sleepover. And the graduates slept there" (Polina, 6 years 3 months). In storytelling, unlike in play, the child does not need to act physically; it is enough to name the characters. This makes the child's position even more distanced from the immediate situation than in play and gives greater freedom to the child as author-director, strengthening what M. M. Bakhtin termed *outsideness* (Bakhtin, 2020).

J. Piaget interpreted animism as a manifestation of immature thinking. Yet when children personify objects and phenomena, transforming impersonal forces into agents, they are mastering the position of an acting subject, similar to the director's position in highly developed dramatic play (Kravtsov, Kravtsova, 2019). At the same time, personification reveals early forms of an artistic relation to reality, bringing children closer to artists (Melik-Pashaev, Novlyanskaya, 2022).

Personification in children's stories is only the first step towards the creation of an artistic image, since newly invented characters often act in non-specific ways — that is, they do what their authors do in everyday life: meteors, kittens, or little boats meet, visit one another, and so forth. In imaginative and especially role play, by contrast, children often attempt to act as the character would act: moving, speaking, or behaving in a distinctive manner. In this context, a phenomenon found in children's stories becomes particularly interesting — one that resembles what occurs in play but also represents something qualitatively new because it is created through language. This is the case in stories where characters act in accordance with their image.

“There was a mummy rainbow and a baby rainbow. It was almost seven, because it didn't yet have one of the rainbow colours... And when it becomes seven, it will become a grown-up rainbow” (Polina, 6 years 3 months).

“And then they met a family of rainbows. And together they built a rainbow castle. The rainbows separated colours from themselves and built the castle like that” (Polina, 6 years 4 months).

In this example, the actions of the rainbow characters are determined by what is, for the child, their defining feature — having seven colours. As they grow, they acquire more colours; they use colours to build a castle. The child experiments with unfolding this image in different ways, as though discovering a new mode of action. This illustrates what has been described as the “semantic realism of imagination” (Kudryavtsev, 2022). The poetic quality of children's speech has been noted repeatedly by researchers and has given rise to the hypothesis that artistic giftedness may be a developmental characteristic of the preschool years (Melik-Pashaev, 2014; Chukovsky, 2023).

Thus, possibilities for constructing an artistic image emerge in storytelling when the child meaningfully connects the “landscape of consciousness” with the “landscape of action”.

Experimentation with narrative form and language as a component of children's storytelling

Researchers note that a child who produces a story close to a “classical narrative” today — with a beginning, climax, resolution, and ending — may produce a much simpler chronological narrative tomorrow, or even a story consisting of only two sentences (Lee, 2022). The same unevenness can be observed in children's descriptions of characters' feelings and thoughts, their use of expressive language, and other narrative features. This suggests that children's storytelling includes experimentation as a way of acting with language and narrative.

N. N. Poddyakov defines free experimentation as disinterested exploration, “aimed at discovering connections and relationships independently of solving any practical task”, in which the child formulates problems and seeks ways of solving them autonomously (Poddyakov, 2021). A study by J. Bruner and K. Sylva demonstrated that experiences of safe experimentation — in which children engage independently with materials, set themselves problems, and search for solutions without fear of making mistakes — positively influence their ability to develop purposeful strategies for solving problematic situations (Bruner, 1986a).

Children acquire language and speech not passively but through active experimentation with the semantics, grammar, and syntax of their native language (Slobin, Green, 1976; Chukovsky, 2023). Within the context of this study, it is particularly important to consider what opportunities for experimentation are created by the normative space of narrative — J. Bruner's “landscape of action” and “landscape of consciousness” (Bruner, 1986).

Experimentation with the “Landscape of action”

In the stories of children aged three to four — often consisting of only two or three sentences — one can identify entire series of stories structured around the same actions (“once there was...”, “they met”, “they won”, “they became friends”), while either the characters or the setting change:

“A kitty lived. And it went for a walk.” “Once there was a tiger. And it went for a walk.” (Bogdana, 4 years 2 months)

T. Lee describes a girl who, over a period of six months, repeatedly told the same story about getting lost and being found by her father; each time, however, the events took place in a different location — in the forest, in a supermarket, or on the street (Lee, 2022). In some cases, the characters themselves seem absurd and clearly mismatched with the actions:

“Once there was an oval, and it went for a walk. Then it went on a picnic.” (Alyosha, 3 years 6 months)

In this case, the three-year-old storyteller was probably inspired by his own drawing, in which an oval may have appeared accidentally.

Behind these apparent absurdities — reminiscent of Daniil Kharms, though in fact surprisingly difficult for an adult to invent — lies the child's experimentation with narrative structure. Children are effectively discovering that stories require certain invariants, such as a character and a sequence of actions that happen to that character. Young experimenters use a strategy close to G. Rodari's “binomial of fantasy” (Rodari, 2022), as if observing the emergence of meaning through placing unexpected words within a narrative framework.

This process can be compared to how children explore object function in play: when a child rides a stick, a chair, or an upside-down bucket as though it were a horse, we see them grasping the meaning of riding. The difference is that here the invariant is not the meaning of action with an object, but the structure of story-making itself — at minimum, a protagonist and an action.

Of particular interest are situations in which children create transformations, reversals, and “stories the other way round”. K. I. Chukovsky observed that at the heart of “absurd nonsense” lies not humour alone but a cognitive attitude towards the world (Chukovsky, 2023). Sometimes this reversal occurs in relation to a familiar fairy tale:

“Somebody killed Goldilocks, and they didn't live happily ever after.”

This story was told by a child after hearing the story of Goldilocks (Bruce, 2020). Here the child is clearly experimenting with alternative possibilities for the development of familiar events:

“Once there was a cat, and it stood on water. It was an upside-down cat. Everyone asked it why it walked upside down. It was an upside-down cat.” (Polina, 4 years 5 months)

In *The Birth of a Storyteller*, T. Lee presents the following story told by six-year-old Noah:

“Once there was a school. And there were lots of people there. And it was a school for adults. And children went to work.”

When the adult asked, “What did the adults learn at that school?”, the boy replied:

“They learn how to play.” (Lee, 2022)

K.I. Chukovsky suggests that through such reversals children affirm a norm they have already mastered (Chukovsky, 2023). At the same time, they experiment with reality itself, constructing what Bruner called “possible worlds” (Bruner, 1968). This resonates with N.E. Veraksa’s idea that transformation and creativity constitute one of the child’s ways of engaging with culture (Veraksa, 2024).

This becomes even clearer when analysing several stories created by the same child in sequence. In the three maze stories cited above, one can see the child trying out different — including opposite — ways in which events might unfold.

In this case, the child is experimenting not so much with language itself as with the possibilities of the situation. Yet it is narrative structure that makes such experimentation possible.

The linguistic tools through which these alternative possibilities are developed are antonyms and negative constructions — in this case, “difficult / not difficult” — which shape different outcomes of the same situation. P. Wason argued that negation is used specifically when a person wishes to emphasise a discrepancy between what is perceived and what is expected, whether by oneself or by others (Wason, 1961). In this way, negative constructions and antonyms become tools of mental experimentation, enabling the child to construct different possible developments of a situation and thereby estrange reality, creating another possible world (Bruner, 1968).

The presence of contrasting versions of events in children’s stories supports N. E. Veraksa’s idea of dialectical structures — including dialectical structures of language — as psychological tools for transforming reality and generating something new (Veraksa, 2024; Barinova, 1997).

Reversals also include comic stories in which characters behave paradoxically and which children create deliberately, anticipating the audience’s reaction. T. Lee notes that such clowning reflects not only children’s explorations of language and humour but also their emerging ability to anticipate listeners’ responses and orient their storytelling towards those responses (Lee, 2022).

Experimentation with the “Landscape of consciousness”

At the same time, the analysis of children’s stories shows that, when storytelling, children do not always imagine themselves in desired circumstances (Osorina, 2010); rather, the situation is more complex. Narratives typically involve a protagonist — the main

character — and an antagonist — the one who opposes them. In children’s stories, it is possible to observe that the same character may appear as a protagonist in one story and as an antagonist in another; in some stories the character triumphs, while in others they are defeated.

“Once there was water. And it was friends with a sweet shop. And one Halloween children came into the shop and ate all the sweets.” (Lada, 5 years 5 months)

“Once there were sweets. And they went for a walk. When they came back to their shop, they saw that someone was buying them, and it turned out that children were eating and drinking them at a party in the nursery school.” (Lada, 5 years 5 months)

In exploring one of the dimensions of storytelling — the “landscape of consciousness” — the child creates a kind of experimental psychodrama that allows the same character to be placed in different positions. Most significant here is that storytelling allows the child to become the “demiurge” of this world, varying the character’s degree of agency, activity, or success.

Discussion

Our analysis shows that children’s storytelling contains features characteristic of the key forms of preschool activity: play and experimentation. In creating stories, the child acts actively — expressing and transforming lived experience while exploring different dimensions of narrative form. In this sense, storytelling becomes significant for addressing the core developmental tasks identified by L.S. Vygotsky: the generalisation of experience and the construction of the self as the “basis of freedom”.

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At the same time, the verbal material itself — narrative structures, the presence of action, protagonist, antagonist — creates distinctive possibilities for projecting the events of one’s life in different ways. Narrative becomes a specific cultural tool for transforming experience and constructing identity as an agent of action.

Moreover, children’s stories reveal early foundations of artistic creativity. While this article has focused on children’s experimentation with narrative form and symbolic imagery, the range of children’s linguistic experimentation is considerably broader: it includes experimentation with rhythm, rhyme, hyperbole, and other expressive devices. A.A. Melik-Pashaev argues

that preschool children possess an important precondition for artistic development: the readiness to embody personally meaningful experience in image. Children's storytelling, which includes play and experimentation with language without being reducible to either, may be understood as a possibility — a promise of creativity — that can come into being if, reflected in the surprise and interest of adults and peers, the child comes to recognise these experiments as artistic expression (Lobok, 1996).

It may therefore be concluded that children's storytelling, as it exists within the narrative practices described here, unfolds within the child's zone of proximal development and creates conditions for the amplification of age-related developmental possibilities (Kudryavtsev, 2022). On the one hand, the adult "responds to the child's initiative, leaving space for the child's initiative" (Tsukerman, 2007, p. 42), thereby creating a space for children's intentions, play, and experimentation with language. On the other hand, through the practice of recording stories, building a "community of storytellers", and engaging in shared reading and dramatic enactment, the adult supports children in mastering narrative form as a specific cultural tool.

Storytelling becomes a meeting point of all three forms of development characteristic of the preschool years: learning (through mastering the conventions of narrative), play, and creativity (Veraksa, 2024). In this sense, practices of children's storytelling dissolve the opposition between cultural acquisition and creativity (Novlyanskaya, 2010).

In the Prehistory of Written Speech, L. S. Vygotsky wrote that schooling often begins with the technical aspects of writing, while its meaning — the possibility of communicating one's thoughts and feelings to another person — remains absent for the child (Vygotsky, 2025a). Storytelling practices offer children an experience of meaningful story creation that may fill this gap and create the conditions for writing as a way of addressing another through text.

At the same time, the creative, "laboratory-like" character of children's experimentation may appear chaotic to adults, although, as K.I. Chukovsky noted, quoting Shakespeare, "there is method in this madness" (Chukovsky, 2023, p. 156). This may be one of the indirect reasons why such practices remain relatively

rare in early childhood settings. A kind of vicious circle emerges: educators may fail to recognise the value of children's stories because they seem chaotic or illogical; as a result, children's experimentation is not supported, and children have fewer opportunities to develop storytelling competence.

Conclusion

Children's storytelling as a distinct phenomenon still awaits close scholarly attention. It is important to undertake qualitative analyses of children's experimentation with narrative form in order to understand the logic and variability of this process; to examine the interaction between drawing and verbal text in story creation; and to explore the role of play in the development of storytelling. It should be noted that this kind of experimentation becomes visible precisely within narrative practices, where children have the opportunity to create stories from their own ideas not occasionally but on a regular basis (Bruce, McNair, Whinnett, 2022; Lee, 2022; Iakshina, Ereemeeva, 2025).

At the same time, practices that support children's storytelling — as an example of work within the zone of proximal development — require a high level of competence from adults. During the processes of dictating, recording, listening to, and re-enacting stories, "points of transition" and transformation are created: from the child's intention to oral speech, from oral speech to written text, and from written text to dramatic enactment. During such transitions, or translations, situations of "understanding and misunderstanding" inevitably arise (Isenina, 2025), enabling thought to "come into being in the word" and then in play action.

These situations require adults, on the one hand, to be responsive, attentive, interested, and emotionally engaged; and on the other hand, to ask questions that help reveal and work through moments of misunderstanding (Cooper, 2007; Pramling et al., 2024). These competencies are essential for creating situations in which, in the precise words of A. A. Melik-Pashaev and Z.N. Novlyanskaya, "...learning moves towards development, as if from the possible future of the developing person" (Melik-Pashaev, Novlyanskaya, 2022, p. 28).

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Information about the authors

Olga A. Shiyan, Candidate of Sciences (Pedagogy), Associate Professor, Leading Researcher, Research Institute of Urban Studies and Global Education, Moscow City Pedagogical University (MCU), Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3882-7965>, e-mail: olgablues@gmail.com

Igor B. Shiyan, Candidate of Sciences (Psychology), Deputy Director, Research Institute of Urban Studies and Global Education, Moscow City Pedagogical University (MCU), Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6400-1705>, e-mail: igor.bogdanovich@gmail.com

Anna N. Iakshina, Candidate of Sciences (Psychology), Researcher, Research Institute of Urban Studies and Global Education, Moscow City Pedagogical University (MCU), Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8431-8208>, e-mail: annaiakshina@gmail.com

Информация об авторах

Ольга Александровна Шиян, кандидат педагогических наук, доцент, ведущий научный сотрудник, Научно-исследовательский институт урбанистики и глобального образования, Московский городской педагогический университет (ГАОУ ВО МГПУ), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3882-7965>, e-mail: olgablues@gmail.com

Игорь Богданович Шиян, кандидат психологических наук, заместитель директора, Научно-исследовательский институт урбанистики и глобального образования, Московский городской педагогический университет (ГАОУ ВО МГПУ), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6400-1705>, e-mail: igor.bogdanovich@gmail.com

Анна Николаевна Якшина, кандидат психологических наук, научный сотрудник, Научно-исследовательский институт урбанистики и глобального образования, Московский городской педагогический университет (ГАОУ ВО МГПУ), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8431-8208>, e-mail: annaiakshina@gmail.com

Contribution of the authors

Olga A. Shiyan — research ideas; writing and design of the manuscript; research planning.

Igor B. Shiyan — research supervision, annotation.

Anna N. Iakshina — data collection and analysis; writing and design of the manuscript.

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Following in the footsteps of improvisation: the experience of the participants of the musical movement studio

A.M. Ailamazyan^{1, 2}, N.L. Savchenko^{1, 2} ✉

¹ Federal Scientific Center of Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation

² Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ savchenko.ni.leo@yandex.ru

Abstract

Context and relevance. Improvisation is becoming increasingly popular among artists, as well as psychologists and educators who incorporate it into their methods of art therapy. While there are few works aimed at understanding the psychological aspects of improvisation, it is important to study the experiences associated with it. This study focuses on the psychological effects of improvisation on individuals through the lens of motor improvisation within a music movement studio. The aim is to describe and analyze these effects based on the experiences of participants. **Objective.** To study the states that occur during improvisation and the corresponding inner experience of the participants. **Hypothesis.** There is a connection between the characteristics of participants' experienced states and the quality of improvisation. **Methods and materials.** The study involved 25 women ($M = 37.1$, $SD = 10.7$). The material for the analysis was 50 transcripts of semi-structured interviews devoted to the experience of successful and unsuccessful musical and motor improvisations. The quality of improvisation was assessed by the teacher based on the selected criteria. A thematic analysis of the received texts was carried out. **Results.** The features that characterize the experience of successful and unsuccessful improvisations are revealed. **Conclusions.** It has been shown that the inner experience of participants in musical and motor improvisations varies depending on the quality of improvisation. Successful improvisation experiences include a description of a specific state that combines full conscious awareness and spontaneous movement. Post-spontaneous mediated behavior is realized. Common to all successful, fully developed improvisations, regardless of the context, is the experience of flow and the ability to overcome fear, internal resistance, and focus on the content of the improvisation. The improvisational experience in the context of musical movement focuses on musical content and can contribute to the development of self-transcendental abilities.

Keywords: improvisation, musical movement, state, spontaneity, flow, experience

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По следам импровизации: опыт участников студии музыкального движения

А.М. Айламазьян^{1, 2}, Н.Л. Савченко^{1, 2} ✉

¹ Федеральный научный центр психологических и междисциплинарных исследований,
Москва, Российская Федерация

² Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова, Москва, Российская Федерация
✉ savchenko.ni.leo@yandex.ru

Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Импровизационные практики обретают все большую востребованность, как среди представителей искусства, так и среди психологов, педагогов, включающих импровизацию в различные методы арт-терапии. Однако работы, направленные на психологическое осмысление феномена импровизации и изучение опыта переживания, с ней связанного, встречаются редко, в связи с чем возникает задача описания и анализа психологических эффектов, которые оказывает на личность импровизация. Данное исследование опирается на опыт двигательной импровизации участников студии музыкального движения. **Цель.** Изучить состояния, возникающие в процессе импровизации, и соответствующий им внутренний опыт участников. **Гипотеза.** Существует связь характеристик переживаемых состояний участников с качеством импровизации. **Методы и материалы.** В исследовании приняли участие 25 женщин ($M = 37,1$, $SD = 10,7$). Материалом для анализа послужили 50 стенограмм полуструктурированных интервью, посвященных опыту успешных и неуспешных музыкально-двигательных импровизаций. Качество импровизации оценивалось педагогом на основании выделенных критериев. Использовался тематический анализ полученных текстов. **Результаты.** Выявлены характерные для опыта успешной и неуспешной импровизаций особенности. **Выводы.** Показано, что внутренний опыт участников музыкально-двигательных импровизаций различается в зависимости от качества импровизации, опыт успешной импровизации содержит описание особого состояния, сочетающего полное сознательное присутствие и спонтанное движение, реализуется постпроизвольное спонтанно разворачивающееся опосредствованное поведение. Общими для успешных, полноценных импровизаций в разных практиках является состояние потока, а также способность преодолеть страхи, внутреннее сопротивление, направить внимание на содержание импровизации. Импровизационный опыт в рамках практики музыкального движения отличается фокусированием на музыкальных содержаниях и может способствовать развитию способности к самотрансценденции.

Ключевые слова: импровизация, музыкальное движение, состояние, спонтанность, поток, переживание

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Introduction

Improvisation has recently gained increasing popularity in artistic creation and psychological practice, yet research exploring the experiential and psychological dimensions of the improvisational process remains scarce (Dumaresq, McFerran, 2024).

Improvised practices in theater, dance, music, and the visual arts emerge as a reaction against academicism and elitism, often grounded in the concept of artistic synthesis. Through the fusion of various forms of creativity, such as painting and movement, artists aim to convey impressions from other creative domains or stimuli from different modalities, such as music or sound. These practices originated as theatrical experiments, challenging

the established boundaries of theatricality and serving as an exploration of dance and movement art, rejecting traditional dance steps and choreographic constraints. Simultaneously, improvisation allows each participant to embrace their role as a creator, expressing their individuality and conveying their current experiences.

These artistic experiments served as the foundation for pedagogical and psychological approaches aimed at addressing the challenges of aesthetic education, unlocking the creative potential of individuals, providing psychological assistance, and facilitating correction. The employment of improvisation within the context of teaching dance and music allowed for the transcendence of the limitations imposed by the traditional pedagogical framework, which predomi-

nantly emphasized the memorization and replication of predetermined patterns, resulting in a mechanical reproduction of isolated elements. Improvisation provided students with the opportunity to actively engage in the process of creating music, dance, and artistic imagery, imbuing their role with meaning and intrinsic motivation. This approach fostered the awakening of initiative and created an environment conducive to exploring novel solutions, surpassing the confines of established conventions in improvisational performance. These techniques were integrated into training programs aimed at cultivating creativity and fostering innovation. Ultimately, it has been discovered that engagement in improvisational activities enhances self-confidence, elevates one's energy level, and unveils their inherent capabilities (Misluk-Gervase, Ansaldo, 2022; Kong, 2025). The emerging approaches in the field of art therapy heavily rely on the utilization of improvisation, enabling individuals to manifest their inner states through external expressions, such as creative works. This process allows for the release of suppressed emotions, providing a means of venting anxiety, fears, and other pent-up feelings. The work with the products of personal self-expression serves the purpose of identifying and altering destructive attitudes, habitual patterns of behavior, and communication styles, among other aspects.

It is worth noting that, despite its practical significance, improvisation remains an under-researched area in psychology. This may be attributed to the fact that Russian schools of thought, such as cultural-historical and activity theories, prioritize the processes of learning and the formation of mediated behaviours. The diminishing focus on the subject's independent activity, spontaneous actions, and involuntary behaviours has been recognized as a limitation within the framework of developmental learning systems. Thus, P.G. Nezhnov articulates the issue and delves into the intricate interplay between mediation and spontaneity within the framework of the "cultural development" model. "The educational process, structured as a chain of instrumental mediation, with both direct and indirect outcomes, does not allow for the incorporation of these outcomes into the child's spontaneous actions, which are determined by a wider context in which a full actualization of thought as the foundation of an individual's personal identity can occur" (Nezhnov, 2007, p. 133).

However, the works of L.S. Vygotsky have already indicated the need to "cultivate" cultural forms through a child's self-directed activity (Vygotsky, 1983). A.V. Zaporozhets, V.V. Davydov, and D.B. Elkonin have pointed out the role of independent activity and spontaneous processes in children's development. These ideas were specifically embodied in the idea of testing a goal by action (A.N. Leontiev). The concept of developmental learning by B.D. Elkonin includes ideas about trial-

productive or search-and-trial actions, which function to expand the range of possibilities, transform circumstances, rethink objectives, and discover hidden properties in the context of an activity situation (Elkonin, Semenova, 2018).

Improvisation is an action that does not have a clear definition of its outcome or execution process. It unfolds in a way that is not from conception to implementation, but rather in a reverse order, in a sense. The purpose of the action is born within the action itself. An extended exploration, groping, testing, and "short-circuiting" to an unexpected solution or answer, or an image that emerges, are characteristics of improvisational actions that allow one to go beyond pre-defined boundaries. We can say with confidence that such actions or processes exist in any creative endeavor.

Improvisation can be seen as a logical and psychological model of the creative process in general. The suddenness, randomness, and lack of conscious thought that characterize any genuine work of art are also present in improvisation. In fact, its nature is noted to be ahead or beyond the conscious intentions of the creator. B.M. Runin has emphasized this point, stating: "The paradox of 'anticipation', where the desired outcome is realized by the artist before they have time to consciously plan it, becomes a source of surprising discoveries. ... After all, it is only through the creation of their work that the artist can truly understand their ideas, the work tells the author itself only by being created, only by unfolding at his fingertips. There should always be a place for 'spontaneous', 'accidental' decisions" (Runin, 1980, pp. 48–49).

However, the psychology of improvisation is revealed not only through the characteristics of the actions, but also through the features of the individual's state, which can be considered internal conditions for the occurrence of such actions.

As an essential component of the creative process and even more so, as the central aspect of improvisational art practices, genuine improvisation is linked to the specific state of the artist. This can be described as spontaneity, receptivity to impressions and inner impulses, reduced conscious control, vitality, etc. J. Moreno, one of the pioneers of improvisational theatre, emphasized the critical importance of the spontaneous state: "The beginning of the spontaneous creation of a poet, actor, musician, or artist does not lie outside of them, but within them, in their spontaneous state. ... This is the state of creation, the fundamental principle of all artistic activity" (Moreno, 1993, p. 55). F.E. Vasilyuk also refers to spontaneity as the fundamental inner force awakened through the practice of psychodrama. He describes spontaneity as an "active will prior to the distinction between good and evil, a creative process as the first phenomenon that creates being from nothing and gives rise to the beginning", "a self-active being,

the pulsation of life originating from its deepest sources and layers" (Vasilyuk, 1997).

At the same time, J. Moreno emphasizes the dual nature of the spontaneous state, it does not arise spontaneously. On the other hand, the rational component in our consciousness blocks its manifestations. "This state is not automatic; it is not given to humans from the start. It can only be brought about through volitional effort, and not by anything other than one's own will. However, this state does not result from conscious volitional efforts. Rather, consciousness acts as a barrier here. It is only due to an internal striving for freedom that is, in essence, nothing more than the manifestation of liberated spontaneity" (Moreno, 1993, p. 56). Therefore, for a free, spontaneous response, revealing inner strength, it is necessary to master it by cultivating and strengthening one's will. This issue leads us to Vygotsky's "paradox of the will", which "consists of creating an involuntary acting mechanism with the help of the will" (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 283). Therefore, a bridge is being constructed from "natural" spontaneity to spontaneity, which manifests itself already at the stage of developed ability based on appropriated cultural forms (Nezhnov, 2007).

We explore improvisational practices that emerge in the process of cultural development, conceiving them as catalysts for cultivating the ability to freely spontaneous response, since they provide means and ways of expressing one's own impulses or other content. The focus of our attention turned to improvisational practice of musical movement.

The aim of our research was to investigate the states that occur during the process of improvisation, and the corresponding internal experiences of the participants.

Materials and methods

Musical movement, as a form of free dance, challenges participants to express emotions arising from music through movement. This process leads to the creation of musical-motor forms during improvisation, which can then be refined, conceptualized and reproduced.

Practical experience demonstrates that improvisations arising during independent work are not always equivalent in value. Participants may not always be able to respond emotionally to music, let alone reflect it accurately and profoundly. As a general rule, successful improvisations stand out against the background of dancers. They immediately attract the viewer's attention due to their meaningfulness, emotional richness, and clear expression. Through observations, we have identified several movement characteristics that help assess the quality of an improvisation.

Successful improvisations in motion reflect the intonational aspect of the musical composition, changes in the emotional and semantic content of the music.

This process is accompanied by the emergence of holistic experience for the listener. The movement is also unfolds as an integrated whole, rather than a differentiated response to specific components of the music score. It represents the "dynamic interplay of sounds in this musical piece" and can convey musical meaning indirectly, through the use of "convenient bodily techniques that help the listener experience and reveal the musical image" (Ilyina, Rudneva, 1971, p. 69). At the same time, a musical-motor form can gradually emerge in the process of improvisation: "At first, movement may separately reflect sub-rhythmic features of a musical composition or the melodic process may be emphasized. Phrases may turn out to be too short, with the melody 'breaking' in the movement or the movement being aimless, without finding a climax. Finally, the process 'collapses', with a piece of music or excerpt performed as a complete and sequentially unfolding movement that reflects not features of the musical texture but something more whole that holds the musical text together" (Ailamazyan, 2013, p. 40).

The data were collected during music classes. During each lesson, after a stage where exercises based on a given motor form were performed, there was a stage for improvisation, where all participants were invited to provide a free response to the music through movement. The teacher assessed the improvisations of students based on the following criteria:

- 1) The correspondence of the movement with the music (i.e., completeness, accuracy, and depth).
- 2) The degree of engagement of the participant.
- 3) The characteristics of the movement, such as integrity and continuity.
- 4) Originality and lack of pattern.

Improvisations that demonstrated characteristics that satisfied all four criteria were considered "successful".

After the lesson, a brief, semi-structured interview was conducted with the participants. The responses of those participants whose improvisations fell short of the set criteria were collected using the same format (they had only partially completed the task, or substituted it in their perception).

The study involved 25 women aged 23 to 65 years ($M = 37,1$, $SD = 10,7$), of different professions, with different levels of musical education. Most of the participants provided answers about both successful and ordinary experiences with different improvisations in different classes.

The material for the analysis consisted of 25 transcripts of interviews with participants who had their improvisations rated as successful, and 25 transcripts from interviews with those who did not have their improvisations selected by the teacher.

Interview questions that were answered verbally in a free-form manner by the interviewees:

1. Could you please describe your impressions of the music that you listened to?

2. How did you feel when “living in music”?

3. When did you start feeling the music, and how would you describe that experience?

4. If you have an image, at what point did it occur?

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

Results

We can discuss the following common themes that emerged from the participants' accounts of their experience of successful improvisation.

1. Improvisation is accompanied by a state of detachment from one's immediate concerns, allowing for a momentary oblivion to the surroundings. A crucial aspect is the creation of a mental space devoid of distractions, liberating the mind from the clutches of daily worries, that allows for the release of attentional resources. This allows one to be receptive to music and experience a response that manifests itself in movement.

Here are a few examples of statements:

“It seems to me that when I am inside myself, I am not waiting for anything, it is then, in this silence, that the very impulse that motivates movement is born inside my body”.

“It's like no one sees me, like ‘I'm on my own, in some kind of joy and inner silence.’ it just helps to find that very movement”.

“When I realize that I got into music, the people around me cease to exist for me. That is, I don't notice what they are doing, I don't focus on them, I don't try to follow them, but I just float in the music and feel free”.

“The biggest problem for me is to get ready. And I felt like I was sinking into this music, and... it was so subtle, I even tried not to look at anyone, just not to come out of it”.

2. Entering into improvisation, the process of improvisation can be described as falling into the flow, coupling with the music. Movement arises along with the music and under its guidance: the participant does not need to invent anything, he hears intonations and reflects them in spontaneous movement. The participants describe the music as “guiding”, “prompting”, or “making sense”. At the same time, some people notice that reality itself takes on new qualities for them, as if they have fallen into a “different world”, feeling magic and lightness.

These aspects of improvisational experience are reflected in the following examples:

“I felt myself getting into the music at the moment when I realized that it had lifted me like a wave on the sea, and I was already caught in its current and felt so light inside. I didn't know what to do, whether to move forward or backward, or what movements to make. You just let the music take you and go with it”.

“The feeling of freedom, lightness, falling into the flow of it (music). It's as if you've entered another dimension”.

“In this music, I felt the sound itself pouring down on me from above, and I accepted it. It felt like moonlight was pouring down on me, and I moved in that light, as if I were in another dimension while listening to the music”.

“At some point, there is a special connection with music. It is a connection that, if I may say so, is almost divine. It's like a portal into which you can enter and merge with the music, tuning in with it as if you have entered a stream”.

“There's an admixture of the feeling that you don't have to try to be sophisticated and do something, because you're already connected with the music. You're sort of singing along with it, so you're not trying to go beyond what it offers. There are such ripples, waves in this music, and it's as if you are moving with them. So it's like you're voicing the music with your movement”.

“When you start moving, the music tells you everything”.

“In those moments when I could feel the music, I felt like I knew the music already, even though it was my first time hearing it”.

“... it was magical for me”.

3. Communion with music can also be accompanied by a sense of personal integrity, inner harmony, and unity with one's surroundings and the world. There is a holistic physical, emotional, and personal involvement of the improvisers.

This is confirmed by the following statements:

“When you get into music, it's like a complete fusion, a fusion with sounds, with everything around you. And inside, there's some kind of, you know, calmness”.

“It feels like I'm moving this weight not just with my hands, but with the whole of my body”.

“It felt like a very harmonious state... You're doing something right and interesting. I was like an artist, who was brushstrokes on a canvas, painting what the author wants to convey. There's a connection between all the senses, emotions, soul and your experience, musical and choreographic. That's how music affected me as a whole – like a puzzle, all the pieces fit together, and my body and mind react. This reaction was an improvisation”.

4. Feelings come to the forefront in the process of improvisation. This confirms the compatibility of improvisation with the criteria of movement in music and the reflection of its content: there is no preconceived image, it is not imposed on top of the music; the image is created later. First of all, there is a general involvement, often consisting of abstract sensations and undifferentiated feelings that correspond to the musical texture. Feeling, entering to music through an emotional and physical response, is primary. At the same time, a visual image may not be present.

These observations are reflected in the statements of the participants:

“I didn't realize it at first, the image of the doll didn't come to mind immediately. Instead, my legs began to

move and my arms responded sharply, albeit sharply. At the same time, the violin provided me a sense of life, a gentleness and a kind of interest in living”.

“And there was a sense of footsteps, like this. Well, they probably first appeared in my body, and then, actually, the image of the footsteps appeared. That is, somehow, through my body, into representation, into image”.

“I didn't have any image, such a visual artistic one, I just entered this music and it was as if I had entered some completely different world in which everything was completely different, I just lived in this music and it's even hard to explain”.

“As for the image, I don't think a specific image came to mind right away. It was more of a gradual process, and it had to do with the oriental motifs and the tints that you imitate with your body. Overall, the impression is that you're in an oriental fairytale, and that's the preface to it. That is, everything is still calm, there's still a slightly detached story that calls out to you and creates anticipation for what will happen next”.

“The image of the bird, the crane, didn't come to me immediately. That is, at first... there was just a sense of some kind of delicate beauty, like something filigreed. Then, I had a vision of this crane. When I worked on it again, several times in the next class, I could already clearly reproduce this image”.

“The image was born gradually, through listening and dancing, as we had several improvisations on this music. At first, it was just a kind of ‘immersion’ or orientation. Then the bright accents and bursts began to become more recognizable as a mental storm. And then there was an attempt to hear and understand where these bursts came from and what led to them”.

5. The experience of improvisation is characterized by the participant's personal involvement and is often accompanied by emotional uplift, joy, and delight.

Here are some examples:

“I felt great joy. ... The impressions are very strong”.

“It was an incredible feeling of freedom and happiness”.

“And so, when I manage to get into such an improvisation, then ... I am very open and vulnerable internally”.

“And the inner state is a great pleasure from what is happening”.

“I was in a state of great emotional elation. My feelings were all somehow uplifted...”.

“I was probably very close to this music, and it was very melodic and desirable for me. That's probably why, first and foremost, it was such a joy for me to move in it”.

“It felt... well, it was just good... it was good, interesting, and it was as if I wanted the music to continue so that it wouldn't stop”.

At the same time, while analyzing the participants' responses, based on improvisations which partially or completely fail to meet the criteria for success, the following observations are recorded:

1. Participants discussed the incompleteness of their musical experience, dissatisfaction with their improvisation and lack of immersion in music, despite the fact that they may like musical composition.

2. Impression often includes descriptions of the music and the visual images or feelings it evokes, which is typical for listening to music without movement (Ailamazyan, Savchenko, 2025). In such cases, the image can be a projection adapted to the overall mood of the music.

3. It is noted that there may be internal resistance or unwillingness to fully hear, engage with and express the musical content.

Here are a few instances of responses:

“Music was not available to me at all. It seemed incomprehensible to me. It was as if there were a lot of things in her at once. I even closed myself off from her to some extent. I realized that there was something about it that I was afraid to let myself feel, because it would be hard to deal with”.

“The music seems quite romantic to me, gentle, rushing somewhere, like a flower opening and closing again. I probably haven't fully explored this music for myself, I don't feel a great depth to it, or any strong emotions. It's still somewhat surface-level and doesn't cause any excitement or goosebumps for me. I take it very calmly, but definitely gently, simply. I understand that there is no hit, because when there is a hit, there are special sensations that come with it, in my body and head, well... at the level of feeling. But... I'm not ready to go further yet. Maybe I can't, maybe I don't want to let something more serious inside through this music. I don't want to get anything too intense from the inside”.

“In improvisation, I felt that I had caught movements that were able to convey at least a partial essence of the experience and the inner conflict that existed within it. However, while I was not fully immersed in the music, there was resistance inside me that prevented me from completely entering into the music and living it. I found myself rather illustrating the feelings that I was hearing. I cannot say that a specific image emerged, but rather, it was a process of selecting from life situations and attempting to find appropriate one”.

“This music, I feel as if it belongs to me, but I can't quite get into it, like I don't have enough time to tune into it or somehow immerse myself in it. In other words, I generally feel as if I'm passing by it. I want to answer because there's something about her character that's deep, her inner self or something that I like. I would like to understand her better, but I didn't find any image there. Yes, I think I've lived there, but I couldn't quite catch up with her. It felt like she was slipping away from me, despite her apparent simplicity”.

“Unfortunately, I have nothing to say about this improvisation on my own. There was no reflection”.

Discussion

The internal experience of participants varies depending on the quality of improvisation in terms of overall satisfaction, significance of the experience, nature of the emotions and states experienced, and connection with music.

Let us consider the fact that descriptions of experiences of successful musical and motor improvisation contain an indication of the specific state of the participants. This state combines full conscious presence and following the music, merging with music through a movement that unfolds spontaneously, as if by itself. This duality in improvisational creativity is emphasized by J. Moreno (Moreno, 1993). Such improvisation could be considered a form of post-spontaneous regulation, where “emerging movements and gestures are spontaneous and involuntary, yet at the same time, mediated and conscious” (Ailamazyan, 2023, p. 26).

The condition under consideration can be described as a non-everyday, uncommon combination of activity, subjectivity, and involvement with music and the Other, in a broad sense. It is assumed that there is dialogical communication between the person and music, during which the personality achieves integrity, self-recognizing, and development (Bakhtin, 1979). This may be the psychological significance of experiencing this type of improvisational activity for a person. By being open to a meeting and expressing his inner experience through an expressive movement, a person can find their true self, authenticity. “Through exposing their inner self, the personality overcomes their duality and division into acting and observing, reflecting selves, allowing them to experience self-identity, coincidence with themselves” (Ailamazyan, 2023, pp. 31-32).

The experience of improvisation under consideration can be compared to A. Maslow's description of a peak experience. During this experience, a person becomes free from control and fear — which can distort perception — by directing attention to a certain part of reality that is important at that moment and is perceived as integral. The perceiver's state during this experience is largely contemplative and non-egocentric, which is necessary for aesthetic experience (Melik-Pashaev, 2023), however, the perceiver is not devoid of his own activity. This type of experience leads to an integration of all aspects of the individual's personality, and it is self-valuable, positive, and desirable, and is characterized by a unique perception of time and space, akin to being in another world, and often accompanied by intense emotional reactions that can be paradoxical (Maslow, 2009).

Let us consider the possibility that different improvisational techniques may be based on different content and may differ in terms of the psychological states they elicit. It is worth noting that foreign researchers have

also pointed out that the type of practice can act as a moderator in the model of shaping the psychological effect of motor improvisation, however, what exactly causes this remains unclear (Horvath et al., 2025).

We believe that methods which stimulate the expression of internal desires, thoughts, and experiences, etc., and methods which involve an improvised response to an external stimulus or image, may have different psychological effects. The studied experience was obtained on the basis of the method of musical movement that involves giving a motor response to music, with the goal of reflecting the musical content (intonation), which determines the semantic basis for improvisation and the nature of the inner experience of participants.

In the field of foreign musical psychology, there are also parallels regarding the significance of perceiving musical content for a complete experience. From a cognitive psychology perspective, S. Hoffding et al. conclude that “mental surfing” while listening to music, which involves intense and selective attention, is made possible precisely due to the cognitively and emotionally rich foundation, the “framework” of the music itself, as a force that attracts (Hoffding, Nielsen, Laeng, 2024). Russian musical psychology consistently emphasizes the focus on intonational processes in music.

One of the common indicators of successful and fully-fledged improvisation, observed both in the experiences of participants in this study and dancers from other genres (Biasutti, Habe, 2021), is a state of flow. According to the well-established concept of M. Chiksentmikhaii, “flow” is accompanied by a specific organization of consciousness in which there is a unified focus of all mental energies, engagement in activity, where the individual does not perceive themselves separately from the activity and feels a sense of correctness in their actions, receiving immediate feedback. They do not feel the need for reflection or introspection, experiencing a sense of unity with the external world and transcendence of their own self, joy and pleasure (Chiksentmikhaii, 2011).

Based on interviews with sixteen dance improvisation teachers, the study captured the experience of freedom, absolute presence, increased self-awareness, and at the same time, merging with music, the audience, and the situation. In addition, an autotelic experience was observed that generated internal motivation, and an altered “spiritual” state of consciousness was noted during the process of motor improvisation (Biasutti, Habe, 2021). Another study on improvisational experiences also noted the feeling of both internal and external integration with accompanists and other dancers (Miyahara, Mirfin-Veitch, 2021).

In general, modern researchers have shown a high level of interest in the phenomenon of flow in the context of music (Tan, Sin, 2021). Flow is considered to be a form of spontaneous thinking that is characterized by flexibility and creativity. It is assumed that flow can be

conceptualized as a “self-organizing dynamic cascade of insights”, implying an insightful restructuring of a situation based on implicit learning that occurs within the zone of proximal development (Vervaeke, Ferraro, Herrera-Bennett, 2018, p. 322). This emphasizes the concept of the post-arbitrary nature of improvisation, in which experiencing the flow arises.

When considering the characteristics of unsuccessful improvisational experiences, similarities are also found with the results of other studies. For example, orientation towards external feedback, fear of appearing before an observer, and being judged by them may serve as obstacles (Horvath et al., 2025). This is particularly noted in interviews with seven dance masters from different directions, who rely on various content when creating motor improvisations — images, ideas, musical features, verbal material, physical impulses, etc., which may be pre-determined or generated during the improvisational process (Miyahara, Mirfin-Veitch, 2021).

Conclusion

The findings of the study may be summarized in the following points:

1. Cultural improvisation practices organize the process of developing the ability for free spontaneous response. Specifically, in the context of musical movement, the capacity to respond spontaneously to sounding music is enhanced.
2. The internal experience of participants in musical-motor improvisation varies in terms of overall satisfaction, significance and nature of the experience and states, and depth of comprehension of musical meanings, depending on the quality of the improvisation.
3. The study of successful improvisational experience contains a description of a specific state, which is rarely encountered in everyday life. This state combines

a complete conscious presence with spontaneous movement, allowing musical content to be expressed. The experience of subjectivity is accompanied by a heightened sensitivity to external meanings — in this case, meanings in music — as well as a sense of attunement with them, and a holistic bodily, emotional, and personal involvement. Participants have described this experience as subjectively meaningful, and it can be assumed that it contributes to the integration of personality.

4. What successful, fully-fledged improvisations in different practices have in common is a state of flow, characterized by the alignment of all mental energies, a sense of harmony with the external world, the experience of joy and satisfaction from the musical and physical activity, and the lack of need for reflection or analysis due to the feeling of correctness and coherence of one's actions. At the same time, it is a necessary condition to overcome fears, inner resistance, and focus on the content of the improvisation.

5. Due to the fact that various improvisational practices are aimed at different kinds of content, their impact on the personality may vary. Unlike methods that use music as background, which aim to express internal impulses, desires, and conflicts, or offer responses to specific musical features, the technique of musical movement creates a state of receptivity to intonation and musical meaning. This allows for a dialogue with the music and the development of the ability for self-transcendence — the discovery of meaning beyond one's self.

In the next phases of the study, it is proposed to validate the findings using an expert evaluation process, based on the already established criteria for improvisational quality.

Limitations. The study of the experience of improvisation and its significance for the personality is limited by the ability of participants to verbalize and reflect on their experiences and behaviors.

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Information about the authors

Aida M. Ailamazyan, Candidate of Sciences (Psychology), Senior Researcher at the Department of Personality Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University; Junior Researcher at the Laboratory “Center for Socio-Cultural Problems of Modern Education”, Federal Scientific Center of Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8896-938X>, e-mail: aida@heptachor.ru

Nina L. Savchenko, PhD Student at the Department of Personality Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University; Junior Researcher at the Laboratory “Center for Socio-Cultural Problems of Modern Education”, Federal Scientific Center of Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8250-9254>, e-mail: savchenko.ni.leo@yandex.ru

Информация об авторах

Аида Меликовна Айламазян, кандидат психологических наук, старший научный сотрудник кафедры психологии личности, факультет психологии, Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова (ФГБОУ ВО «МГУ имени М.В. Ломоносова»); младший научный сотрудник лаборатории «Центр социокультурных проблем современно-

го образования», Федеральный научный центр психологических и междисциплинарных исследований (ФГБНУ ФНЦ ПМИ), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8896-938X>, e-mail: aida@heptachor.ru

Нина Леонидовна Савченко, аспирант кафедры психологии личности, факультет психологии, Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова (ФГБОУ ВО «МГУ имени М.В. Ломоносова»); младший научный сотрудник лаборатории «Центр социокультурных проблем современного образования», Федеральный научный центр психологических и междисциплинарных исследований (ФГБНУ ФНЦ ПМИ), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8250-9254>, e-mail: savchenko.ni.leo@yandex.ru

Contribution of the authors

Aida M. Ailamazyan — planning of the research and its organization; control over the research, writing and design of the manuscript.

Nina L. Savchenko — organization of the research, data collection and analysis; writing and design of the manuscript.

All authors participated in the discussion of the results and approved the final text of the manuscript.

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Научная статья | Original paper

Parental respect motivation as a factor in the internalization of educational values within academic motivation: a comparative study of Russian and Arab adolescents

Dabbah Yehya ✉

Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ yehiadabbah7@gmail.com

Abstract

Context and relevance. Academic motivation is considered one of the key predictors of learning success, persistence in educational activity, and students' psychological well-being. Within self-determination theory, motivation is understood as a multidimensional system of regulatory processes developing through the internalization of social values. Particular interest is given to parental respect motivation, reflecting students' striving to meet parental expectations and maintain positive relationships with significant others. From the perspective of cultural-historical psychology, this type of motivation may be interpreted as a result of the transformation of social interaction into internal mechanisms of self-regulation (Vygotsky, 1983). **Objective.** To examine the role of parental respect motivation in the structure of academic motivation among adolescents and to identify its associations with intrinsic motivation, achievement motivation, self-worth motivation, and introjected regulation across different cultural contexts. **Hypothesis.** It was assumed that parental respect motivation would demonstrate stronger associations with introjected regulation and self-worth motivation than with intrinsic motivation. Cultural differences between Russian adolescents and Arab adolescents living in Israel were also expected, as well as age-related differences in the strength of these relationships. **Methods and materials.** The study involved adolescents aged 13–16 from educational institutions in the Russian Federation and Israel. The younger age group included students aged 13–14 ($N = 333$), and the older group included students aged 15–16 ($N = 383$). Academic motivation was assessed using the Academic Motivation Scales for School Students (AMS-S) (Gordeeva, Sychev, Gizhitsky, Gavrichenkova, 2017). Group differences were analyzed using the Mann–Whitney U test, and relationships between variables were examined using Spearman correlation analysis. **Results.** Arab adolescents demonstrated higher levels of achievement motivation, self-development motivation, self-worth motivation, introjected regulation, and parental respect motivation compared to Russian adolescents in the younger age group (13–14 years). In the older age group (15–16 years), group differences remained significant mainly for introjected regulation and parental respect motivation. Parental respect motivation showed consistent associations with introjected regulation ($r = 0,309–0,550$) and self-worth motivation ($r = 0,357–0,595$), while its association with intrinsic motivation was weak ($r = 0,039–0,358$). **Conclusions.** Parental respect motivation may be considered a culturally mediated mechanism of internalization of educational values associated with controlled forms of academic self-regulation. The findings contribute to a more precise understanding of the structure of academic motivation in adolescence and highlight the role of family context in motivational development.

Keywords: academic motivation, self-determination theory, internalization, introjected regulation, parental respect motivation, adolescents, cultural differences

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Мотивация уважения к родителям как фактор интериоризации образовательных ценностей в структуре учебной мотивации подростков: сравнительное исследование российских и арабских учащихся

Е. Даббах ✉

Московский государственный психолого-педагогический университет, Москва, Российская Федерация
✉ e-mail: yehiadabbah7@gmail.com

Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Учебная мотивация рассматривается как один из ключевых факторов успешности образовательной деятельности и психологического благополучия учащихся. В рамках теории самодетерминации мотивация понимается как система различных форм регуляции учебной активности, формирующихся в процессе интериоризации социальных ценностей. Особый интерес представляет мотивация уважения к родителям, отражающая стремление учащегося соответствовать ожиданиям значимых взрослых и поддерживать позитивные отношения в семье. С позиций культурно-исторической психологии данный тип мотивации может рассматриваться как результат преобразования социальных отношений во внутренние механизмы саморегуляции (Выготский, 1983). **Цель.** Анализ роли мотивации уважения к родителям в структуре учебной мотивации подростков и выявление ее взаимосвязей с познавательной мотивацией, мотивацией достижения, мотивацией самоуважения и интроецированной регуляцией в различных культурных контекстах. **Гипотеза.** Предполагается, что мотивация уважения к родителям демонстрирует более тесные связи с интроецированной регуляцией и мотивацией самоуважения, чем с познавательной мотивацией; существуют различия между российскими подростками и подростками арабского происхождения, проживающими в Израиле; по уровню выраженности данного типа мотивации выраженность различий может изменяться в зависимости от возраста. **Методы и материалы.** В исследовании приняли участие подростки 13–16 лет из образовательных учреждений Российской Федерации и Израиля. Первая возрастная группа включала учащихся 13–14 лет ($N = 333$), вторая — учащихся 15–16 лет ($N = 383$). Учебная мотивация измерялась с использованием опросника ШАМ-Ш (Гордеева, Сычев, Гижицкий, Гавриченко, 2017). Для анализа различий применялся критерий Манна–Уитни, для анализа взаимосвязей — корреляционный анализ Спирмена. **Результаты.** Подростки арабского происхождения продемонстрировали более высокие показатели мотивации достижения, мотивации саморазвития, мотивации самоуважения, интроецированной регуляции и мотивации уважения к родителям по сравнению с российскими подростками в группе 13–14 лет. В группе 15–16 лет различия сохраняются преимущественно для интроецированной регуляции и мотивации уважения к родителям. Мотивация уважения к родителям демонстрирует устойчивые связи с интроецированной регуляцией ($r = 0,309–0,550$) и мотивацией самоуважения ($r = 0,357–0,595$) при слабой связи с познавательной мотивацией ($r = 0,039–0,358$). **Выводы.** Мотивация уважения к родителям может рассматриваться как культурно обусловленный механизм интериоризации социальных ценностей, связанный с формированием контролируемых форм саморегуляции учебной деятельности. Полученные результаты уточняют представления о структуре учебной мотивации подростков и подчеркивают роль семейного контекста в формировании мотивационных процессов.

Ключевые слова: учебная мотивация, теория самодетерминации, интериоризация, интроецированная регуляция, уважение к родителям, подростки, культурные различия

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Introduction

The question of how social expectations become internal sources regulating academic activity remains one of the central issues in contemporary motivational psychology. Despite the substantial body of research conducted within the framework of self-determination theory (Deci, Ryan, 2000; Ryan, Deci, 2020), the mechanisms through which specific social values associated with educational achievement become internalized remain insufficiently differentiated. In particular, it remains unclear how parental expectations may transform into internal standards regulating adolescents' academic activity.

According to self-determination theory, motivation is conceptualized as a continuum of regulatory forms differing in their degree of autonomy (Ryan, Connell, 1989; Deci, Ryan, 1985; Ryan, Deci, 2000; Vallerand et al., 1992). External demands may gradually become internalized and integrated into the individual's psychological structure, giving rise to different forms of self-regulation. Within this framework, Introjected Motives occupy a particular position as partially internalized forms of motivation in which behavior is governed by internal standards of self-evaluation associated with maintaining a positive sense of competence or avoiding negative self-evaluation (Ryan, Connell, 1989; Assor et al., 2009).

This perspective is consistent with the principles of cultural-historical psychology, which emphasizes the social origins of higher psychological functions. According to L.S. Vygotsky, psychological mechanisms initially emerge within interpersonal interaction and are subsequently internalized, becoming internal regulators of behavior (Vygotsky, 1983). Within activity theory, the motivational sphere of personality develops through systems of social relations and activity (Leontiev, 1975; Bozhovich, 1968). Thus, the internalization of social relations may be regarded as a general mechanism underlying the development of internal regulation in academic activity.

From the perspective of self-determination theory, different forms of external motivation vary in their degree of psychological autonomy. Some external demands retain the character of direct control, whereas others become integrated into the individual's self-evaluative system and begin to function as internal standards (Ryan, Deci, 2000; Ryan, Deci, 2020). In this context, academic activity may be sustained not only by Cognitive Motivation but also by the desire to meet socially significant expectations.

The structure of adolescents' academic motivation has traditionally been viewed as a multidimensional system that includes various sources regulating academic activity (Markova, 1990). Contemporary psy-

chometric models developed within self-determination theory make it possible to differentiate internal and external forms of academic motivation (Vallerand et al., 1992; Guay et al., 2015). In the original versions of academic motivation questionnaires, the structure of academic motivation is described through Cognitive Motivation and various forms of external regulation. However, a distinct type of motivation reflecting students' striving to meet parental expectations is not identified within these models.

In the Russian AMS-S methodology, an additional component referred to as parental respect motivation was introduced (Gordeeva et al., 2017). The inclusion of this scale was motivated by the need for a more differentiated description of the sources regulating schoolchildren's academic activity, since existing categories of external motivation do not fully capture the diversity of social factors influencing adolescents' academic engagement (Gordeeva, 2015; Gordeeva et al., 2013).

From a conceptual perspective, parental respect motivation may be understood as a form of regulation associated with the internalization of social expectations that acquire personal significance within the structure of self-evaluation (Ryan, Deci, 2000; Assor et al., 2009). In this context, academic activity may function as a means of maintaining a positive perception of one's competence within relationships with significant adults. Such a mechanism is closely related to controlled forms of motivation in which standards of self-evaluation are shaped by perceived social expectations (Ryan, Connell, 1989).

Particular interest lies in examining this type of motivation within a comparative cultural context. A number of studies suggest that the structure of academic motivation may vary depending on cultural value systems (Chen et al., 2015; Vasquez et al., 2023). The present study examines Russian adolescents and adolescents of Arab origin living in Israel. This sample makes it possible to analyze the role of family expectations in the structure of academic motivation under conditions involving the interaction of different cultural norms and educational values.

Thus, the analysis of parental respect motivation may contribute to clarifying the role of social context in shaping adolescents' academic motivation and broaden current understanding of the pathways through which educational values become internalized.

The present study aimed to examine the role of parental respect motivation within the structure of adolescents' academic motivation and to investigate its relationships with Cognitive Motivation, Achievement Motivation, Self-Worth Motivation, and Introjected Motives.

Cultural differences in adolescents' socialization processes may shape the internalization of parental expectations in different ways. In Arab cultural contexts

characterized by stronger collectivistic orientations, family relationships and parental authority often occupy a more central position in the regulation of adolescents' behavior. This may facilitate the internalization of parental expectations in the form of Introjected Motives accompanied by a stronger sense of duty and the need to meet socially significant standards. In the Russian context, where individualistic and collectivistic orientations coexist in a more heterogeneous manner, the role of parental expectations within the structure of academic motivation may be less pronounced. Within the framework of self-determination theory, this may be reflected in different levels of controlled forms of motivation, including Introjected Motives.

Accordingly, it was hypothesized that differences would exist between Russian adolescents and adolescents of Arab origin living in Israel with regard to parental respect motivation and related components of controlled motivation.

Based on the theoretical framework, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Parental respect motivation demonstrates stronger associations with Introjected Motives and Self-Worth Motivation than with Cognitive Motivation;

The magnitude of these differences may vary depending on developmental stage.

Materials and methods

Participants

The study involved 716 adolescents aged between 13 and 16 years ($M = 14,5$; $SD = 1,1$) enrolled in educational institutions in the Russian Federation and Israel. A convenience cluster sampling procedure was used based on schools that agreed to participate in the study.

The Russian sample consisted of 199 students from the Municipal Autonomous General Education Institution "Educational Center Leader" (Moscow Region, Leninsky Urban District): 99 eighth-grade students (50 girls, 49 boys; $M = 13,8$; $SD = 0,4$) and 100 tenth-grade students (49 girls, 51 boys; $M = 15,6$; $SD = 0,5$).

The Arab sample included 517 students from Arab schools in Israel: 234 eighth-grade students (147 girls, 87 boys; $M = 13,9$; $SD = 0,5$) and 283 eleventh-grade students (165 girls, 118 boys; $M = 15,7$; $SD = 0,4$).

Group comparability was ensured through correspondence between educational stages in the Russian and Israeli educational systems: eleventh-grade students in Israel were age-equivalent to tenth-grade students in the Russian Federation.

In accordance with the aims of the study, the total sample was divided into two age groups: 13–14 years (333 students: 99 Russian and 234 Arab students) and 15–16 years (383 students: 100 Russian and 283 Arab students).

Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. Informed consent was obtained from the adolescents' parents and the administrations of the participating educational institutions. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of psychological research.

Measures

To assess the structure of academic motivation, the Schoolchildren's Academic Motivation Scales (AMS-S), developed on the basis of self-determination theory (Gordeeva et al., 2017), was used.

The instrument assesses different types of academic motivation reflecting both cognitive and socially mediated components of academic activity.

The questionnaire includes eight scales: Cognitive Motivation, Achievement Motivation, Self-Development Motivation, Self-Worth Motivation, Introjected Motives, External Positive Motives (Parental Respect Motivation), External Negative Motives, and Amotivation.

The factorial structure of the instrument has been confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis and demonstrates satisfactory levels of internal consistency ($0,72 < \alpha < 0,90$).

Procedure

Data collection was conducted in educational institutions in the Russian Federation and Israel in group settings.

Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. Respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire designed to assess different aspects of academic motivation. All participants were informed about the aims of the study and provided consent to participate.

Data were processed in an aggregated form without the inclusion of personal identifying information.

Statistical analysis

The nonparametric Mann–Whitney U test was used to analyze differences between independent groups.

Spearman correlation analysis was employed to examine the structure of relationships among the components of academic motivation.

Effect sizes for between-group differences were calculated using the coefficient r ($r = Z/\sqrt{N}$).

Statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS software package.

Additionally, measurement invariance of the academic motivation structure within the Arab sample was tested using multigroup CFA. The model fit indices indicated acceptable configural, metric, and scalar invariance ($CFI = 0,981$ – $0,984$; $RMSEA = 0,066$ – $0,074$; $SRMR = 0,080$ – $0,084$).

Results

To identify differences in the structure of academic motivation between adolescents of Arab origin and Russian adolescents, the Mann–Whitney U test was applied separately for the two age groups.

The results showed that, in the 13–14-year-old age group (8th grade), adolescents of Arab origin demonstrated higher levels of Achievement Motivation, Self-Development Motivation, Self-Worth Motivation, Introjected Motives, and External Positive Motives (Parental Respect Motivation) compared to Russian adolescents (see Table 1). Differences in Cognitive Motivation, External Negative Motives, and Amotivation were not statistically significant.

In the 15–16-year-old age group (10th–11th grade), differences between the cultural groups remained significant primarily for Introjected Motives and External Positive Motives (Parental Respect Motivation),

whereas no statistically significant differences were found for the remaining components of academic motivation (see Table 2).

The findings presented in Tables 1–2 suggest that cultural differences in the structure of academic motivation are more pronounced during early adolescence and partially decrease with age.

The results of the correlation analysis for the different age and cultural groups are presented in Tables 3–6 (see Tables 3–6). The analysis demonstrated that parental respect motivation showed stable positive associations with Introjected Motives ($r = 0,309–0,550$) and Self-Worth Motivation ($r = 0,357–0,595$) across all examined groups. At the same time, its associations with Cognitive Motivation were weaker or absent ($r = 0,039–0,358$). These patterns were observed in both the Russian and Arab samples, suggesting that parental respect motivation is primarily associated with controlled forms of regulation of academic activity.

Table 1

Differences between cultural groups (13–14 years)

Scale	Russian students ($M \pm SD$)	Arab students ($M \pm SD$)	Z	p	r
1. Cognitive Motivation	3,63 $\pm$ 0,81	3,69 $\pm$ 0,94	–1,000	0,317	0,05
2. Achievement Motivation	2,98 $\pm$ 0,97	3,69 $\pm$ 0,93	–5,813	<0,001	0,32
3. Self-Development Motivation	3,66 $\pm$ 0,77	4,12 $\pm$ 0,73	–5,147	<0,001	0,28
4. Self-Worth Motivation	3,72 $\pm$ 0,82	4,23 $\pm$ 0,71	–5,371	<0,001	0,29
5. Introjected Motives	3,37 $\pm$ 0,80	3,72 $\pm$ 0,73	–3,669	<0,001	0,20
6. External Positive Motives (Parental Respect Motivation)	3,26 $\pm$ 1,06	3,91 $\pm$ 0,97	–5,212	<0,001	0,29
7. External Negative Motives	2,94 $\pm$ 0,91	2,88 $\pm$ 0,94	–0,612	0,541	0,03
8. Amotivation	2,04 $\pm$ 0,97	1,99 $\pm$ 0,93	–0,239	0,811	0,01

Note: M – mean; SD – standard deviation; r – effect size ($r = Z/\sqrt{N}$).

Table 2

Differences between cultural groups (15–16 years)

Scale	Russian students ($M \pm SD$)	Arab students ($M \pm SD$)	Z	p	r
1. Cognitive Motivation	4,00 $\pm$ 0,88	3,85 $\pm$ 0,88	–1,431	0,152	0,07
2. Achievement Motivation	3,57 $\pm$ 1,05	3,69 $\pm$ 0,97	–0,907	0,364	0,05
3. Self-Development Motivation	4,03 $\pm$ 0,85	4,05 $\pm$ 0,82	–0,118	0,906	0,01
4. Self-Worth Motivation	3,89 $\pm$ 0,90	4,00 $\pm$ 0,92	–1,332	0,183	0,07
5. Introjected Motives	3,41 $\pm$ 0,78	3,81 $\pm$ 0,83	–4,137	<0,001	0,21
6. External Positive Motives (Parental Respect Motivation)	3,18 $\pm$ 1,12	3,44 $\pm$ 1,12	–2,150	0,032	0,11
7. External Negative Motives	2,93 $\pm$ 0,90	3,04 $\pm$ 0,98	–0,788	0,431	0,04
8. Amotivation	2,09 $\pm$ 0,96	2,03 $\pm$ 1,06	–1,084	0,278	0,06

Note: M – mean; SD – standard deviation; r – effect size ($r = Z/\sqrt{N}$).

Table 3

Correlation matrix (Arab adolescents 13–14 years)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Cognitive Motivation	-						
2. Achievement Motivation	0,755**	-					
3. Self-Development Motivation	0,739**	0,735**	-				
4. Self-Worth Motivation	0,598**	0,549**	0,647**	-			
5. Introjected Motives	0,415**	0,371**	0,489**	0,514**	-		
6. External Positive Motives (Parental Respect Motivation)	0,077	0,077	0,172**	0,357**	0,309**	-	
7. External Negative Motives	-0,027	-0,019	-0,008	0,096	0,363**	0,326**	-
8. Amotivation	-0,369**	-0,356**	-0,346**	-0,174**	-0,064	0,219**	0,296**

Note: «*» — $p \leq 0,05$; «**» — $p \leq 0,01$ (two-tailed).

Table 4

Correlation matrix (Arab adolescents 15–16 years)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Cognitive Motivation	-						
2. Achievement Motivation	0,711**	-					
3. Self-Development Motivation	0,786**	0,737**	-				
4. Self-Worth Motivation	0,639**	0,532**	0,718**	-			
5. Introjected Motives	0,442**	0,403**	0,564**	0,681**	-		
6. External Positive Motives (Parental Respect Motivation)	0,358**	0,243**	0,384**	0,595**	0,550**	-	
7. External Negative Motives	0,101	0,137*	0,135*	0,325**	0,441**	0,544**	-
8. Amotivation	-0,325**	-0,184**	-0,306**	-0,103	0,048	0,177**	0,418**

Note: “*” — $p \leq 0,05$; “**” — $p \leq 0,01$ (two-tailed).

Table 5

Correlation matrix (Russian adolescents 13–14 years)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Cognitive Motivation	-						
2. Achievement Motivation	0,675**	-					
3. Self-Development Motivation	0,741**	0,710**	-				
4. Self-Worth Motivation	0,515**	0,575**	0,668**	-			
5. Introjected Motives	0,200*	0,290**	0,368**	0,505**	-		
6. External Positive Motives (Parental Respect Motivation)	0,039	0,129	0,201*	0,390**	0,533**	-	
7. External Negative Motives	-0,157	0,023	0,030	0,172	0,545**	0,623**	-
8. Amotivation	-0,540**	-0,477**	-0,550**	-0,406**	-0,213*	-0,115	0,037

Note: “*” — $p \leq 0,05$; “**” — $p \leq 0,01$ (two-tailed).

Table 6

Correlation matrix (Russian adolescents 15–16 years)

Переменные / Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Cognitive Motivation	-						
2. Achievement Motivation	0,817**	-					
3. Self-Development Motivation	0,828**	0,820**	-				
4. Self-Worth Motivation	0,664**	0,664**	0,712**	-			
5. Introjected Motives	0,356**	0,202*	0,431**	0,508**	-		
6. External Positive Motives (Parental Respect Motivation)	0,138	0,145	0,181	0,391**	0,381**	-	
7. External Negative Motives	-0,035	-0,106	0,044	0,165	0,446**	0,527**	-
8. Amotivation	-0,461**	-0,383**	-0,319**	-0,223*	0,135	0,139	0,382**

Note: “*” — $p \leq 0,05$; “**” — $p \leq 0,01$ (two-tailed).

Discussion

The findings of the present study clarify the role of parental respect motivation within the structure of adolescents' academic motivation from the perspectives of self-determination theory and cultural-historical psychology. In line with the initial hypotheses, parental respect motivation demonstrated stronger associations with Introjected Motives and Self-Worth Motivation than with Cognitive Motivation. This suggests its association with controlled forms of self-regulation, in which internal standards of self-evaluation are shaped under the influence of perceived social expectations (Ryan, Connell, 1989; Ryan, Deci, 2000).

The findings may be interpreted within the framework of self-determination theory as a manifestation of Introjected Motives, in which external social demands, including parental expectations, become partially internalized and are subsequently experienced as internal obligations of the student.

In the present study, parental respect motivation is conceptualized as a form of Introjected Motives located at the boundary between external and internal motivation and reflecting the partial internalization of social norms.

From the perspective of self-determination theory, Introjected Motives represent partially internalized forms of motivation in which activity is maintained through the desire to preserve positive self-evaluation or avoid feelings of guilt and shame (Ryan, Connell, 1989; Assor et al., 2009). The stable association of parental respect motivation with Introjected Motives and Self-Worth Motivation indicates that orientation toward parental expectations becomes an internal criterion for evaluating one's own academic success. Its relatively weak association with Cognitive Motivation suggests that striving to meet parental expectations is not necessarily accompanied by a strong interest in the content of academic activity itself. This interpretation is consistent with the distinction between autonomous and controlled forms of motivation (Deci, Ryan, 1985; Ryan, Deci, 2020).

Within the framework of cultural-historical psychology, the identified patterns reflect the process of internalization of social relations, whereby external demands from significant adults are transformed into internal mechanisms of self-regulation (Vygotsky, 1983). Parental expectations, as part of the adolescent's social situation of development, acquire personal significance and become incorporated into the structure of self-evaluation (Bozhovich, 1968; Leontiev, 1975). Thus, parental respect motivation may be understood as a specific mechanism of internalization of educational values that develops within family relationships and supports academic activity through internal standards of self-evaluation.

The observed cultural differences confirm that the role of family expectations in the structure of academic motivation depends on the sociocultural context. Higher levels of parental respect motivation and Introjected Motives among adolescents of Arab origin in the younger age group, compared to Russian adolescents, indicate a stronger orientation toward meeting family expectations as a source of regulation of academic activity. These findings are consistent with cross-cultural studies demonstrating that the structure of academic motivation and the significance of basic psychological needs may vary across cultural contexts (Chen et al., 2015; Vasquez et al., 2023).

These differences may be explained by the sociocultural context in which adolescents' academic motivation develops. Higher levels of Achievement Motivation, Self-Worth Motivation, and Introjected Motives among Arab students reflect the increased significance of family expectations and intergenerational obligations within the structure of social relations. In a number of cultural contexts, educational achievement is viewed not only as an individual accomplishment but also as an indicator of family success as a whole, thereby strengthening the role of parental expectations as a source of regulation of academic activity (Chen et al., 2015).

From a cultural-psychological perspective, these differences are associated with a pronounced orientation toward interdependence and the maintenance of significant relationships with adults. Under such conditions, academic activity becomes a means of confirming adolescents' social responsibility and maintaining a positive family identity. Parental expectations function as normative guidelines shaping adolescents' perceptions of appropriate effort and educational achievement (Ryan, Deci, 2000).

An additional factor is the social significance of education as a resource for social mobility, which strengthens the role of controlled forms of regulation of academic activity (Ryan, Deci, 2020). As a result, the desire to meet family expectations is transformed from an external demand into an internal standard incorporated into the system of self-evaluation (Assor et al., 2009).

The reduction of intercultural differences in the older age group appears to be associated with age-related changes in the structure of self-regulation. As adolescents mature, personal goals and interests become increasingly important, leading to a relative decline in the significance of external reference points, including parental expectations. This trend reflects general developmental patterns of motivation during adolescence (Gnambs, Hanfstingl, 2016; Froiland, Worrell, 2020).

The stable associations between parental respect motivation and Self-Worth Motivation across both age groups further confirm its integration into adolescents' self-evaluative system. In this context, academic activ-

ity functions as a means of maintaining a positive perception of one's competence in relationships with significant adults (Ryan, Deci, 2000). Such a mechanism is consistent with the idea that the internalization of social expectations is accompanied by the formation of internal standards of self-evaluation related to beliefs about appropriate behavior and success (Bozhovich, 1968).

Thus, parental respect motivation represents a culturally mediated component of the structure of academic motivation predominantly associated with controlled forms of regulation of academic activity. The findings expand current understanding of the mechanisms through which educational values become internalized and emphasize the central role of the family context in the development of motivational processes during adolescence (Deci, Ryan, 2000; Ryan, Deci, 2020).

Future research perspectives are associated with a more detailed analysis of the mechanisms of internalization of motivation across different cultural contexts using psychometric approaches to the assessment of measurement invariance.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study make it possible to clarify the position of parental respect motivation within the structure of adolescents' academic motivation and to conceptualize this type of motivation as a specific form of regulation of academic activity associated with the internalization of socially mediated expectations. Unlike Cognitive Motivation, which reflects interest in the content of academic activity, parental respect motivation demonstrates stronger associations with Introjected Motives and Self-Worth Motivation, indicating its connection with mechanisms of self-evaluative regulation.

The results suggest that parental respect motivation occupies an intermediate position between External Negative Motives and Introjected Motives. Although this motive originates from a social source, its regulatory function is realized through internalized standards of self-evaluation. This makes it possible to conceptualize this type of motivation as a relationally mediated mechanism of self-regulation of academic activity that develops through adolescents' interactions with significant adults.

The comparative analysis of Russian adolescents and adolescents of Arab origin living in Israel demonstrated that differences between the groups are manifested primarily in the components of controlled motivation,

whereas the level of Cognitive Motivation appears comparable across cultural contexts. These findings suggest that cultural characteristics primarily influence the ways in which academic achievement is interpreted and incorporated into the system of personal values, rather than the level of cognitive interest itself.

Age-related differences indicate a possible developmental dynamic in the role of social expectations within the structure of academic motivation. More pronounced differences during early adolescence may reflect the greater significance of family-related factors in the formation of standards of self-evaluation at this stage of development. In older adolescence, the structure of academic motivation becomes more homogeneous, which may reflect the gradual expansion of sources of self-regulation and the increasing autonomy of adolescents.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings refine current understanding of the structure of academic motivation by demonstrating that external motivation is not a homogeneous category and may include different forms of internalization depending on the source of social expectations.

The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of conducting a more differentiated analysis of the sources of adolescents' academic motivation and in considering the role of family expectations in the development of educational strategies aimed at supporting academic engagement.

Overall, the findings allow parental respect motivation to be considered a specific pathway through which educational values become internalized, the significance of which may vary depending on cultural context and developmental characteristics.

Limitations. Limitations of the study are related to the correlational design, which does not allow conclusions about causal relationships between components of academic motivation. In addition, the data are based on self-reports, which may limit the accuracy of the assessment of motivational processes.

The sample of Arab adolescents was recruited in educational institutions in Israel, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other Arab cultural contexts. The Russian sample was collected from a single educational institution, whereas the Arab sample included students from several schools, which may also limit generalizability.

Measurement invariance across the Russian and Arab samples was not tested, which limits the possibility of direct comparison of the factor structure of academic motivation across cultural groups.

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Information about the authors

Yehya Dabbah, Postgraduate Student, UNESCO Department of “Cultural and Historical Psychology of Childhood”, Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9613-267X>, e-mail: yehiadabbah7@gmail.com

Информация об авторах

Ехия Даббах, аспирант, кафедра Юнеско «Культурно-историческая психология детства», Московский государственный психолого-педагогический университет (ФГБОУ ВО МГППУ), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9613-267X>, e-mail: yehiadabbah7@gmail.com

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Конфликт интересов

Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Ethics statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of psychological research. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. All participants were informed about the aims of the study and provided informed consent to participate.

Декларация об этике

Исследование проводилось в соответствии с этическими принципами психологических исследований. Участие в исследовании было добровольным и анонимным. Все участники были проинформированы о целях исследования и дали информированное согласие на участие.

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Activity level and general well-being indicators among university students

A.Yu. Plotnikov ✉, Z.R. Khayrova, E.B. Bashkin, I.V. Kelareva

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia named after Patrice Lumumba, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ plotnikov_ayu@pfur.ru

Abstract

Context and relevance. The study of indicators of general well-being and drivers of activity among students is particularly relevant in the context of modern challenges in the educational environment. Student life is a critical stage of personal and professional development, accompanied by high academic loads, the need to adapt to sociocultural changes, and the formation of life goals and social connections. In this context, the ability to effectively manage one's own time, goals, and relationships, which are the drivers of activity, becomes a key factor in successful adaptation and psychological comfort. **Objective.** To study the indicators of general well-being among students in the higher education system and their relationship with the level of activity. **Hypothesis.** The level of activity is interrelated with indicators of general well-being among students: as activity increases, well-being also increases. **Methods and materials.** The study involved 297 undergraduate students of a humanitarian university ($M = 21,1$, $SD = 4,0$, 84% female). Indicators of general well-being were assessed using a battery of questionnaires (Spielberger-Khanin self-assessment scale of anxiety level, V. Zung's method of differential diagnosis of depressive states (adapted by T.I. Balashova), N.P. Fetiskin's scale of subjective well-being, N. Hall's method for assessing emotional intelligence, etc.), and the level of activity was determined using E.B. Bashkin's "Drivers of student learning activity" method. **Results.** The results showed that all the studied indicators of general well-being differed among students with different levels of activity. **Conclusions.** It has been shown that the ability to effectively manage goals, time, and relationships, on the one hand, contributes to a decrease in personal anxiety and depression, an increase in emotional intelligence, but on the other hand, it leads to an increase in situational anxiety and a decrease in subjective well-being.

Keywords: well-being, activity drivers, student youth, higher education system

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Уровень активности деятельности и показатели общего благополучия у студентов

А.Ю. Плотников ✉, З.Р. Хайрова, Е.Б. Башкин, И.В. Келарева

Российский университет дружбы народов имени Патриса Лумумбы, Москва, Российская Федерация

✉ plotnikov_ayu@pfur.ru

Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Изучение показателей общего благополучия и драйверов активности деятельности у студентов приобретает особую актуальность в контексте современных вызовов образовательной среды. Студенчество представляет собой критический этап личностного и профессионального становления, сопровождающийся высокой академической нагрузкой, необходимостью адаптации к социокультурным изменениям, а также формированием жизненных ориентиров и социальных связей. В этих условиях способность к эффективному управлению собственным временем, целями и отношениями, которые являются драйверами активности деятельности, становится ключевым фактором успешной адаптации, психологического комфорта. **Цель.** Изучить показатели общего благополучия у студентов в системе высшего образования и их связь с уровнем активности деятельности. **Гипотеза.** Уровень активности деятельности взаимосвязан с показателями общего благополучия у студентов: с повышением уровня активности благополучие увеличивается. **Методы и материалы.** В исследовании приняли участие 297 студентов бакалавриата гуманитарного профиля ($M = 21,1$, $SD = 4,0$, 84% девушек). Показатели общего благополучия оценивались с помощью батареи опросников (Шкала самооценки уровня тревожности Спилбергера–Ханина, методика дифференциальной диагностики депрессивных состояний В. Зунга (адаптация Т.И. Балашовой), Шкала субъективного благополучия Н.П. Фетискина и др., методика оценки эмоционального интеллекта Н. Холла), уровень активности деятельности определялся с помощью методики «Драйверы учебной активности студента» Е.Б. Башкина. **Результаты.** Результаты свидетельствуют, что все исследуемые показатели общего благополучия различаются у студентов с разным уровнем активности. **Выводы.** Показано, что способность эффективно управлять целями, временем и отношениями, с одной стороны, способствует снижению личностной тревожности и депрессии, увеличению уровня эмоционального интеллекта, но, с другой стороны, приводит к увеличению ситуативной тревожности и снижению субъективного благополучия.

Ключевые слова: благополучие, драйверы активности деятельности, студенческая молодежь, система высшего образования

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Introduction

The study of general well-being indicators and drivers of activity among students is becoming particularly relevant in the context of contemporary challenges in the educational environment. Student life represents a critical stage of personal and professional development, accompanied by high academic loads, the need to adapt to sociocultural changes, and the formation of life orientations and social connections. In these conditions, the ability to effectively manage one's own time, goals, and relationships — which are the drivers of activity — becomes a key factor in suc-

cessful adaptation and psychological comfort. The article presents an empirical study of differences in anxiety, depression, subjective well-being, and emotional intelligence among students with different levels of activity. It also examines the relationships between general well-being indicators and activity drivers. The conducted study led to the conclusion that the ability to effectively manage goals, time, and relationships, on the one hand, contributes to a decrease in trait anxiety and depression and an increase in emotional intelligence, but, on the other hand, leads to an increase in state anxiety and a decrease in subjective well-being.

General well-being

The concept of general well-being does not have a single origin attributable to a specific researcher; rather, it gradually developed through theoretical and empirical research spanning multiple disciplines. The earliest philosophical roots of this concept can be traced to John Stuart Mill in the 19th century. He defined happiness and the absence of suffering as the ultimate goals of human beings, thereby laying a solid foundation for subsequent formulations of well-being. However, he did not provide a formal definition of “general well-being” as a distinct psychological construct (Jacobs, 1991).

In the 20th century, Marie Jahoda was one of the first to formulate a multidimensional model of positive mental health, identifying criteria such as self-acceptance, growth, integration, autonomy, and environmental mastery. Although she did not introduce the term “general well-being”, her work became a fundamental basis for later models aimed at covering a wide range of well-being components (Jahoda, 1958).

Later, Carol Ryff proposed a model of psychological well-being, clearly defining the components of optimal psychological functioning: self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, autonomy, and positive relations. Ryff’s model, while not addressing the term “general well-being”, largely corresponds to its concept by integrating cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of positive functioning (Ryff, 1989).

Concurrently, Ed Diener introduced the concept of subjective well-being, which includes a cognitive component (perception of well-being and life satisfaction), an emotional component (positive and negative affects), and a behavioral component. Despite the similarity of the components he identified to Ryff’s model, Diener distinguished subjective well-being from psychological well-being (Diener, Suh, Lucas, Smith, 1999).

Later, Martin Seligman presented the PERMA model within positive psychology, comprising five elements: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment — reflecting both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being (Seligman, 2013). This model partially replicates and expands previous approaches, explicitly integrating life goals and achievements as core components of general well-being.

Thus, there exist concepts of mental health, subjective well-being, and psychological well-being, the synthesis of which constitutes the concept of general well-being. The synthesis of these concepts occurred as a result of empirical research showing that components of subjective

and psychological well-being can be combined into a single model with a common higher-order factor. The adequacy and appropriateness of extracting this general well-being factor to describe different lower-order factors have been tested in several studies (Disabato et al., 2016; de Bruin, 2015; Chen et al., 2013). Based on these data, researchers from the United Kingdom proposed the Scales of General Well-Being (SGWB), which includes 14 well-being constructs: happiness, cheerfulness, calmness, optimism, engagement, mindfulness, self-acceptance, self-esteem, competence (sense of effectiveness in one’s own activities), self-development, sense of meaning and purpose in life, sense of importance and value of one’s own activities, congruence, and social connections (Longo, Coyne, Joseph, 2017).

Although the concept of general well-being is scarcely addressed by Russian researchers, it is consistent with the main methodological concepts of Russian psychology — L.S. Vygotsky’s cultural-historical theory and A.N. Leontiev’s activity approach (Rubtsov, Zaretsky, Maidansky, 2024). The key link is that well-being is not innate or purely individual; it is mediated by culture and generated by the quality of a person’s activity. Within the cultural-historical framework, well-being is the ability to use cultural tools to regulate one’s behavior and emotions; the presence of meanings set by the cultural context; the quality of social interaction in the zone of proximal development, through which a person not only learns but also receives support and recognition that can become the foundation of general well-being (Rubtsov, 2016). Within the activity approach, well-being is the opportunity to engage in meaning-making activity, where motive and goal are closely linked; the construction of identity through activity, success in which strengthens self-respect and self-esteem and also becomes an important factor of well-being. Thus, Vygotsky’s theory explains the cultural-historical foundations and mediation of various aspects of well-being, while the activity approach explains the mechanism of its realization through the structure of activity. Together, these approaches form a socio-activity model of well-being, useful both for theoretical understanding and for designing interventions and measurements across different cultures.

It is worth noting that despite the existence of the SGWB, there is still no consensus on a clear definition, components, and universally accepted structure of general well-being. Summarizing the studied approaches and concepts that have formed the basis for studying general well-being, it can be said that it is a complex and multidimensional construct, combining both subjective experiences and objective indicators of psycho-

logical functioning and adaptation of the individual. It is an integrative state including life satisfaction, positive and negative affects, as well as the realization of personal potential, social activity, and meaning-of-life orientations.

Drivers of activity

The first component of activity drivers is time management. This is a conscious and purposeful process of allocating time between academic and personal tasks in order to optimize productivity and reduce stress. In the student context, time management includes prioritization, planning task completion, and regulating distractions, which contributes to achieving academic and personal goals (Aeon, 2021). The ability to manage one's own time becomes especially important today, in the era of accelerating information flows and constant changes in educational conditions. This skill requires deliberate formation and support both at the individual and institutional levels.

The second activity driver is goal management — a complex activity involving the conscious setting of a hierarchy of goals, structuring them according to priorities and time frames, adaptation, and reassessment during study and self-realization. Goal setting is viewed as a dynamic process that includes the development of stable motivation and self-regulation, particularly self-control and evaluation of one's own achievements (Locke, Latham, 2006). In the context of student activity, goal management becomes a fundamental element of effectiveness, ensuring the optimization of efforts through conscious planning, motivation, and control.

The third component of activity drivers is relationship management. This is a dynamic process that includes emotional and social perception of oneself and others, communication skills, the ability to work in a team, as well as constructive conflict resolution and adaptation to various social contexts. Relationship management skills in students facilitate the establishment of social connections, which can improve learning motivation, facilitate material assimilation, and increase engagement in collective learning activities. The link between effective social interaction and academic performance and reduced anxiety is supported by empirical research (Jurado, Molero, et al, 2021).

The study uses a questionnaire developed by Bashkin E.B., Chudina Yu.A., and Shlyakhta D.A. (Bashkin, Chudina, Shlyakhta, 2025). This questionnaire mea-

sures all three components of activity: time management, relationship management, and goal management. The questionnaire consists of 28 items: 7 items for the Time Management scale, 12 items for the Relationship Management scale, and 9 items for the Goal Management scale. Based on a psychometric analysis conducted on 707 respondents, the researchers found the questionnaire to be valid and reliable. It allows assessment of three key drivers that determine the effectiveness of managing learning activities: prioritizing activities through their goals (goal management), optimal time allocation (time management), and key communication and interaction skills in implementing activities (relationship management).

Materials and methods

The aim of this study is to examine general well-being indicators among students in higher education and their relationship with the level of activity.

Procedure. The study was conducted in two stages: the first stage examined differences in general well-being indicators among students with different levels of activity; the second stage examined the relationship between general well-being indicators and the expression of activity drivers. General well-being indicators were assessed using a battery of questionnaires (Spielberger—Khanin Self-Rating Anxiety Scale, W. Zung's Differential Depression Scale adapted by T.I. Balashova, N.P. Fetiskin's Subjective Well-Being Scale, N. Hall's Emotional Intelligence Scale). The level of activity was determined using E.B. Bashkin's "Drivers of Student Learning Activity" questionnaire. Statistical processing of the obtained data was performed using Jamovi software. The following methods of mathematical statistics were used: Shapiro—Wilk normality test, Kruskal—Wallis test (to find significant differences), Dwass—Steel—Critchlow—Fligner test (for pairwise comparisons between groups), and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (to identify statistically significant correlations).

Hypothesis. The level of activity influences general well-being indicators among students: as activity increases, well-being also increases.

Participants. The study involved 297 undergraduate students of humanities majors ($M = 21,1$, $SD = 4,0$, 84% female) from the 2nd and 3rd years of the 2024/2025 academic year, studying at the Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. No data were excluded from further calculations.

Results

At the preliminary stage of the study, the normality of the distribution of the empirical data was tested using the Shapiro–Wilk test. The results showed that the data were not normally distributed; therefore, it was decided to use nonparametric methods in subsequent work. Also at this stage, the distribution of respondents by level of activity was determined. It was found that 79 respondents had a high level of activity, 99 had a medium level, and 86 had a low level.

The first stage of the study was to search for significant differences in general well-being indicators among students with different levels of activity using the Kruskal–Wallis test (Table 1).

A comparative analysis of indicators of students with different levels of activity based on the Kruskal–

Wallis H-test showed that significant differences exist for all variables: state and trait anxiety tests, emotional intelligence test, and depression and subjective well-being scales.

For a more precise interpretation of the results, pairwise differences were tested (Table 2).

Pairwise comparison analysis showed that all studied general well-being indicators differ between students with high and medium levels of activity.

The next stage of the study was a correlation analysis using Spearman’s method to identify significant correlations between general well-being indicators and activity drivers across the entire sample (Table 3).

The study revealed multiple correlations between activity drivers and general well-being indicators.

Mean values and significance indicators of differences (Kruskal–Wallis test – H, significance of differences – p) between groups of students with different levels of activity in terms of overall well-being (N = 297)

Table 1

№	Scales	Activity levels			Indicators of differences	
		High	Medium	Low		
		Average	Average	Average	H	p
1	Situational anxiety	42,7	40	41,7	8,556	0,014*
2	Personal anxiety	42,2	45,1	47,6	21,82	<0,001*
3	The Depression Scale	41,1	49,6	59,8	112,571	<0,001*
4	The scale of subjective well-being	46	60,6	73,6	116,975	<0,001*
5	Emotional awareness	13,2	10,5	6,78	49,27	<0,001*
6	Managing your emotions	7,92	4,08	0,279	43,698	<0,001*
7	Self-motivation	11,8	7,88	3,14	73,135	<0,001*
8	Empathy	12,8	10,7	6,65	47,585	<0,001*
9	Recognizing other people’s emotions	12,7	10	6,74	44,401	<0,001*
10	Emotional intelligence (total score)	58,4	43,1	23,6	79,671	<0,001*

Note: «*» – significant differences were noted with a significance level of no more than 0.05.

Indicators of pairwise differences (Dwass–Stiel–Krichlow–Fligner test – W its significance level – p) between groups of students with different levels of activity in terms of overall well-being (N = 297)

Table 2

№	Scales	Pairwise comparisons in groups with different levels of activity					
		High–Low		High–Medium		Low–Medium	
		W	p	W	p	W	p
1	Situational anxiety	–2,07	0,309	–4,27	0,007*	–1,78	0,421
2	Personal anxiety	6,36	<0,001*	3,98	0,014*	–3,32	0,049*
3	The Depression Scale	13,42	<0,001*	8,62	<0,001*	–9,71	<0,001*
4	The scale of subjective well-being	13,86	<0,001*	9,62	<0,001*	–8,83	<0,001*
5	Emotional awareness	–9,77	<0,001*	–4,86	0,002*	5,7	<0,001*
6	Managing your emotions	–8,87	<0,001*	–5,64	<0,001*	4,93	0,001*
7	Self-motivation	–11,14	<0,001*	–7	<0,001*	7,25	<0,001*
8	Empathy	–9,21	<0,001*	–4,1	0,010*	6,63	<0,001*
9	Recognizing other people’s emotions	–9,16	<0,001*	–5,11	<0,001*	5,17	<0,001*
10	Emotional intelligence (total score)	–11,58	<0,001*	–6,81	<0,001*	8,06	<0,001*

Note: «*» – significant differences were noted with a significance level of no more than 0.05.

Table 3

**Correlation coefficients between the Drivers of Activity Test scores
and overall well-being scores (N = 297)**

№ п/п	Scales	Time management	Relationship management	Goal management
1	Situational anxiety	0,113	0,157**	0,136*
2	Personal anxiety	–0,268***	–0,154**	–0,219***
3	The Depression Scale	–0,638***	–0,508***	–0,593***
4	The scale of subjective well-being	–0,687***	–0,525***	–0,593***
5	Emotional awareness	0,403***	0,402***	0,405***
6	Managing your emotions	0,378***	0,321***	0,440***
7	Self-motivation	0,417***	0,442***	0,503***
8.	Empathy	0,337***	0,412***	0,350***
9	Recognizing other people's emotions	0,334***	0,450***	0,413***
10	Emotional intelligence (total score)	0,472***	0,494***	0,527***

Note: «*» — $p < 0,05$; «**» — $p < 0,01$; «***» — $p < 0,001$.

Discussion of results

Analysis of significant differences showed that all studied general well-being indicators differ among students with different levels of activity.

Thus, differences were found in state anxiety between students with high and medium levels of activity. Students with a high level had higher scores on this indicator. It can be assumed that students with high activity levels are often more involved in academic, social, and extracurricular activities, which increases their workload and the sense of responsibility they feel. Ambition and orientation toward high achievements can generate internal tension and anxiety as a reaction to significant stressful situations (exams, coursework) and expectations related to outcomes. According to a study by Gao et al., such state anxiety in students mobilizes resources and acts as an adaptive mechanism for maintaining focus and productivity (Gao et al., 2011). Anwar et al. also indicate that involvement in diverse tasks requires performing multiple roles and rapidly switching contexts, which increases environmental stress and the likelihood of anxiety reactions (Anwar et al., 2021). Furthermore, students with high activity levels may exhibit perfectionism, which creates internal requirements to avoid mistakes and meet external expectations, thereby increasing the experience of anxiety before responsible situations. In this case, a high level of state anxiety may reflect the student's subjective attitudes toward self-regulation and control (Larigani et al., 2010). A tendency toward strict control and structuring of life reduces tolerance for uncertainty, which regularly manifests in academic settings. As a result, situations of uncertainty become stressors that cause strong

state anxiety. The opposition between control and uncertainty is a fundamental factor of anxiety, especially in individuals with high self-regulation (Nahm, Chun, 2020).

Trait anxiety scores differ significantly across all three groups, with the highest scores observed in students with low activity levels. The same holds true for depression and subjective well-being. It can be noted that these results are rather contradictory, as students with the highest levels of depression also have the highest levels of subjective well-being. Such seemingly paradoxical results can be explained by the fact that subjective well-being is viewed through two components: cognitive and affective. Depressive states are characterized by a reduced positive affective tone and increased negative affect, yet the cognitive component (evaluation of one's own life and its meanings) may remain relatively high, especially if the person rationalizes or cultivates positive aspects of their experience despite emotional difficulties (Bos et al., 2016). Moreover, compensatory cognitive strategies, such as reinterpreting the situation, focusing on social successes, meaningful goals, or supportive relationships, may contribute to maintaining subjective well-being despite symptoms of depression (Lin, 2022).

Differences in the studied indicators among students with different levels of activity can be explained by the following reasons. A low level of time, relationship, and goal management — which constitute the overall level of activity — indicates poorly developed self-regulation skills responsible for planning, behavioral control, and emotional reactions. Research shows that weak self-regulation leads to procrastination and rumination, creates chronic stress, and contributes

to the formation of anxiety and depressive symptoms (Shao et al., 2020). Problems with time management cause a constant feeling of overload and falling behind, provoking state anxiety that later transforms into trait anxiety through persistent stress and decreased self-esteem (Kulsoom, Afsar, 2015). Deficits in relationship management skills may increase the risk of social isolation, conflicts, and emotional instability, which is confirmed by the strong correlation between insufficient social support and symptoms of anxiety and depression found by Shao et al. (Shao et al., 2020). The absence of stable life goals and weak goal-setting create existential uncertainty, exacerbate apathy and a sense of inner chaos, which is associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms (Lin, 2022).

Higher scores on subjective well-being in students with low activity levels may be related to the fact that such students often have lowered expectations of themselves and the world, leading to a reduction in cognitive conflicts and experiences, creating an effect of relative emotional ease and comfort – the “effect of lowered aspirations”. This approach reduces the risk of a perceived discrepancy between desired and actual states, thereby increasing satisfaction with the current situation (Mahmod et al., 2012). The lack of goal-setting and planning skills in students with low activity levels may contribute to an increase in the affective component of subjective well-being, as such students focus on positive emotions and present pleasures. They experience more positive “here and now” experiences, even if the cognitive component is low or neutral. Such a dissociation between affective and cognitive components of subjective well-being has been confirmed by psychological theories and empirical data (Lin, 2022).

The obtained results, according to which significant differences exist on all emotional intelligence scales among students with different levels of activity, indicate that activity drivers (time, goal, and relationship management) are associated with the ability to flexibly control internal emotional processes and interact effectively with others. The highest scores on all emotional intelligence scales are observed in students with high activity levels.

Effective time and goal management require developed self-regulation skills, which are closely related to emotional awareness and the ability to regulate one's own emotions. Students who plan and control their behavior thereby train metacognitive processes and mindfulness, which contributes to increased emotional competence and more constructive management

of emotional states (Palmer et al., 2001; Zee, Thijs, Schakel, 2002). Thus, the self-control necessary for allocating time resources simultaneously trains the management of emotional impulses, allowing one to maintain emotional balance and productivity in difficult situations.

Self-motivation is an integral part of goal setting and task completion. This component of emotional intelligence is activated and strengthened through self-regulation and positive emotional reinforcement. Intrinsic motivation is formed through the ability to recognize and direct emotions in a constructive direction, which is directly related to success in achieving set goals and resilience when facing difficulties (Patil et al., 2023).

Students with high relationship management skills are able to recognize others' emotions and empathize with them, which facilitates the establishment and maintenance of social contacts. This, in turn, contributes to successful regulation of interpersonal interactions and conflict resolution. Relationship management skills based on empathy and social competencies create a favorable environment for personal growth and reduce emotional tension (Rahman et al., 2024).

The results of the correlation analysis revealed multiple correlations between general well-being indicators and activity drivers, which confirm and further emphasize the patterns found in the analysis of significant differences among students with different activity levels.

Emotional intelligence is closely interconnected with time management, goal setting, and the ability to build relationships within a team. For example, Zhang and Wang found that high emotional intelligence in employees contributes to increased effectiveness, including through the development of time management skills (employees with high emotional intelligence cope better with time constraints and are less prone to procrastination) (Zhang, Wang, 2012). The results of another study showed that high emotional intelligence in leaders promotes team cohesion and effectiveness (Zhang, Hao, 2022). Emotional intelligence also contributes to the development of conflict management skills and social adaptation (Soriano-Vazquez, Castro, Morales-Garcia, 2023).

Based on the obtained results, it can also be said that a high level of time, goal, and relationship management skills contributes to a reduction in trait anxiety and emotional depression. Effective time management provides structuring of daily activities, prioritization,

and adherence to deadlines, which helps reduce feelings of chaos, overload, and uncertainty — key emotional triggers of anxiety and depressive states. Setting life goals provides meaning orientation and perspective, which is critical for preventing procrastination, apathy, and depression.

The results also show that a high level of goal and relationship management skills leads to an increase in state anxiety. Moreover, all drivers are negatively associated with subjective well-being. This may be related to increased personal responsibility and self-demands. People with highly developed self-regulation skills tend to strive for maximum task quality, which is accompanied by perfectionism and fear of failure. These factors create vulnerability to state anxiety in evaluation situations, performances, exams, or when receiving feedback. If this evaluation is negative or results do not meet expectations, the level of subjective well-being decreases (Cox, Chen, 2015). The ability to create mature and productive relationships may lead to an enhanced perception of potential social threats. Such individuals may experience affective fusion, where the emotional state of others is experienced as one's own, which can cause state anxiety and negatively affect the affective component of subjective well-being (Russel, 2010).

Conclusion

In the course of this empirical study, it was found that activity drivers are closely related to indicators of state and trait anxiety, depression, subjective well-being, and emotional intelligence.

Analysis of significant differences in the studied indicators among students with different levels of activity showed that as the level of activity increases, emotional intelligence improves, while trait anxiety and depression decrease. However, there is a risk of increased state anxiety and reduced subjective well-being. These results indicate that focusing solely on improving competencies in goal, relationship, and time management, although positively affecting emotional intelligence, anxiety, and depression, cannot guarantee high general well-being. Excessive striving for self-control and life management can lead to perfectionism, which inevitably contributes to increased state anxiety, which in turn may reduce both the cognitive and affective components of subjective well-being.

Limitations. The limitations of this study include the small number of students with different levels of activity, as well as the lack of tools for a more comprehensive study of overall well-being. As a direction for further research, it is possible to explore other components of overall well-being in the context of activity levels.

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Information about the authors

Alexander Yu. Plotnikov, Candidate of Sciences (Psychology), Assistant of the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Philology, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia named after Patrice Lumumba, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9809-6084>, e-mail: plotnikov_ayu@pfur.ru

Zulfiya R. Khairova, Candidate of Sciences (Psychology), Senior Lecturer of the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Philology, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia named after Patrice Lumumba, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5367-2156>, e-mail: khayrova_zr@pfur.ru

Evgeny B. Bashkin, Candidate of Sciences (Psychology), Head of the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Philology, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia named after Patrice Lumumba, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4118-813X>, e-mail: bashkin_eb@pfur.ru

Irina V. Kelareva, Academic Master of the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Philology, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia named after Patrice Lumumba, Moscow, Russian Federation, e-mail: kelareva_iv@pfur.com

Информация об авторах

Александр Юрьевич Плотников, кандидат психологических наук, ассистент кафедры психологии и педагогики, филологический факультет, Российский университет дружбы народов имени Патриса Лумумбы (ФГАОУ ВО РУДН), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9809-6084>, e-mail: plotnikov_ayu@pfur.ru

Зульфия Рафиковна Хайрова, кандидат психологических наук, старший преподаватель кафедры психологии и педагогики, филологический факультет, Российский университет дружбы народов имени Патриса Лумумбы (ФГАОУ ВО РУДН), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5367-2156>, e-mail: khayrova_zr@pfur.ru

Евгений Брониславович Башкин, кандидат психологических наук, заведующий кафедрой психологии и педагогики, филологический факультет, Российский университет дружбы народов имени Патриса Лумумбы (ФГАОУ ВО РУДН), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4118-813X>, e-mail: bashkin_eb@pfur.ru

Ирина Владимировна Келарева, учебный мастер кафедры психологии и педагогики, филологический факультет, Российский университет дружбы народов имени Патриса Лумумбы (ФГАОУ ВО РУДН), Москва, Российская Федерация, e-mail: kelareva_iv@pfur.com

Contribution of the authors

Alexander Yu. Plotnikov — application of statistical, mathematical or other methods for data analysis; conducting the experiment; data collection and analysis; visualization of research results.

Zulfiya R. Khairova — ideas; annotation, writing and design of the manuscript; planning of the research; control over the research.

Evgeny B. Bashkin — ideas; writing and design of the manuscript; planning of the research; control over the research.

Irina V. Kelareva — annotation, writing and design of the manuscript; planning of the research; control over the research.

All authors participated in the discussion of the results and approved the final text of the manuscript.

Вклад авторов

Плотников А.Ю. — применение статистических, математических или других методов для анализа данных; проведение эксперимента; сбор и анализ данных; визуализация результатов исследования.

Хайрова З.Р. — идеи исследования; аннотирование, написание и оформление рукописи; планирование исследования; контроль за проведением исследования.

Башкин Е.Б. — идеи исследования; написание и оформление рукописи; планирование исследования; контроль за проведением исследования.

Келарева И.В. — аннотирование, написание и оформление рукописи; контроль за проведением исследования.
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ЭМПИРИЧЕСКИЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ

Научная статья | Original paper

The “Trajectory” graphical method: a tool for assessing life path dynamics

A.E. Shilmanskaya ✉, **D.A. Leontiev**

National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE University), Moscow, Russian Federation
✉ amiyuzova@yahoo.com

Abstract

Context and relevance. The issue of personality changes has become a significant trend in personality research over the past decade. Traditional approaches to assessing the effectiveness of psychotherapeutic work are based on comparing measurement results before and after intervention. **Objective.** To test the visual “Trajectory” method for assessing the perceived trajectory of individual development and to verify its convergent validity. **Methods and materials.** The study involved 231 participants of the summer school of the magazine *Russky Reporter* ($M = 20,2$, $SD = 2,96$, 85,9% women). The following methods were used: “Trajectory” method, “Big Five” (BFQ-2), Satisfaction with Life Scale, Brief Differential Perfectionism Inventory, Differential Test of Reflexivity, Differential Loneliness Experience Questionnaire, Purpose-in-Life Test. **Results.** Significant differences were found between groups of respondents who chose different types of trajectories on the indicators of extraversion, emotional stability, life satisfaction, meaningfulness of life, normal perfectionism, and general experience of loneliness. **Conclusions.** The “Trajectory” method demonstrates convergent validity and can be used to assess the subjective picture of life path in addition to traditional questionnaires.

Keywords: personality changes, visual methods, developmental trajectory, individual trajectory, psychodiagnostics, subjective perception

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Возможности графической методики «Траектория» для диагностики динамики жизненного пути личности

А.Е. Шильманская ✉, Д.А. Леонтьев

Национальный исследовательский университет Высшая школа экономики,
Москва, Российская Федерация
✉ amiyuzova@yahoo.com

Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Проблема личностных изменений за последнее десятилетие становится трендом в исследованиях личности. Традиционные подходы к оценке результативности психотерапевтической работы основаны на сопоставлении результатов измерений до и после вмешательства. **Цель.** Апробация графической методики «Траектория» для диагностики субъективно воспринимаемой траектории индивидуального развития и проверка ее конвергентной валидности. **Методы и материалы.** В исследовании приняли участие 231 участник летней школы журнала «Русский репортер» ($M = 20,2$, $SD = 2,96$, 85,9% женщин). Использовались методики: «Траектория», «Большая пятерка» (BFQ-2), Шкала удовлетворенности жизнью, Дифференциальный тест перфекционизма, Дифференциальный тест рефлексивности, Дифференциальный опросник переживания одиночества, Тест смысловых ориентаций. **Результаты.** Выявлены значимые различия между группами респондентов, выбравшими разные типы траекторий, по показателям экстраверсии, эмоциональной стабильности, удовлетворенности жизнью, осмысленности жизни, нормального перфекционизма, общего переживания одиночества. **Выводы.** Методика «Траектория» демонстрирует конвергентную валидность и может использоваться для диагностики субъективной картины жизненного пути в дополнение к традиционным опросникам.

Ключевые слова: личностные изменения, визуальные методы, траектория развития, индивидуальная траектория, психодиагностика, субъективное восприятие

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Introduction

The problem of personality changes has become a relevant research field over the past decade, encompassing both theoretical developments and methodological innovations for diagnosing personality changes (Shilmanskaya, Leontiev, 2021; Manukyan, Murtazina, Grishina, 2020; Bityutskaya, Bazarov, Korneev, 2021). The issue of the effectiveness of psychotherapeutic and other practical psychological work has remained actively debated for many decades.

Traditional approaches are based on comparing statistical measurements of a certain variable before and after a process considered to be the cause of the recorded changes, e.g., psychotherapy or psychological training. Researchers are attempting to approach the problem of personality changes with new tools

and instruments, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Recently, a special issue of the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* (Vol. 67(4), 2020) of the American Psychological Association was published, devoted to personality changes as a result of psychotherapy and psychological counseling, as well as new research methods.

Methodological approaches to studying personality changes and self-change vary widely, from studying qualitative data in phenomenological, discursive, and narrative approaches to creating special questionnaires that diagnose one or another aspect of personality changes (Grishina et al., 2021). In general, the existing toolkit for diagnosing personality changes relies on various methodological foundations and selectively diagnoses different aspects of change (Manukyan, Murtazina, 2019).

The existing toolkit for diagnosing personality changes includes questionnaires measuring: life orientations (Korzhova, 2006); personal dynamism (Sapronov, Leontiev, 2007); styles of responding to change (Bazarov, Sycheva, 2012); subjective authorship of life (Shchukina, 2014); goals of personality change (Hudson, Roberts, 2014); potential for self-change (Manukyan et al., 2020); types of responding to change (Bityutskaya et al., 2021). Along with questionnaire methods, qualitative approaches — phenomenological and biographical methods — are used to deeply study the interaction of personality and environment in change processes (Manukyan, Murtazina, 2019). These methods allow for a comprehensive assessment of various aspects of personal dynamics — from readiness for change and behavioral strategies to conscious striving for transformation.

The potential of visual methods in the study of personality changes

One of the authors has already extensively discussed the current practice of using visual methods in psychological diagnostics (Shilmanskaya, 2020). Cultural-historical psychology, by its very nature, contains a rich potential for such practice. L.S. Vygotsky's idea of “non-classical psychology” assumes that psychological contents exist not only in the space of the individual psyche but also, in externalized form, in cultural objects and artifacts that can be used as tools for understanding human psychology.

The most elaborated approach to using visual materials for the mediated recording of attitudes towards significant aspects of experience or life in general is the psychology of subjective semantics by E.Yu. Artemyeva (1999). E.Yu. Artemyeva studied the subjective attitude toward objects, phenomena, and situations related to the subject of her activity, allowing experimental recording in the form of evaluative judgments or other attributive characteristics of those objects, phenomena, and situations.

Visual methods expand the possibilities for participation and cooperation of respondents within the research process. Existing evidence suggests that the advantages of visual methods mainly lie in their ability to facilitate and enrich communication with respondents.

Expanding the evidence base for the possibilities of visual methods will improve the researcher's informed ethical choice (Shilmanskaya, 2020).

For many years, research in counseling and psychotherapy was predominantly based on quantitative approaches. However, over the past two decades, researchers have increasingly recognized the enormous value of

qualitative approaches for understanding the processes and outcomes of counseling and psychotherapy (Lutz, Hill, 2009). Data obtained from each approach can potentially be analyzed using qualitative or quantitative methods or a combination thereof.

We hypothesized that possible changes should manifest not so much in shifts in personality and situational-evaluative variables, but rather in changes in the qualitative parameters of the life development trajectory itself, which can be captured through a non-verbal technique that includes visual images of the current perception of one's own life (Artemyeva, 1999; Leontiev, Miyuzova, 2016).

Materials and methods

The “Trajectory” graphical method

In order to diagnose the subjectively perceived trajectory of individual development, the graphical method “Trajectory” was developed. The form of the method is a set of squares arranged on a sheet of paper, each containing a schematic symbolic representation of a particular life trajectory (ascending and descending lines of different steepness, zigzags, dead ends, spirals, etc.); the last square is empty. The squares are labeled with letters of the Latin alphabet (Leontiev, Miyuzova, 2015; Shilmanskaya, 2020). Respondents are asked to choose one of the images that best corresponds to their self-perception in their life, or, if none fits, to draw their own version in the last empty square (Shilmanskaya, 2020). In the initial version, the method included only linear images, but during sample expansion and analysis of drawings made in the empty square, non-linear images of the individual development trajectory were added. The final version of the stimulus material is shown in Fig. 1.

The use of visual data implies the implementation of a multimodal approach to the analysis of human experience as opposed to a unimodal approach based on the analysis of textual, verbal material (Shilmanskaya, 2020). Images act not only as memory prompts but can become integrals of experience, that is, bring together significant past events in relation to present events; images can represent an image-attitude toward one's own life or life period.

To test the “Trajectory” method, we set the task, firstly, to verify the stability of the individual choice of trajectory, and secondly, to investigate the existence of relationships between the choice of trajectory and personality characteristics. Based on pilot studies, assumptions were made about the relationship between trajec-

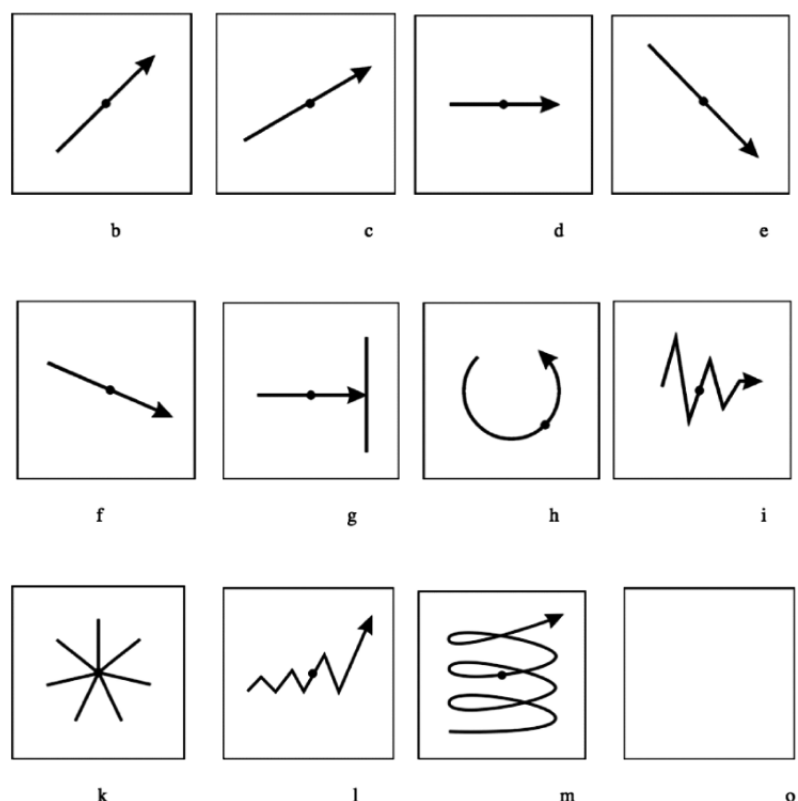


Fig. 1. Stimulus material of the “Trajectory” method

tory choice (differences in means between groups) and indicators of basic personality traits and other personality variables related to psychological well-being, reflexivity, perfectionism, loneliness experience, and life-meaning orientations to test the convergent validity of the new method.

Sample and procedure

The study involved 231 participants of the summer school of the magazine *Russky Reporter* ($M = 20,2$, $SD = 2,96$, 85,9% women). The majority of respondents had secondary (30,7%), incomplete higher (39,7%), or higher (29,6%) education. All respondents participated voluntarily (informed consent forms were used). The “Trajectory” method was administered twice (before and after participation in the summer school), but this article analyzes only the data from the first administration (before the school). Respondents at the summer school participated non-anonymously (to ensure confidentiality, they signed the forms with any pseudonym; real names appeared only on informed consent forms, which were submitted separately).

Measures

The following questionnaires were used to test convergent validity: “Big Five” (BFQ-2; Russian adaptation by E.N. Osin) (Osin et al., 2015); Satisfaction with Life

Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985 / Osin, Leontiev, 2020); Brief Differential Perfectionism Inventory (BDPI; Russian adaptation by A.A. Zolotareva, 2018); Differential Test of Reflexivity (DTR) (Leontiev, Osin, 2014); Differential Loneliness Experience Questionnaire (DLEQ; Osin, Leontiev, 2013); The Purpose-in-Life Test (PIL; Leontiev, 1992).

All participants completed the above battery of questionnaires twice: before and after participation in the *Russky Reporter* summer school, along with a brief demographic questionnaire. In this publication, we analyze the first battery of tests. Data processing was carried out using SPSS Statistics 29.0.

Results

Descriptive statistics. Mean values and other descriptive statistics for all study variables, as well as instrument reliability data, are presented in Table 1.

Sample distribution by trajectory type. Table 2 presents the frequencies of choice of each trajectory, as well as the average age and proportion of women in each group. Of the twelve initial images, trajectory “a” (straight line) was not chosen by any respondent; due to the small number of trajectories e, f, g, h, they were subsequently combined into one group (e–f–g–h).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of variables (N = 231)

Scale	M	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Extraversion (E)	45,50	7,93	0,88
Agreeableness (A)	50,83	6,50	0,87
Conscientiousness (C)	42,77	8,58	0,87
Emotional Stability (S)	35,49	10,27	0,91
Openness to Experience (O)	62,40	7,05	0,86
Social Desirability (L)	31,98	7,15	0,81
Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)	22,54	5,36	0,83
Noetic Orientations Test (NOT)	102,15	16,84	0,82
Systemic Reflection (SR)	40,25	5,42	0,78
Quasi-Reflection (SK)	28,67	5,38	0,83
Introspection (FA)	26,22	5,49	0,83
Normal Perfectionism (P_NORM)	4,92	0,71	0,87
Pathological Perfectionism (P_PATO)	4,09	0,91	0,82
General Loneliness (L_GEN)	2,22	0,81	0,87
Communication Dependency (L_DCOM)	2,40	0,88	0,86
Positive Solitude (L_POS)	3,83	0,62	0,81

Table 2

Sample distribution across trajectory types (N = 231)

Trajectory	n	% of sample	Age (M±SD)	Women (%)
b	18	7,8	20,3±2,9	83,3
c	19	8,2	20,1±2,8	84,2
d	6	2,6	20,5±3,1	83,3
e	1	0,4	21,0	100
f	2	0,9	19,5±2,1	100
g	3	1,3	20,0±2,0	66,7
h	3	1,3	20,7±2,5	100
i	25	11,3	20,4±3,0	88,5
k	26	11,7	20,0±2,9	85,2
l	49	21,6	20,2±2,9	86,0
m	45	19,9	20,1±3,0	86,9
o	34	14,7	20,3±3,0	85,3

Note: Trajectories e, f, g, h were combined into the group “e-f-g-h” (n = 9). The groups did not differ significantly by age (ANOVA, $p = 0,31$) or gender (χ^2 , $p = 0,47$).

Analysis of differences between trajectory groups.

Preliminary one-way ANOVA showed that the choice of trajectory can act as a factor influencing the distribution of certain traits and other personality variables. Variances for most measured variables were equal across the 11 trajectory groups (Levene's test Sig. = 0,012 to 0,38). Of the 12 proposed images, trajectory “a” was not chosen, so 11 groups were included in the initial ANOVA. After combining the small trajectories e, f, g, h (n < 4), the number of groups was reduced to 8. Pillai's criterion showed no significant differences between e, f, g, h ($p = 0,28$).

Table 3 presents the initial one-way ANOVA results (11 groups) with significant differences on Extraversion, Emotional Stability, SWLS, PIL, Normal and Pathological Perfectionism, and General Loneliness.

Based on descriptive statistics and plots of means, a description can be given for each scale where non-random mean differences were found. For example, on the Extraversion (E) scale, the scores of ascending trajectories (b, m) are significantly higher than those of descending trajectories (f, g), indicating that the first group of trajectories reflects greater energy, activity, talkativeness, sociability, and enthusiasm compared to trajectories (f, g).

On the Emotional Stability (S) scale, the lowest emotional stability is found for the descending trajectory (e), while the highest is found for the spiral trajectory (m).

On the Satisfaction with Life (SWLS) scale, the lowest scores are also for the descending trajectory (e), indicating a low assessment of quality of life, in contrast to

Table 3

One-way ANOVA results

Scale	df1	df2	F	p	η^2 (partial)
Extraversion (E)	11	231	1,88	0,04	0,08
Agreeableness (A)	11	231	0,91	0,52	0,04
Conscientiousness (C)	11	231	0,99	0,45	0,04
Emotional Stability (S)	11	231	2,00	0,02	0,08
Openness to Experience (O)	11	231	1,37	0,18	0,06
Social Desirability (L)	11	231	1,10	0,36	0,05
Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)	11	231	2,68	0,00	0,10
Noetic Orientations Test (NOT)	11	231	5,00	0,00	0,18
Systemic Reflection (SR)	11	231	0,25	0,99	0,01
Quasi-Reflection (SK)	11	231	1,71	0,07	0,07
Introspection (FA)	11	231	0,66	0,77	0,03
Normal Perfectionism (P_NORM)	11	231	2,70	0,00	0,11
Pathological Perfectionism (P_PATO)	11	231	1,82	0,05	0,07
General Loneliness (L_GEN)	11	231	2,05	0,02	0,08
Communication Dependency (L_DCOM)	11	231	1,37	0,18	0,06
Positive Solitude (L_POS)	11	231	0,67	0,76	0,03

Note: $\eta^2 = (F \times df1) / (F \times df1 + df2)$. For non-significant effects, η^2 is shown for completeness.

all other trajectories, which show similar high scores on this scale.

On the Normal Perfectionism (P_NORM) scale, the highest normal perfectionism corresponds to the steeply ascending trajectory (b), and the lowest to non-ascending trajectories (f, d). The highest scores on the General Loneliness (L_GEN) scale correspond to the steeply descending trajectory (e). Respondents who chose this trajectory have a pronounced current experience of isolation, lack of emotional closeness or contact with others, and awareness of themselves as lonely, isolated individuals, in contrast to ascending or flat trajectories (b, c, d, l, m). High scores on the Purpose-in-Life test (PIL) correspond to ascending trajectories (b, c, m), and the lowest to descending trajectories (e, f, g).

To go further and find out where exactly the differences lie, i.e., which trajectories differ from each other, it is necessary to perform pairwise comparisons of the means of the existing groups. For this, the Holm method was chosen, but no statistically significant differences were found for the 12 trajectory groups.

Preliminary analysis showed that some trajectories exhibit the same pattern, so for further analysis we combined trajectories (e, f, g, h) into one group, since the number of cases in each trajectory group was insufficient for further analysis. After combining the low-frequency trajectories e, f, g, h ($n < 4$), the number of groups was reduced to 9 (b, c, d, e–f–g–h, i, k, l, m, o). Pillai’s criterion showed no significant differences between trajectories e, f, g, h ($p = 0,28$), which allowed us to combine them. On

this basis, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied for further analysis.

All groups have practical significance for the study. Levene’s test for equality of variances showed that the variances of the dependent variables are not equal. For the case of unequal variances (i.e., in a situation of heteroscedasticity), Welch’s correction was used; the results of testing the initial assumption of equality of all means are presented in Table 4 with the results of robust tests.

At this stage, we focus on those variables for which the analysis of variance revealed statistically significant differences in means between groups ($p < 0,05$). Significant differences were obtained for several variables: Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Life Satisfaction, Normal Perfectionism, Pathological Perfectionism, General Loneliness, and Meaning in Life (see Table 5). The results are consistent with the results of the initial one-way ANOVA, which used 12 types of trajectories.

We established that mean differences exist; therefore, the next step in data analysis is to determine, using post-hoc range criteria and pairwise multiple comparisons, which means differ significantly. For the analysis of pairwise multiple comparisons, the Holm criterion was chosen, which is used to perform all pairwise comparisons between groups. Table 6 presents only the group means that differ significantly at the alpha level of 0,05.

According to the results, significant pairwise differences between trajectory groups after Holm correction were found for a number of comparisons.

Table 4

Robust tests of equality of means

Переменная / Scale	df1 (Welch)	df2 (Welch)	Welch F	p	η^2 (partial)
Extraversion (E)	8	51,20	2,28	0,036	0,08
Agreeableness (A)	8	52,38	1,35	0,242	0,04
Conscientiousness (C)	8	52,16	1,46	0,196	0,04
Emotional Stability (S)	8	52,45	2,60	0,018	0,08
Openness to Experience (O)	8	51,53	1,57	0,156	0,06
Social Desirability (L)	8	54,05	0,86	0,552	0,04
Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)	8	51,13	3,14	0,006	0,10
Noetic Orientations Test (NOT)	8	51,33	7,24	0,000	0,18
Systemic Reflection (SR)	8	55,11	0,28	0,971	0,01
Quasi-Reflection (SK)	8	55,87	2,04	0,050	0,07
Introspection (FA)	8	52,04	0,88	0,537	0,03
Normal Perfectionism (P_NORM)	8	51,06	2,35	0,031	0,10
Pathological Perfectionism (P_PATO)	8	51,73	2,00	0,036	0,07
General Loneliness (L_GEN)	8	51,23	2,71	0,014	0,08
Communication Dependency (L_DCOM)	8	50,87	0,97	0,468	0,05
Positive Solitude (L_POS)	8	51,47	0,59	0,785	0,03

Note: Welch's test was used due to heterogeneity of variances. η^2 computed as $(F \times df1) / (F \times df1 + df2)$ for uniformity.

Table 5

One-way ANOVA results

Scale	df1	df2	F	p	η^2 (partial)
Extraversion	8	231	2,47	0,00	0,08
Agreeableness	8	231	1,25	0,27	0,04
Conscientiousness	8	231	1,09	0,37	0,04
Emotional Stability	8	231	2,45	0,01	0,08
Openness to Experience	8	231	1,70	0,10	0,06
Social Desirability	8	231	1,12	0,35	0,04
Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)	8	231	2,98	0,00	0,09
The Purpose in Life Test	8	231	6,79	0,00	0,19
Systemic Reflection	8	231	0,29	0,97	0,01
Quasi-Reflection	8	231	2,25	0,02	0,07
Introspection	8	231	0,74	0,65	0,03
Normal Perfectionism	8	231	3,20	0,00	0,10
Pathological Perfectionism	8	231	2,06	0,04	0,07
General Loneliness	8	231	2,40	0,02	0,08
Communication Dependency	8	231	1,18	0,32	0,04
Positive Solitude	8	231	0,63	0,75	0,02

Note: $\eta^2 = (F \times df1) / (F \times df1 + df2)$. For non-significant effects, η^2 is shown for completeness. Bold p-values indicate significance at $\alpha = 0,05$.

Table 6

Significant pairwise differences between trajectory groups after Holm

Scale	Comparison (IJ)	Mean difference	Std, error	p (Holm-corrected)
Extraversion (E)	b – e-f-g-h	0,787	0,246	0,041
Emotional Stability (S)	m – e-f-g-h	0,964	0,285	0,028
Satisfaction with Life Scale	b – e-f-g-h	6,833	2,113	0,041
Satisfaction with Life Scale	b – i	5,415	1,586	0,029
Satisfaction with Life Scale	b – o	4,868	1,494	0,039
Noetic Orientations Test	b – e-f-g-h	29,611	6,269	<0,001
Noetic Orientations Test	b – i	19,840	4,709	0,002

Scale	Comparison (IJ)	Mean difference	Std, error	p (Holm-corrected)
Noetic Orientations Test	b – k	17,919	4,673	0,008
Noetic Orientations Test	b – o	14,297	4,454	0,044
Noetic Orientations Test	c – e-f-g-h	26,989	6,164	0,002
Noetic Orientations Test	c – i	17,218	4,568	0,010
Noetic Orientations Test	l – e-f-g-h	21,798	5,552	0,008
Noetic Orientations Test	m – e-f-g-h	25,503	5,569	<0,001
Normal Perfectionism	b – d	1,148	0,326	0,022
Normal Perfectionism	b – e-f-g-h	0,991	0,282	0,022
Normal Perfectionism	b – i	0,705	0,210	0,033
General Loneliness	o – l	0,558	0,173	0,042

Respondents who chose the steeply ascending trajectory (b) have higher scores on the *Extraversion* scale, indicating their expansiveness, enthusiasm, confidence, and assertiveness, in contrast to the group of trajectories (e, f, g, h). On the *Emotional Stability* scale, significant differences were found between respondents who chose the spiral trajectory (m), indicating their ability to control irritation, discontent, and anger, as well as their ability to cope with anxiety and emotions, in contrast to the group of trajectories (e, f, g, h). On the *Life Satisfaction* scale, differences were found between respondents who chose trajectory (b) and the group of trajectories (e, f, g, h, i, o), indicating greater overall satisfaction with their lives for the former and low satisfaction for the group (e, f, g, h, i, o). As shown in Table 6, respondents who chose the steeply ascending trajectory (b) scored significantly higher on *Normal Perfectionism* compared to those who chose trajectory d (flat horizontal line), the combined descending group (e–f–g–h), and the dead-end trajectory i. This suggests

that individuals with an upward perceived life trajectory tend to set high standards for themselves and strive for excellence in an adaptive, non-debilitating manner.

On the *General Loneliness* scale, which reflects the degree of current feeling of loneliness and lack of close communication with others, significant differences were found between respondents who chose trajectory (o) (empty field) and (l) (ascending broken line). These data may indicate that the former have a pronounced current experience of isolation, lack of emotional closeness or contact with people, while the latter do not experience painful loneliness associated with lack of closeness or communication and do not consider themselves lonely.

To illustrate the identified differences, Figure 2 presents the mean values of life satisfaction (SWLS) and meaning in life (PIL) in each trajectory group with 95% confidence intervals. It can be seen that groups with ascending and spiral trajectories (b–c, l, m) show the highest scores on both scales, while descending trajectories (e–f–g–h) and trajectory i (dead end/zigzag) show the lowest.

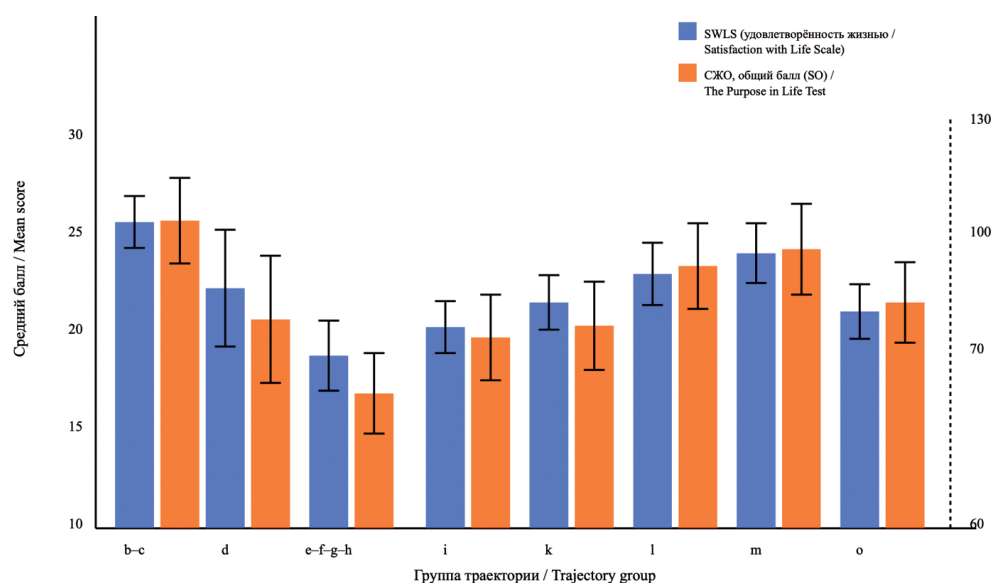


Fig. 2. Mean values of life satisfaction (SWLS, blue bars) and meaning in life (SO / the Purpose-in-Life Test, orange bars) across trajectory groups with 95% confidence intervals. Groups b-c, l, and m show the highest scores on both scales, while e-f-g-h and i show the lowest

Figure 3 shows the mean values of extraversion and emotional stability across groups. Group b–c significantly exceeds group e–f–g–h in extraversion, and group m (spiral) significantly exceeds group e–f–g–h in emotional stability. Error bars correspond to standard errors of the mean.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to test the new graphic method “Trajectory”, which explores the possibility of using visual data as integrals of experience. In our case, we used a schematic image of the life trajectory as a visual representation of the current subjective attitude towards one’s own life.

The results confirmed stable relationships between the choice of a visual image of the life trajectory and indicators of basic personality traits and some other personality variables. The obtained data indicate that the choice of trajectory can act as a factor influencing the distribution of certain traits and other personality variables. When we divide people into groups according to their choice of trajectory, they turn out to differ in the expression of various psychological parameters.

We found that mean differences exist. Therefore, the next step in data analysis was to determine, using post-hoc range criteria and pairwise multiple comparisons, which mean values differ significantly in terms of energy, emotional stability, life satisfaction, meaning in life, reflection, perfectionism, and the experience of loneliness.

The obtained results are consistent with theoretical notions that visual methods can serve as effective

tools for diagnosing subjective experiences and personality characteristics (Shilmanskaya, 2020; Artemyeva, 1999). The choice of a particular type of trajectory reflects not only cognitive representations of one’s own life path but also the emotional attitude towards it, which manifests in its relationship with emotional stability and life satisfaction scores. Of particular interest is the relationship between trajectory choice and perfectionism indicators. Respondents who choose steeply ascending trajectories demonstrate higher levels of normal perfectionism, which may indicate a striving for high standards combined with the ability to adaptively regulate their behaviour.

Conclusion

The conducted analysis allows us to conclude that the phenomenon of personality change is complex and multifaceted, requiring an integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches for its study. Contemporary psychology shows a clear “visual turn”, expressed in the development and active use of methods such as “Trajectory” to diagnose the subjective picture of the life path.

These visual methods, complementing traditional questionnaires (such as scales of meaning in life, self-change potential, and response styles to change), make it possible to obtain unique data about a person’s experience of change processes, their readiness for change, and the subjective authorship of their own life.

Thus, a promising direction for further research is an in-depth study of the relationships between ob-

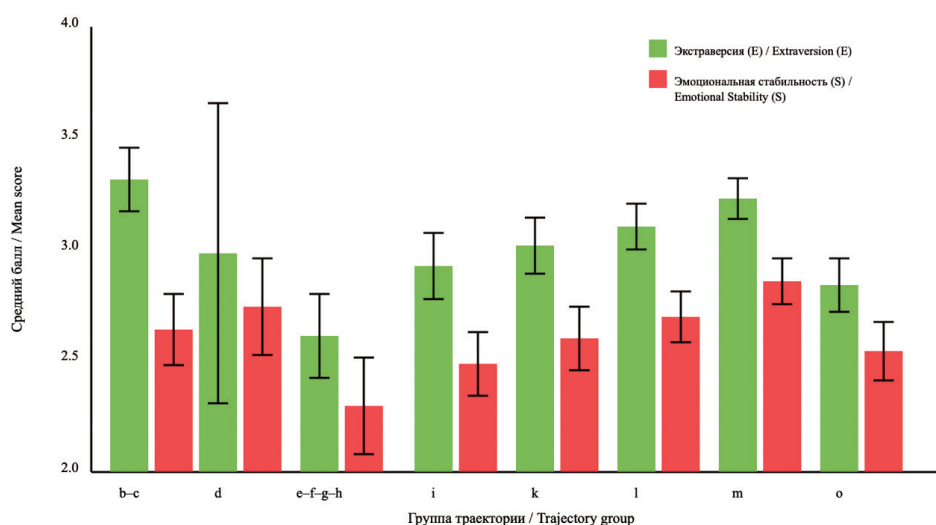


Fig. 3. Extraversion (green bars) and emotional stability (red bars) across trajectory groups. Group b–c is significantly higher in extraversion than e–f–g–h ($p = 0,041$). Group m is significantly higher in emotional stability than e–f–g–h ($p = 0,028$). Error bars represent standard errors

jective indicators of personality dynamics and their subjective representation using visual and narrative methods.

Limitations. The main limitations of the study are related to the need to expand the sample for more re-

liable data. There is also a question about studying the change or stability of trajectory choice over different time intervals. The study sample was relatively homogeneous in terms of age and educational status, which limits the ability to generalize results to other age and social groups.

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Информация об авторах

Алеся Евгеньевна Шильманская, кандидат психологических наук, стажер-исследователь международной лаборатории позитивной психологии личности и мотивации, Национальный исследовательский университет «Высшая школа экономики» (ФГАОУ ВО НИУ ВШЭ), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9395-3086>, e-mail: amiyuzova@yahoo.com

Дмитрий Алексеевич Леонтьев, доктор психологических наук, заведующий международной лабораторией позитивной психологии личности и мотивации, Национальный исследовательский университет Высшая школа экономики (ФГБОУ ВО НИУ ВШЭ), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2252-9805>, e-mail: dmleont@gmail.com

Information about the authors

Alesya E. Shilmanskaya, Candidate of Sciences (Psychology), Research Intern of the International Laboratory of the Positive Psychology of Personality and Motivation, National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE University), Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9395-3086>, e-mail: amiyuzova@yahoo.com

Dmitry A. Leontiev, Doctor of Sciences (Psychology), Head of the International Laboratory of the Positive Psychology of Personality and Motivation, National Research University, Higher School of Economics (HSE University), Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2252-9805>, e-mail: dmleont@gmail.com

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Шильманская А.Е. — разработка методики, анализ данных, написание рукописи.

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Features of perception of life changes among representatives of Uzbek culture

E.V. Bityutskaya ✉, A.G. Dokuchaeva, A.A. Korneev, A.A. Kheruvimova

M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ bityutskaya_ew@mail.ru

Abstract

Context and relevance. This paper examines tendencies of perceiving life changes in people based in Uzbekistan and proposes a cross-cultural comparison between Russian and Uzbek cultural groups. Life changes are defined as challenging situations, as they require increased effort due to the increasing intensity of such situations. The research framework of the cultural-historical approach suggests that perceptions of change and coping strategies may have both quantitative differences and specific meanings across cultures. **The aim** of this study is to identify the specific perceptions of change among representatives of Uzbek culture using a few lines of comparison: a) within an Uzbek sample for groups with different responses to change; and b) between Uzbek and Russian samples. **Methods and Materials.** At the first stage, the Uzbek sample ($n = 279$; $M = 26.1$; $SD = 9.11$; 82% women) was used to analyze latent profiles was conducted based on the data from the questionnaire “Types of Response to a Situation of Change (TRSC)” (E.V. Bityutskaya, T.Yu. Bazarov, A.A. Korneev). The analysis provided for distinguishing three groups using the profiles of acceptance of change, rejection of change and that of ambivalent attitudes. For each profile, the features of perception of change were determined using the qualitative data content analysis, the analysis of variance and pairwise comparisons. At the second stage, cross-cultural comparisons were conducted using the Uzbek sample and the Russian sample ($n = 216$; $M = 28.5$; $SD = 9.8$; 84% women). **Results.** Differences in the perception of changes between the three groups were revealed in the Uzbek sample. The group with the profile of rejection of change is characterized by a more frequent mention of negative emotions, a sense of the inevitability of change, and coping aimed at search for support. The group with the ambivalent profile is more likely to report distraction. In the group with the profile of acceptance of change, positive emotions and assessments of changes, readiness for them, as well as coping aimed at analyzing their own experiences are more often noted. The cross-cultural comparisons of the two cultural groups generally revealed that representatives of the Uzbek culture more frequently reported collective ways of coping, as well as the need for being patient, while rarely mentioning resistance to change. The cross-cultural comparison of groups with similar profiles in the Russian and Uzbek samples showed both differences and similarities (the valence of appraisal and emotions for those with the profiles of either acceptance of change or rejection of change). The results are discussed in the context of cultural models of coping with change.

Keywords: coping, difficult life situation, life changes, situation perception, culture, values, cross-cultural research

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Особенности восприятия жизненных изменений у представителей узбекской культуры

Е.В. Битюцкая ✉, А.Г. Докучаева, А.А. Корнеев, А.А. Херувимова

Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова, Москва, Российская Федерация

✉ bityutskaya_ew@mail.ru

Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Статья посвящена изучению восприятия жизненных изменений людьми, проживающими в Узбекистане, и кросс-культурному сравнению российской и узбекской культурных групп. Жизненные изменения рассматриваются как трудная жизненная ситуация, поскольку они требуют повышенных затрат усилий в связи с возрастающей динамикой ситуации. Концептуальная рамка культурно-исторического подхода позволяет предположить, что восприятие изменений и способы совладания с ними могут иметь не только количественные различия, но и специфичные смыслы у представителей разных культур. **Цель.** Выявить особенности восприятия ситуации изменений у представителей узбекской культуры в серии сравнений: а) внутри узбекской выборки для групп с разным реагированием на перемены; б) между узбекской и российской выборками. **Методы и материалы.** На первом этапе на материале узбекской выборки ($n = 279$; $M = 26,1$; $SD = 9,11$; 82% женщин) проведен анализ латентных профилей с использованием данных опросника «Типы реагирования на ситуацию изменений» (Е.В. Битюцкая, Т.Ю. Базаров, А.А. Корнеев). Выделены три группы, которым соответствуют следующие профили: принятие перемен, отвержение перемен и амбивалентное отношение. Для каждого профиля определены особенности восприятия изменений с помощью контент-анализа качественных данных, дисперсионного анализа и попарных сравнений. На втором этапе проведены кросс-культурные сравнения на материале узбекской выборки и российской выборки ($n = 216$; $M = 28,5$; $SD = 9,8$; 84% женщин). **Результаты.** В узбекской выборке выявлены различия в восприятии изменений между тремя группами. Для группы с профилем отвержения перемен характерно более частое упоминание негативных эмоций, чувства неизбежности изменений и копинга, направленного на поиск поддержки. Группа с амбивалентным профилем чаще сообщает об отвлечении. В группе с профилем принятия перемен чаще отмечаются позитивные эмоции и оценки изменений, готовность к ним, а также копинг, направленный на анализ собственных переживаний. Кросс-культурные сравнения двух культурных групп в целом показали для представителей узбекской культуры более высокую частоту упоминания коллективных способов копинга, а также необходимость терпения, в то же время редкие упоминания сопротивления. Кросс-культурное сравнение групп с аналогичными профилями в российской и узбекской выборках выявило наряду с различиями и сходства (валентность оценок и эмоций — для профилей принятия и отвержения перемен). Результаты обсуждаются в контексте культурных моделей совладания с переменами.

Ключевые слова: копинг, трудная жизненная ситуация, жизненные изменения, восприятие ситуации, культура, ценности, кросс-культурное исследование

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Introduction

Situations of life change are characterized by momentum and uncertainty, and they are highly resource intensive, hence change is viewed as a type of difficult life situation (Bityutskaya, 2020; Bityutskaya, Dokuchaeva, Korneev, 2025). In Lazarus and Folkman's theory, novelty, unpredictability, and ambiguity of a context, as well as temporal factors are considered as

properties of a situation that determine its potential of being harmful, dangerous and threatening for the individual, thus requiring the activation of coping mechanisms (Lazarus, Folkman, 1984).

As we are interested in the role of cultural factors in the perception of life transitions, several aspects shall be highlighted that define the theoretical perspectives of contemporary cross-cultural research in this area. The cultural comparison most frequently used in

the literature is based on the dimensions proposed by Hofstede (1980). This approach allows for quantitative comparisons and the determination of, for example, individualism or uncertainty avoidance in representatives of a certain culture.

Another aspect is related to the etic-emic approach, which provides for the identification of the universal (etic) and culture-specific (emic) components for any psychological phenomenon (Stefanenko, 1999). Thus, stress and the ability to cope with it are viewed as universal experiences people may have regardless of their cultural background. Yet, the perception of a stressor and the response to it, that is, goal setting and the choice of coping strategies, have cultural specificity (Kuo, 2011).

The third perspective looks into the mechanism used by individuals to link internalized cultural values to the process of stress appraisal as a factor in the coping dynamics and the perception of its effectiveness (Folkman, Moskowitz, 2004). Appraisals are viewed as “automatic products of learned rules of interpretation” and, therefore, are culturally prescribed phenomena embedded in the social context (Hobfoll, 2001).

The cultural-historical approach comprises the theoretical framework of this study; it defines mental functions as determined by the processes of humans interacting with the cultural environment (activities mediated by signs, symbols, and tools) (Vygotsky, 1982; Zavershneva, van der Veer, 2019). The cultural-historical theory considers cognition as a continuous process of mutual transitions between the poles of a “Person-Acting-in-the-World” system (Stetsenko, 2023). Culture sets patterns and “anti-patterns” of behavior that underlie an individual’s “self-understanding” in difficult life situations (Petrovsky, Shmelev, 2019). As noted in the study (Sokolova, 2012), research into the content and structure of the psyche, based on social and cultural conditions, as well as the structure of practical substantive activity, was an important outcome of using in psychology the cultural-historical approach developed by L.S. Vygotsky, A.R. Luria, and A.N. Leontiev. In particular, A.R. Luria showed the influence of cultural factors (the situation of rapid social change in Soviet Uzbekistan in the early 1930s) on cognitive processes and intellectual activity (Luria, 1982).

Cultural specificity of Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is a multiethnic, multi-confessional country with a rich, complex, and collectivist culture. A focus on traditions, customs, and religion has been prevalent in the Uzbek people for many centuries (Jabbarov, 2007), which has been newly revealed in the last three decades.

The collapse of the USSR, the new independence followed by socioeconomic changes, and globalization have become the scene of a unique clash of “Western” and “Eastern” cultures (Dadabaev, 2007; Ismailbekova, 2013; Kurbonov, 2019). Young people’s interest in the new values has catalyzed a revival of traditional education (Alizhanova, 2021). The community institution of the “mahalla” has moved to a new stage of development (Ismailbekova, 2013; Alizhanova, 2021).

The definition of the cultural levels of coping requires a description of the practice of patience, “Sabr,” that was primarily formed by the foundational principles of Islam, the most widespread religion in Uzbekistan. The highest form of this practice (“Sabr Jamil,” beautiful or noble patience) is mentioned in the Quran (Pavlova, Barieva, Bairova, 2018) and signifies endurance, fortitude, and trust in the will of Allah. The role of this practice in coping with situations of change is determined by two factors. On the one hand, the practice is efficient for preventing conflicts (Ismailbekova, 2013) and contributes to perceiving life’s difficulties as trials. On the other hand, it is used in the context of Islamic psychological counseling, which aims to influence an individual’s personality on three levels: 1. “ruh” (soul), 2. “aql” (consciousness/mind), and 3. “jism” (physical body) (Pavlova, Barieva, Bairova, 2018). Pre-Islamic qasidas (poems), based on the technique of tahwil — shifting focus from negative aspects to positive ones — have a unique psychotherapeutic effect. In order to master this technique, a person should cultivate steadfast patience. Thus, “Sabr conquers dahr” (changing circumstances) (Rudakova, 2017, p. 24).

Coping at the individual levels in Uzbek culture is characterized by the unhurried actions, the use of planning strategies and “containing coping”, gender roles distributed in the process of overcoming life’s difficulties (Byzova, Chikurova, Molutova, 2013), and the search for social support (Agadullina, Belinskaya, Juraeva, 2020).

The aim and theoretical framework of this study

In this study, the cultural-historical approach is applied as an upper-level fundamental theory that provides a general explanatory framework and enables the development of theoretical propositions that can be empirically proven (Kornilova, 2023). Applied to the subject of change perception, the cultural-historical approach suggests that culture, through the models of coping with life’s difficulties adopted by its representatives, determines the content of representations (perceptions) of life situations and appropriate coping strategies. In particular, we propose that cultural mod-

els of acceptance or rejection of change include specific content depending on an individual's cultural background. Moreover, this content is determined not only by quantitative characteristics but also largely by semantic features associated with social development and cultural and religious values. The general conceptual framework for the cultural determination of change perception is presented in Figure 1.

The cycle diagram demonstrates that *cultural coping models* determine the specifics of how an individual *perceives their life changes*. Depending on this perception, the person uses accordingly a specific set of *coping strategies* to manage the situation of change aligned with their cultural model. In this empirical study, we explore three combinations of coping strategies (focused on either accepting change or rejecting change, or those of an ambivalent profile, which combines the first two). We also examine the characteristics of change perception associated with each profile. The discussion of these results and their comparison with cultural values described in the literature, as well as with culture-inherent coping methods enable a further description of these cultural models.

The aim of this study is to identify the specific perceptions of change in representatives of Uzbek culture and their methods of coping with change.

Materials and methods

Participants

Two hundred seventy-nine participants, residents of Tashkent and other cities in Uzbekistan, took part

in the study. The sample ranged in age from 18 to 64 years (mean age 26.1 ± 9.11), including 230 women and 49 men. Seventy-four percent of the participants reported Uzbek ethnicity, with the largest number of Russians and Koreans among the remaining participants. All respondents were fluent in Russian. Sixty-three percent of the study participants were students at Tashkent universities in various fields of study, while the remaining participants were workers in various professions. The data were collected online using the Testograf platform. The participants were informed on the study objectives, provided informed consent and then answered the questions. All study participants were provided with feedback on the study results.

In the second stage of the study, data from a Russian sample of 216 individuals aged 17 to 55 years (mean age 28.5 ± 9.8), including 182 women and 34 men (Bityutskaya, Dokuchaeva, Korneev, 2025), were used for cross-cultural comparison.

Methods

We used a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The questionnaire “*Types of Response to a Situation of Change*” (TRSC, Bityutskaya, Bazarov, Korneev, 2021) was used to collect quantitative data. The 48 questionnaire items are grouped into seven scales related to the acceptance of life changes (scales: *mastering change*, *overcoming difficulties*, *preferring uncertainty*, and *creating change*) and the rejection or aversion to change (*avoiding change*, *preventing change*, and *maintaining stability*). The questionnaire items were rated on a Likert scale from 0 to 3 (least often, rarely, often, and most often).

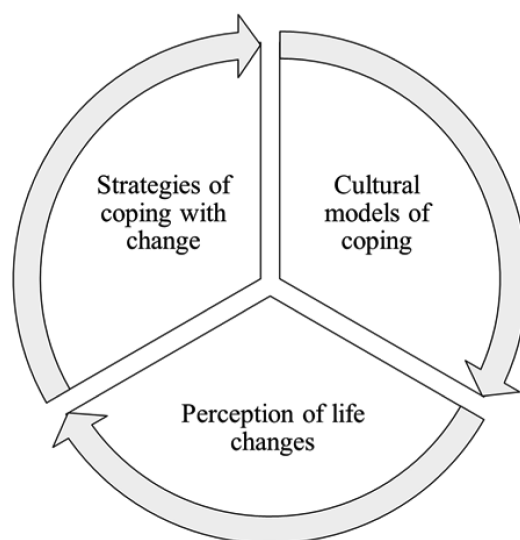


Fig. 1. A cycle diagram of the relationship between cultural models of coping with life difficulties, perceptions of life changes and strategies of coping with them

In order to study the perception of change, responses to the following *open-ended questions* were used as qualitative data:

1. What environmental cues help you recognize that life changes are happening?
2. What signs of change are most important to you?
3. What helps you accept change?
4. How do you neutralize resistance to change?

The data collection procedure was consistent with the study conducted on a Russian sample (Bityutskaya, Dokuchaeva, Korneev, 2025).

Content analysis procedure

A codebook was used to analyze the qualitative data, including *general categories* and corresponding *specific subcategories* with their indicators. To enhance the reliability of the content analysis, 20 cases randomly selected from the dataset were independently coded by two experts. Upon reaching consensus on the discrepancies in data coding and reaching inter-coder reliability, the remaining responses were coded. During the content analysis, seven general categories and 74 specific subcategories were identified based on the respondents' responses

Statistical analysis

Latent profile analysis (Ferguson, Moore, Hull, 2020) was applied to identify groups with different proportions of response strategies according to the TRSC. Analysis of variance and pairwise comparisons with the Holm correction were used to assess differences in individual strategies across respondent groups. Results in the Uzbek and Russian samples were compared using the Mann–Whitney U test. Calculations were performed in the R environment (4.3.3) using the software packages tidyverse (2.0.0), rstatix (0.7.2), and tidyLPA (1.1.0).

To determine the number of groups, models identifying from one to six clusters were evaluated, with each model evaluated under different assumptions regarding the (in)equality of variances and covariances of variables within the groups. Model comparisons were conducted using the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC). The group size ratio and entropy were also taken into account.

Results

Latent profile analysis

The model that identified three groups of respondents, assuming unequal variances and zero covariances between variables, was selected as the best model. The mean values for the TRSC scales in the groups identified in the Uzbek sample are shown in Figure 2. The number of subjects, their age, and gender distribution are presented in Table 1. Analysis of variance and pairwise comparisons revealed significant differences between all groups on all scales ($p < 0.001$).

The first group is characterized by relatively high mean scores on the Acceptance of Change scales and relatively low scores on the Rejection of Change scales (hereinafter, G-AC). The second group has average scores on all scales, which allows us to define it as a group of people with ambivalent attitudes toward change, combining both acceptance and rejection strategies (G-AMB). The third group had relatively high scores on the Rejection of Change scales and relatively low scores on the Acceptance of Change scales (G-RJ). In the study using a Russian sample ($n = 216$), three similar profiles were identified: G-AC (45 participants), G-AMB (111 participants), and G-RJ (60 participants).

Descriptive statistics for the identified groups by content analysis categories are presented in Table 2. As can be seen from the table, differences across categories are small; a comparison of the three groups by these indicators using ANOVA revealed no significant differences between the groups across all categories ($p > 0.05$). However, this result was expected, as the characteristics of perceptions of the change situation enable the description of differences in the frequencies of specific subcategories.

The assessment of differences in the profiles of the Uzbek sample by subcategory

Table 3 presents the results of a comparison of the average frequency of responses, which allowed us to identify significant ($p < 0.05$) and marginally significant ($p < 0.1$) differences.

Differences in the following subcategories were significant:

– *Negative emotions*. In the G-AC, the average frequency of mentioning this subcategory was lower than in the G-RJ ($p = 0.003/0.001^1$) and G-AMB

¹ From here on, the first significance value is provided with the Holm correction, the second significance value is uncorrected. The significance of differences is discussed as adjusted for multiple comparisons; however, given the exploratory nature of this study, we considered it important to also present the uncorrected significance as an indication of potential significant differences.

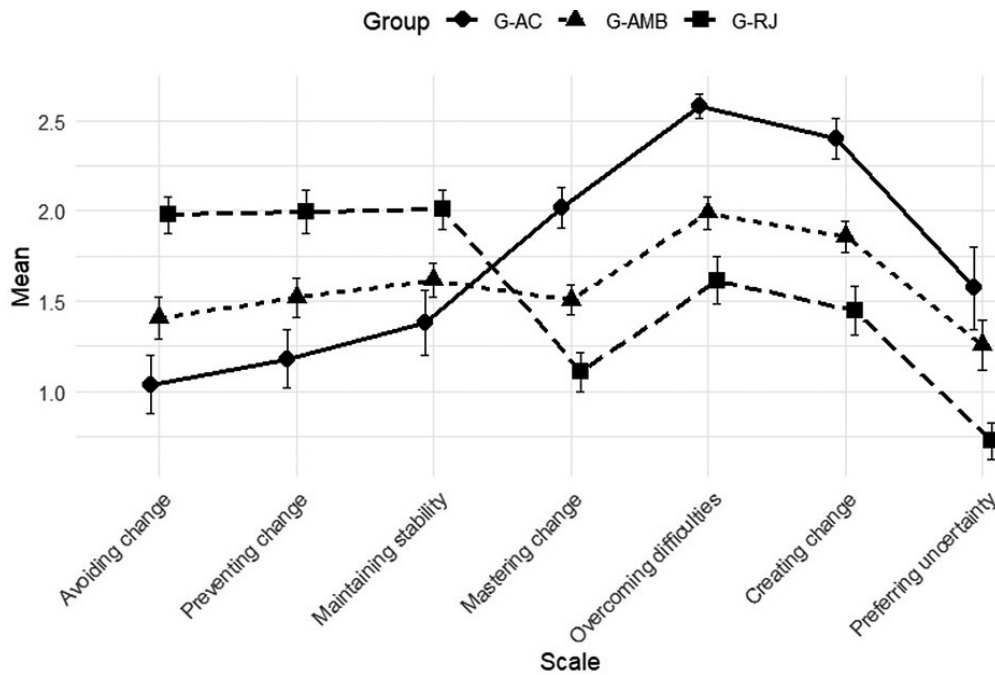


Fig. 2. TRSC Profiles for the Three Selected Groups in the Uzbek sample. G-AC – the acceptance group, with higher scores on the acceptance scales and low scores on the rejection scales. G-AMB – the ambivalent group, with average scores on all scales. G-RJ – the rejection group, with higher scores on the rejection scales and lower scores on the acceptance scales
Note: error bars are 2 standard errors of the mean.

Table 1

Size and composition of the selected groups in the Uzbek sample

Profile name and acronym	Group	N	Male / Female	Percent Male / Female	Age
Group with a profile of acceptance of changes G-AC	1	84 (30,1%)	16/68	19/81	27(9,1)
Group with an ambivalent profile G-AMB	2	115 (41,2%)	22/93	19,1/80,9	25,9(9,1)
Group with a profile of rejection of changes G-RJ	3	80 (28,7%)	11/69	13,8/86,2	25,4(9,2)
All		279	49/230	17,6/82,4	26,1(9,1)

Note: mean age is given, standard deviations are in parentheses.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for content analysis categories in three groups

Category	Profile		
	Г-ИП / G-AC	Г-АМБ / G-AMB	Г-ОТ / G-RJ
1. External signs	1,214 (1,213)	1,165 (1,059)	1,100 (1,001)
2. Internal signs	2,060 (1,826)	2,165 (1,701)	1,812 (1,170)
3. Activity of the subject	0,714 (0,800)	0,678 (0,744)	0,575 (0,671)
4. Appraisal of change	0,345 (0,630)	0,183 (0,431)	0,238 (0,534)
5. Important signs of change	1,024 (0,153)	1,026 (0,160)	0,988 (0,112)
6. Ways to cope with a situation of change	3,250 (1,597)	3,522 (2,149)	3,100 (1,228)
7. Coping orientation	1,000 (0)	1,000 (0)	1,025 (0,157)

Note: averages for profiles are given, standard deviations are in parentheses.

Table 3

Comparison of three groups of the Uzbek sample by frequency of subcategories

Category	Subcategory	Profile			Significance of the differences
		AC	AMB	RJ	
Internal signs	Positive emotions	0,119 (0,361)	0,078 (0,270)	0,025 (0,157)	$F(2, 276) = 2,387, p = 0,094, \eta_p^2 = 0,017$

Category	Subcategory	Profile			Significance of the differences
		AC	AMB	RJ	
	Negative emotions	0,262 (0,583)	0,339 (0,576)	0,575 (0,652)	$F(2, 276) = 6,102, p = 0,003,$ $\eta_p^2 = 0,042$
Appraisal of change	Positive appraisal	0,095 (0,295)	0,017 (0,131)	0,038 (0,191)	$F(2, 276) = 3,463, p = 0,033,$ $\eta_p^2 = 0,024$
Ways to cope with a situation of change	Inevitability	0,143 (0,415)	0,226 (0,441)	0,300 (0,537)	$F(2, 276) = 2,365, p = 0,096,$ $\eta_p^2 = 0,017$
	Distraction	0,167 (0,406)	0,330 (0,573)	0,138 (0,381)	$F(2, 276) = 4,798, p = 0,009,$ $\eta_p^2 = 0,034$
	Readiness for change	0,190 (0,452)	0,104 (0,307)	0,062 (0,291)	$F(2, 276) = 2,846, p = 0,060,$ $\eta_p^2 = 0,020$
Coping orientation	Oneself	0,881 (0,326)	0,835 (0,373)	0,725 (0,449)	$F(2, 276) = 3,591, p = 0,029,$ $\eta_p^2 = 0,025$
	On others	0,036 (0,187)	0,035 (0,184)	0,125 (0,333)	$F(2, 276) = 4,098, p = 0,018,$ $\eta_p^2 = 0,029$

Note: the profiles are given as means, with standard deviations in brackets. The significance of differences was determined by the results of variance analysis.

($p = 0.015/0.007$). However, the G-RJ participants often noted that the change situation “causes discomfort”² and “elicits distress.” In the G-AMB, the development of an anxious state was frequently mentioned.

— *Positive appraisal*. In the G-AC, the average frequency of this subcategory was significantly higher than in the G-AMB ($p = 0.030/0.010$). the G-AC participants identified scenarios that contribute to improvements: “my position in this world improves.”

— *Distraction*. In the G-AMB, the average frequency of this subcategory is significantly higher than in the G-AC ($p = 0.034/0.017$) and G-RJ ($p = 0.017/0.006$) groups. Moreover, G-AC participants mention more active ways of distractions, such as “sports” and “change of activity.” In the G-AMB responses, relaxation is also mentioned: “rest,” “watching films,” and “music.” In the G-AMB, this is associated with the theme of procrastination, as well as hope in fate and God. In the G-RJ responses, this subcategory is typically associated with “sleep” and “focusing on a hobby.”

— *Orientation towards oneself*. Respondents in all groups report reflecting on their experiences and attempting to accept the situation. Moreover, the average frequency of this subcategory was significantly higher in the G-AC than in the G-RJ ($p = 0.029/0.010$).

— *Orientation towards others (seeking support)*. In the G-RJ, the average frequency of this subcategory is significantly higher than in the G-AC ($p = 0.033/0.016$) and G-AMB ($p = 0.028/0.009$). Analysis of the responses shows that the opinions of figures

of authority and generally the “opinion of others,” as well as the desire to maintain reputation, are significant; the importance of maintaining relationships is noted.

Marginally significant differences were found for the following subcategories:

— *Positive emotions*. In the G-AC, the average frequency of mentioning this subcategory is higher than in the G-RJ ($p = 0.090/0.030$). The G-AC participants more often describe “excitement, anticipation,” and “a surge of strength and energy,” which are experienced positively.

— *Inevitability*. In the G-RJ, the average frequency of this subcategory is significantly higher than in the G-AC ($p = 0.092/0.031$). Acceptance of life changes in the G-RJ and G-AMB is facilitated by perceiving them as “inevitable,” as “a given that must be accepted,” as a situation associated with “the absence of another way out.” At the same time, one’s own potential is assessed as insufficient to influence the situation: “I understand that I cannot influence change,” “not everything depends on me.”

— *Readiness for change*. In the G-AC, the average frequency of this subcategory is significantly higher than in the G-RJ ($p = 0.063/0.021$). In terms of meaning, a distinctive feature of the G-AC is the responses associated with an experience of ease and “easy adaptation”: “It is not difficult for me to give up something routine and familiar in favor of something new and interesting.”

² Excerpts from respondents’ responses are provided in quotation marks.

The assessment of differences between the Russian and Uzbek samples within subcategories

We further compared the frequency of subcategories in the responses of the Uzbek and Russian samples. Significant differences between cultural groups overall and within the three profiles are presented in Tables 4 and 5, respectively.

Differences between the Uzbek and Russian participants were significant in the following subcategories.

– *Negative emotions*. This subcategory was mentioned more frequently in the Uzbek sample than in the Russian sample ($p = 0.008$).

– *Patience and removing resistance*. This subcategory was mentioned significantly more frequently in the Uzbek sample than in the Russian sample ($p = 0.023$); this result was replicated when comparing the G-AMB profiles ($p = 0.012$), see Table 6. Among the Russian participants, statements about neutralizing resistance often imply willpower and cognitive effort, mentioning the need to overcome the situation “by forcing oneself.” Participants’ statements in the Uzbek sample contain the meanings of “a need to endure” and overcoming one’s resistance: “negotiating with oneself,” “finding ways to neutralizing resistance.”

– *Experience analysis*. In the Uzbek sample, the frequency of this subcategory is higher than in the Russian sample ($p = 0.012$), which is characteristic of the G-AC ($p = 0.027$). Uzbek G-AC respondents more often mention reflecting on their own states: “I try to understand what causes my resistance,” “I analyze my fears.” Meanwhile, the Russian G-AC respondents primarily rely on rational arguments.

– *Distraction*. The frequency of this subcategory was higher among Russians ($p = 0.001$), which was also

found when comparing the G-AC ($p = 0.003$) and G-RJ ($p = 0.019$) groups. Russians more often use distraction as a form of cognitive and emotional disengagement, as well as “getting absorbed in work.” The responses of the Uzbek cultural group were dominated by “rest,” “peace,” “creativity,” and communication with loved ones; “absorption in work” is not used as a form of distraction.

– *Resistance to change*. The frequency of this subcategory was higher among Russians than among the Uzbek cultural group ($p = 0.033$), as was also found in the G-RJ ($p = 0.004$). Among Russians (most often G-RJ), resistance to change was emphatically expressed as “I resist to the last.” Many Russian participants noted the prolonged and intense nature of their resistance: “I won’t accept [change] for a long time.” The Uzbek G-RJ responses do not include the resistance category, but the overall sample does contain isolated statements in a more moderate form: “Depending on the outcome, if I am not satisfied with the result, I will look for other options.”

– *Orientation towards oneself*. Overall, the frequency of this subcategory is higher among Russians than in the Uzbek sample ($p = 0.024$). Differences were also observed in a cross-cultural comparison between the G-AMB ($p = 0.05$) and G-RJ ($p = 0.011$) groups. At the same time, this subcategory is found in both samples and is largely consistent in content, describing internal attempts to change one’s perception of change.

– *Orientation towards others (seeking support)*. The frequency of this subcategory is higher in the Uzbek sample’s responses compared to the Russians ($p = 0.043$). The content analysis of the responses shows that representatives of the Uzbek culture find family and community support relevant when accepting change: “conversations with loved ones,” “feeling of

Table 4

Comparison of samples by subcategories

Category	Subcategory	Samples		Significance of the differences
		Russian	Uzbek	
Internal signs of change	Negative emotions	0,269 (0,588)	0,384 (0,612)	U = 26880,5, $p = 0,008$
Ways to cope with a situation of change	Patience and removing resistance	0,074 (0,28)	0,143 (0,381)	U = 28224,5, $p = 0,023$
	Experience analysis	0,361 (0,602)	0,491 (0,667)	U = 26761, $p = 0,012$
	Distraction	0,384 (0,607)	0,226 (0,483)	U = 26292, $p = 0,001$
	Resistance to change	0,051 (0,241)	0,014 (0,119)	U = 29167, $p = 0,033$
Coping orientation	Oneself	0,894 (0,338)	0,817 (0,387)	U = 27883,5, $p = 0,024$
	On others	0,023 (0,151)	0,061 (0,24)	U = 28993,5, $p = 0,043$
	Withdrawing from the situation	0,042 (0,2)	0,1 (0,301)	U = 28363,5, $p = 0,014$

Note: averages for profiles are given, standard deviations are in parentheses; the significance of the differences was determined by the Mann–Whitney U test.

security through contact with others,” and “examples of other people.” Respondents describe how the opinions of loved ones influence their own perceptions of change. Russian respondents also mentioned significant others, but the semantic contexts often differed: “the thought that other people are also undergoing changes is helpful,” “a psychologist helped.” It is also important to note that such responses are not typical in the Russian sample.

— *Withdrawal from the situation.* In the Uzbek group, the frequency of this subcategory is higher than in Russians overall ($p = 0.014$) and in the G-AMB ($p = 0.002$). Semantically, the similarities between the Russian and Uzbek samples are manifested, firstly, in the recognition of the role of time: “time helps to accept changes.” Secondly, strategies of distraction and relaxation are frequently used. Thirdly, support from loved ones or trusted people is noted. However, the methods of necessary support and specific methods of distraction vary (see the corresponding subcategories above).

— *Change in internal sensations.* In a cross-cultural comparison of G-RJ, the frequency of this subcategory is higher in Russians ($p = 0.02$). They predominantly describe internal changes through “inner experiences.” A characteristic feature of the G-RJ in the Uzbek sample is the mention of “inner peace” as a resourceful state.

— *Self-development.* The frequency of this subcategory is higher in the Uzbek G-RJ than in the Russian G-RJ ($p = 0.036$). In Russians, this subcategory characterizes the G-AC, while in the G-RJ it is found in separate cases.

Discussion

In this study, we examined ways of perceiving and coping with life changes as exhibited in individuals from the Uzbek culture. In the first stage of comparison, three groups with different change profiles were identified. The group with the profile of *rejection of change* most frequently (compared to the other identified profiles) mentioned negative emotions and assessments of situations of change, as well as the inevitability of such situations as contributing to the acceptance of change. It is important that the period when change is not being accepted and must be endured is perceived as significant for self-development. For the G-RJ profile, a focus on other people was also revealed, such as seeking support from others and turning for advice to figures of authority. The group with the *ambivalent profile* more frequently mentioned distraction, as well as negative emotions (as compared to the G-AC profile). The group with the *acceptance of change* was distinguished by a higher frequency of mentioning positive emotions and assessments of change, readiness for change, and orientation towards oneself. The latter is manifested in focusing on one's own experiences, analyzing the experiences, and searching for positive opportunities in a new situation.

In the second stage, we conducted cross-cultural comparisons for the two cultural groups. Overall, the observed differences in perceptions of change among Uzbek individuals (compared to Russians) were associated with more frequent mentions of collective coping strategies and the “need for patience,” along with

Table 5

Comparison of samples by groups

Category	Subcategory	Samples		Significance of the differences
		Russian	Uzbek	
Г-ПР / G-AC				
Ways to cope with a situation of change	Experience analysis	0,222 (0,471)	0,488 (0,685)	U = 1523,5, p = 0,027
	Distraction	0,489 (0,727)	0,167 (0,406)	U = 1450,5, p = 0,003
Г-АМБ / G-AMB				
Ways to cope with a situation of change	Patience and removing resistance	0,054 (0,227)	0,165 (0,396)	U = 5725,5, p = 0,012
Coping orientation	Oneself	0,928 (0,322)	0,835 (0,373)	U = 5807, p = 0,05
	Withdrawing from the situation	0,018 (0,134)	0,122 (0,328)	U = 5720,5, p = 0,002
Г-ОТ / G-RJ				
Internal signs of change	Change in internal sensations	0,367 (0,52)	0,188 (0,424)	U = 1983,5, p = 0,02
Ways to cope with a situation of change	Distraction	0,317 (0,537)	0,138 (0,381)	U = 2018,5, p = 0,019
	Self-development	0,033 (0,181)	0,138 (0,347)	U = 2150, p = 0,036
	Resistance to change	0,117 (0,372)	0 (0)	U = 2160, p = 0,004
Coping orientation	Oneself	0,9 (0,303)	0,725 (0,449)	U = 1980, p = 0,011

Note: averages for profiles are given, standard deviations are in parentheses; the significance of the differences was determined by the Mann–Whitney U test.

a greater focus on self-reflection. Yet, resistance is mentioned less frequently, indicating that the Uzbek sample was more likely to accept the conditions of a situation of change. While resistance to change (as a struggle to “return everything to the way it was”) was found to be significant for the Russian G-RJ (Bityutskaya, Dokuchaeva, Korneev, 2025), this theme was not present in the responses of the Uzbek sample. Instead, an external locus of control predominates, viewing change as objectively determined circumstances that are difficult to influence. This further facilitates acceptance of change. Another important result was discovered when comparing the Russian and Uzbek groups with ambivalent profiles. The Russian group often demonstrated a tendency to shift from rejection to acceptance of change, using positive reappraisal as the key coping strategy (Ibid.). The Uzbek group reports coping strategies of distraction and postponement of making a decision, with distraction aimed at calming down and communicating with loved ones. The obtained results are consistent with a strategy called “containing coping” (Byzova, Chikurova, Molotova, 2013).

These trends can be seen as a reflection of the collectivist culture and the Islamic value of patience, “Sabr”, characteristic of Uzbek culture (Pavlova, Barieva, Bairova, 2018; Ismailbekova, 2013). Overall, the Uzbek sample was dominated by a focus on the need to adapt to the conditions of a situation, adjusting to them despite internal difficulties, indicating a flexible approach to change.

Coping methods that are defined as “passive coping” and “problem avoidance strategies” (distraction, postponing decisions and actions) in the American-European system of categorizing coping strategies, appear imbued with different meanings in the Uzbek mentality. This is associated with the value of steadfast, noble patience (“Sabr”), which subsequently helps cope with and accept change. In other words, the same external manifestations of coping may have different meanings in Western and Eastern cultural models.

However, in this study, we also obtained results identifying a universal component. The cross-cultural comparison of the perceptions of change by the participants assigned to the profiles of accepting or rejecting change reveals some common features, along with the differences. Similarities are obvious in the valence of emotions and assessments, which can be attributed to universal characteristics (Stefanenko, 1999). However, this conclusion requires verification in samples from other cultures.

Conclusions

This study provides for the description of a model of coping with life changes typical for Uzbek culture, characterized by gradual acceptance of the situation and flexible adaptation to its conditions, as well as collective coping methods. The associated characteristics of perceiving change are described by the need for patience. This is defined as persistent and noble coping, including with the negative emotions that arise when change is not accepted. While Russians in similar situations often need to look for positive aspects and benefits in changes, and find encouragement to accept them, residents of Uzbekistan often need time to slowly and deliberately adjust to the situation and reflect on their experiences of interacting with it. Distractions include methods for achieving calm and a focus on one’s inner world, and the opportunity to communicate with loved ones.

The research framework of the cultural-historical approach was instrumental in analyzing the cultural models, and the specifics of perceiving change and coping with it as a holistic structure.

Limitations. 1. In this study, we did not analyze gender differences due to the disproportionate number of men and women (for the Uzbek sample 18% / 82%, for the Russian sample 16% / 84%, respectively). 2. We also did not consider the substantive features of change situations (what sphere of life they relate to).

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Information about the authors

Ekaterina V. Bityutskaya, Candidate of Science (Psychology), Associate Professor, the Department of General Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6117-1063>, e-mail: bityutskaya_ew@mail.ru

Anna G. Dokuchaeva, Graduate Student, the Department of General Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7162-0624>, e-mail: annadokg@gmail.com

Aleksei A. Korneev, PhD in Psychology, Senior Researcher, the Department of General Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6389-8215>, e-mail: korneeff@gmail.com

Anna A. Kheruvimova, Graduate Student, the Department of General Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8058-7728>, e-mail: kheruvimova.a.a@gmail.com

Информация об авторах

Екатерина Владиславовна Битюцкая, кандидат психологических наук, доцент кафедры общей психологии, факультет психологии, Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова (ФГБОУ ВО «МГУ имени М.В. Ломоносова»), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6117-1063>, e-mail: bityutskaya_ew@mail.ru

Анна Георгиевна Докучаева, аспирантка кафедры общей психологии, факультет психологии, Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова (ФГБОУ ВО «МГУ имени М.В. Ломоносова»), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7162-0624>, e-mail: annadokg@gmail.com

Алексей Андреевич Корнеев, кандидат психологических наук, старший научный сотрудник лаборатории нейропсихологии, факультет психологии, Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова (ФГБОУ ВО «МГУ имени М.В. Ломоносова»), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6389-8215>, e-mail: korneeff@gmail.com

Анна Алексеевна Херувимова, аспирантка кафедры общей психологии, факультет психологии, Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова (ФГБОУ ВО «МГУ имени М.В. Ломоносова»), Москва, Российская Федерация, <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8058-7728>, e-mail: kheruvimova.a.a@gmail.com

Contribution of the authors

Ekaterina V. Bityutskaya — general idea, coordination and theoretical substantiation of the study; sections: “Summary”, “Discussion of Results”, “Conclusion”; data collection; content analysis (expertise); scientific editing and formation of the primary manuscript.

Anna G. Dokuchaeva — content analysis of data; description of empirical results.

Aleksei A. Korneev — processing, statistical analysis and description of empirical results.

Anna A. Kheruvimova — theoretical review on the topic.

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Neither manipulation nor maieutics: essence and origins of activity-based psychotechnics

E.E. Sokolova ✉

Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ ees-msu@mail.ru

Abstract

Context and relevance. The article presents an analysis of the 1948 study by N.G. Morozova, a disciple of L.S. Vygotsky and a colleague of A.N. Leontiev at the Department of Child Psychology at the Psychological Institute. The study focused on the examination and formation of motivation in children to understand adult verbal instructions. The relevance of revisiting this material is driven by contemporary debates on possible approaches to “working with the psyche”, one of which is exemplified in the analyzed study. **Objective.** To identify the origins and specific characteristics of activity-oriented psychotechnical methods. **Hypothesis.** Activity-based psychotechnics cannot be reduced to either manipulation or maieutics. Instead, it represents a form of “life-enhancement” (*zhiznetvorchestvo*), which involves transforming or forming a subject’s meaningful activity, with the psyche serving as a specific function of that activity. **Methods and materials.** The study employs a historical-methodological analysis of research conducted within the framework of A.N. Leontiev’s school of activity psychology and published in the 1940s, as well as a relevant archival document. **Results.** The study demonstrates that the psychotechnical methods used by N.G. Morozova aimed at the sequential formation of children’s motivation to comprehend verbal instructions in full detail (through the organization of joint activity with adults that is meaningful to them). This process first focuses on *what* the adult proposes to do, and subsequently on *how* to do it. It is argued that this work contributes to the study of the structuring function of the motive and to the long-standing debate regarding the relationship between the motivational and operational components of activity. **Conclusions.** N.G. Morozova’s research, along with other works from A.N. Leontiev’s school in the 1940s, is of more than just historical interest. Their analysis should be continued within the context of contemporary discussions on human freedom and the relationship between *word* and *deed*.

Keywords: N.G. Morozova, A.N. Leontiev’s school, psychotechnics, activity, motive, speech, life enhancement

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Не манипулирование и не майевтика: сущность и истоки деятельностной психотехники

Е.Е. Соколова ✉

Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова, Москва, Российская Федерация
✉ ees-msu@mail.ru

Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. В статье представлен анализ исследования ученицы Л.С. Выготского и сотрудницы А.Н. Леонтьева по Отделу детской психологии Психологического института Н.Г. Морозовой, посвященного изучению и формированию у детей мотивации понимания речевых указаний взрослого (1948). Актуальность обращения к данному материалу обусловлена современными дискуссиями о возможных вариантах «работы с психикой», один из которых представлен в анализируемом исследовании. **Целью** является выявление истоков и специфики деятельностно ориентированных психотехнических приемов. **Гипотеза.** Деятельностная психотехника не сводима ни к манипулированию, ни к майевтике, а представляет собой вариант жизнотворчества, заключающегося в изменении (формировании) значимой для субъекта деятельности, определенной функцией которой является психика. **Методы и материалы.** Методом выступает историко-методологический анализ исследований, проведенных в контексте психологии деятельности школы А.Н. Леонтьева и опубликованных в 1940-е гг., а также связанного с ними архивного материала. **Результаты.** Показано, что использованные Н.Г. Морозовой психотехнические приемы нацелены на последовательное формирование у детей (посредством организации совместной со взрослым и значимой для них деятельности) адекватной мотивации понимания речевой инструкции во всех ее деталях: сначала — *что* предлагает сделать взрослый, а затем — *как*. Утверждается, что тем самым данная работа вносит свой вклад в изучение структурирующей функции мотива и в разрешение давно идущего спора по проблеме соотношения мотивационной и операциональной составляющих деятельности. **Выводы.** Исследование Н.Г. Морозовой, равно как и другие работы школы А.Н. Леонтьева 1940-х гг., представляют не только исторический интерес. Следует продолжить их анализ в контексте современных дискуссий о свободе человека и соотношении Слова и Дела.

Ключевые слова: Н.Г. Морозова, школа А.Н. Леонтьева, психотехника, деятельность, мотив, речь, жизнотворчество

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Introduction

This article discusses specific features of a form of psychotechnics that emerged within activity-oriented psychology and deserves particular attention in light of the current demands of contemporary psychological practice. We attempted in one of our previous works (Sokolova, 2023) to show that, from a methodological standpoint, this form constitutes an alternative to two other types of psychotechnics, commonly referred to as manipulation and maieutics. However, our argument was presented in that work only in its most general form, with references to selected statements made by S.L. Rubinstein and A.N. Leontiev in their writings on the philosophy of psychology, without a special consideration of the rich empirical legacy of the founders of the activity approach.

A special place within this legacy is occupied by ontogenetic studies of A.N. Leontiev's school conducted in the 1940s and 1950s. We analyzed one of these studies — Z.M. Istomina's research (1948), which later became widely known — in a previous work (Sokolova,

2024) in light of the eight principles of psychotechnical cognition identified by F.E. Vasilyuk (Vasilyuk, 2003). However, our article did not address the rather acute debates concerning a number of fundamental propositions of the activity approach that also underlay specific psychotechnical tools. The debates in question primarily concerned the discussions between A.N. Leontiev and P.Ya. Galperin regarding the relationship between the motivational determination and the operational composition of mental activity.

The present article undertakes therefore a detailed historical and methodological analysis of another remarkable study of the same period: the work of Natalia Grigorievna Morozova (1906–1989), devoted to the problem of preschool children's understanding of adults' verbal instructions (Morozova, 1948). That study demonstrated that understanding adults' instructions at the operational level was impossible without explicitly forming the motivational component of the activity of understanding in the child. N.G. Morozova's study thus outlined a possible way of resolving the contradictions between A.N. Leontiev's and P.Ya. Galperin's positions,

which, in the year N.G. Morozova's article was published, had not yet been sufficiently explicated. We also propose to demonstrate how that long-standing study helps outline a possible solution to a broader and highly relevant problem: further development, under contemporary conditions, of a form of psychotechnics that could serve as an alternative to its two much more widespread variants, i.e. manipulation and maieutics (Puzyre, 2005; Leontiev, 2012).

Activity-based psychotechnics and its controversial points

The activity-oriented psychotechnical approach developed within A.N. Leontiev's school differed from other forms of psychotechnical practice from the very beginning of its emergence in the 1930s in that "working with the psyche" was understood as construction and transformation of the subject's real activity. This follows from the conception of the psyche as an orienting and regulatory function (or functional organ) of activity, whose role is to optimize its executive component. In other words, no separate "working with the psyche" *per se* is envisaged outside the context of constructing, transforming, and correcting the corresponding activity, which is regarded as the substance (*substantia*) of the mental.

Despite this shared theoretical position underlying numerous studies that combined scientific inquiry, "working with the psyche", education and instruction, significant disagreements emerged among proponents of this version of the activity approach concerning several fundamental issues in general psychology. The disagreements also affected specific psychotechnical methods employed. Different emphases were placed on the study and formation of mental activity in the research conducted under A.N. Leontiev's supervision at the Department of Child Psychology of the Psychological Institute (1943–1960), and in P.Ya. Galperin's work on systematic stage-by-stage formation of mental actions and concepts, initiated at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s.

It is worth recalling the differences between the positions of the two scholars, which were most explicitly articulated during the now well-known 1969 discussion and subsequently analyzed by V.P. Zinchenko, N.N. Nechaev, L.F. Obukhova, M.A. Stepanova, and others. P.Ya. Galperin emphasized in his contribution to that discussion what he regarded as insufficient attention that A.N. Leontiev and his collaborators paid to the "operational aspect of object-oriented activity", rather than to its motivational aspect. According to P.Ya. Galperin, both theory and experimentation neglected the operational components (Galperin, 2004, p. 331). He therefore called for overcoming such one-sidedness in the study of mental activity.

We will discuss below to what extent that criticism was justified. For now, however, it is worth noting one important fact. Having voiced his criticism of A.N. Leontiev and his colleagues, P.Ya. Galperin also acknowledged, with considerable self-criticism, during

the same discussion, "I could have said the same about myself: until recently, we treated motivation with the same indifference" (Galperin, 2004, p. 331). It seemed at that time unimportant how the child was to be engaged in an activity — for example, by the promise of a reward, competition, or similar incentives. However, turning to the study of motivational foundations of the "operational aspect" of thinking, P.Ya. Galperin came to recognize that motivation "has not only an energetic but also an orienting function; external motivation distorts the very task, and the more the task reflects a person's enduring activity, the more significant this distortion becomes" (Galperin, 2023, p. 656).

In our view, however, the apparent opposition between those two positions disappears once we carefully examine the emergence and development of activity psychology in the preceding decades. The 1948 discussion of A.N. Leontiev's book *An Essay on the Development of the Psyche* (Leontiev, 1947), for example, included serious accusations directed against the author for allegedly "overemphasizing" and "grossly exaggerating" the role of motives and, consequently, senses, at the expense of meanings, thus negating the "educational role of knowledge". D.V. Antonov, L.I. Bozhovich, A.V. Zaporozhets, and M.N. Skatkin supported A.N. Leontiev in that discussion. They emphasized that A.N. Leontiev's and his collaborators' works demonstrated precisely the unity of the motivational aspect of activity and its operational components, while showing that primarily the former determined the latter. It implied, in the context of school education, the necessity of organizing students' activity in such a way that knowledge they acquire becomes personally meaningful to them and, therefore, genuinely effective (for a more detailed discussion, see *Speeches of A.N. Leontiev in the discussion...*, 2023; Sokolova, 2023).

D.B. Elkonin, another participant in the same discussion, also noted, "Alexei Nikolaevich has been reproached here for overestimating the role of motives. Yet it is hardly possible to overestimate their role" (Elkonin, 1948, ff. 45–46). D.B. Elkonin adduced extensive excerpts from a collection of works by American authors published in the same year as A.N. Leontiev's book, who attached "enormous importance" to the study of motives, and, considering the conception of motivation presented in that volume unacceptable, emphasized the importance of investigating motivation on the basis of the activity theory developed in the Soviet Union, saying, "It seems to me that Alexei Nikolaevich's book opens up opportunities for understanding the true driving forces of human behavior" (*ibid.*, f. 47). D.B. Elkonin noted much later in a diary entry dated October 20, 1967 that the operational aspect of thinking certainly needed to be developed; however, "this task must be addressed within a broader and more important context. The development of theoretical thinking is possible only when such tasks arise, and they can emerge only within an expanded world" (Elkonin, 1989, p. 488).

In our view, the empirical studies conducted by the staff of the Department of Child Psychology at the

Psychological Institute demonstrated precisely this relationship. Two interrelated functions of motive — the meaning-making and the structuring functions — were examined in detail as early as the second half of the 1940s (Sokolova, 2024). Z.M. Istomina's showed in her study, *inter alia*, that the child identified and realized mnemonic goals (first the goal of recall and later that of memorization) directly depending on the motive underlying the activity, which made the goals meaningful. If a motive through which a given goal can only be identified "does not exist for the child, does not answer to any of its needs, then the goal itself does not exist for the child or exists only nominally: it remains *senseless*" (Leontiev, 1948, p. 6, emphasis added by Leontiev). The same study demonstrated that the structuring function of a motive extended to the identification of mnemonic operations associated with a given goal. That finding proved that the operational component of mental activity could not be studied independently of its motivational aspects. N.G. Morozova examined in her study, which will be analyzed below, a similar relationship between those components in the context of children's understanding of adults' verbal instructions.

The study of the development of children's attitudes toward verbal instructions within a psychotechnical framework

N.G. Morozova addressed a question that remains highly relevant today for researchers, parents, and educators alike: why do children understand adults' instructions in certain situations, while in other situations they seem not to "hear" the adult at all, as if they were deaf. N.G. Morozova hypothesized that children's meaningful understanding of adults' verbal instructions depended on the motives that prompt them to listen and attend to such instructions. Whereas early preschool children may not yet have a motive to understand an adult's instruction as a *plan* of actions and operations required to complete the task, development gradually gives rise to (or forms) a motivation to grasp the essence of what has been said — initially in terms of *what* has to be done and subsequently in terms of *how* it has to be done (Morozova, 1948, pp. 31–32).

The content of N.G. Morozova's studies will be presented here in some more detail, for their certain features are important for understanding the issues under discussion.

Understanding adults' verbal instructions by children¹ was investigated using the following experimental tasks.

1. Drawing according to instructions. The subjects were asked, following the adult's instructions, (a) to draw a certain picture (e.g., a house, a fence, or a tree)

and (b) to colorize it using the colors prescribed in the instruction.

2. Manual handicraft tasks. The children were asked to make a basket or assemble a toy cuckoo-clock. That also included modeling various objects from plasticine, such as mushrooms or an airplane.

3. Role-play. The children were asked to engage in a specific role-playing game. For younger preschoolers, it involved playing with dolls: giving them names and carrying out certain actions (feeding them, putting them to bed, taking them for a walk, etc.). Older preschoolers were additionally asked to make simple props for games with other scenarios (e.g., a broom, a gate, or a ladder).

The instruction was presented to the child, for example, in the following form: "Let's draw a little house! Draw a house with a fence and a tree and then color it. I will tell you first how to draw and color it, and *then* you will do the drawing and coloring. Listen before you draw" (Morozova, 1948, p. 32, emphasis added by Morozova). The child was then given detailed instructions concerning specific features of the house, the fence, the tree, and the colors to be used. For example, the smoke coming out of the chimney was to be purple, whereas the fence was to be brown. Since neither crayons nor paints of these colors were available, it was explained to the child how to obtain them (brown by mixing green and red paint or using green and red crayons, and purple by mixing red and blue paint or using red and blue crayons).

The child's attitude toward the experimenter's verbal instructions and of the child's activity in accordance with those instructions was analyzed during the performance of the task. That made it possible to determine how the children accepted and understood adults' speech and what role their motives played in these processes.

N.G. Morozova carefully singled out seven developmental stages of children's understanding of instructions in her experiments and grouped them into three broader phases, proposing the following sequence in the development of the process she was investigating.

At the first, initial phase, the children lacked any motive whatsoever to understand the meaning of the adult's instructions. The children at that level of development (70%; 30%; 0%)² readily accepted the experimenter's proposal but failed to grasp the specific content of the task — i.e., *what* should be done and *how* it should be done. Those were merely the adult's interesting suggestions for them to play, to model, and so forth. They had not yet developed any attitude toward the task as something obligatory. As a result, they either (1) listened to the explanation but proceeded to act in their own way (for example, drawing an airplane instead of a steamboat), thus treating the task only formally, or (2) interrupted the experimenter's explanation and suggested drawing something else that interested them, such as flowers, tanks, or another object unrelated to the

¹ Children aged 4–7 years (junior, middle, and senior kindergarten groups) were involved in the study.

² The percentages in parentheses represent the proportion of children from the three age groups (relative to the total sample) who demonstrated forms of understanding adults' verbal instructions characteristic of each developmental phase.

task. However, when the experimenter began describing the appealing features of the steamboat, the child might agree to draw or model the steamboat.

N.G. Morozova noted that children understood the meanings of the adult's words and phrases (and were able to repeat them) in both cases, yet failed to grasp the task in its entirety. They perceived it merely as permission or encouragement to draw, to play etc., whereas the purpose of the task in the form of the verbal instruction, was to *guide necessary actions* in the course of drawing, modeling or play (Morozova, 1948, p. 34).

At the second phase of development which N.G. Morozova termed as “object-oriented” (32,4%; 62,2%; 5,4%), the children were motivated to understand *what* exactly needed to be done. They were ready to treat the instructions as guidance for action and began implementing it in practice, that is, drawing or modeling precisely what had been asked. The very execution process itself, however, could still distract them from the task at the early stages of that development phase. For example, a child might start drawing a house but fail to color it, or might add extra elements that had not been in the instructions, such as a girl, flowers, or other objects. In role-playing situations at the early stages of this development phase, the children accepted the proposed scenarios (for example, playing at keeping house), but many would gradually introduce storylines of their own as the game unfolded.

It took a *special effort* to have the children understand the instruction more fully and motivate them to listen more attentively to the experimenter's directions. Whenever a child modified the subject of the task or slipped into another during actual performance, the experimenter would deliberately draw the child's attention to the discrepancy by the questions, “What are you doing? And what did I tell you to do?”

The questions worked better for children encouraged to compare the outcome they produced with what had been set in the instructions. For example, the teacher of the middle group in one of the kindergartens where N.G. Morozova conducted her experiments, showed the pupils clay models or Christmas tree toys made strictly according to the instructions and were noticeably superior to the pupils' products. The teacher would openly praise the exemplary works. As a result, the children's willingness to fulfill the task as instructed would dramatically increase.

At the third phase of development — that of perception of the mode of action (4,1%; 32,6%; 63,3%) — the children began to focus not only on *what* was required by the instruction but also on *how* the required action was to be carried out. N.G. Morozova facilitated that shift in children's attitudes toward instructions by specially designed tasks that the children could not complete *without execution of specific operations strictly following the instructions*. For example, the children were

asked to build a toy garage using construction materials according to a prescribed method. Preschoolers would often attempt to build the garage in their own way; however, the structure would collapse because they had failed to follow the instructions. They would turn to the experimenter only after numerous unsuccessful attempts and ask again how it was supposed to be build.

The children would show desire to attend to such details of the instruction initially only during the performance of the task. The children would begin to realize the importance of the instructions on the mode of completing tasks only after experiencing failure and responding to the experimenter's questions. They would then start asking and re-asking the adult *how* to mix the paint, *how* to punch holes, etc. The experimenter's renewed explanations and guiding questions would help the children re-construct the instructions they had previously memorized and repeated at the experimenter's request. However, they would begin to translate these instructions meaningfully into a “plan of action” only at that point. In other words, this stage marked “emergence of an internally motivated attitude toward the instructions *per se*” (Morozova, 1948, p. 42), as the adult's verbal directions came to be perceived and understood as “something that determines the nature and mode of action and *helps* to carry it out” (*ibid.*, emphasis added by Morozova)³.

According to N.G. Morozova, the motive for understanding instructions in their entirety arises from two sources: the child's own activity and the child's relationship with the experimenter. These two sources are inseparable because *the adult both organizes the child's activity and assists in correct execution*. Consequently, N.G. Morozova's study integrated what might be termed diagnostic and formative strategies into a single process. It was important for the experimenter not only to identify the child's current stage in the development (that of meaningful understanding of verbal instructions), but also to facilitate the child's transition to the next stage. It is precisely what allows N.G. Morozova's studies to be regarded as *psychotechnical both in conception and in implementation*.

Fulfilling tasks in the presence of and in interaction with the adult would make children gradually — and indeed in a genuinely “stage-by-stage” manner — develop a desire to understand instructions accurately. That process occurred unobtrusively and within the context of an activity that was meaningful to the child. The adult, as the indispensable participant in all of N.G. Morozova's experiments, displayed respect for each child as an active subject of meaning-making. When older children (6–7 years old) discovered that an object they had built without following the instructions had turned out “wrong” and ask and re-ask the adult, the experimenter would, rather than resorting to outright criticism (“You have made it wrong!”), ask guiding questions, “Are you really making a stick?” (while

³ The same children demonstrated substantially better and faster comprehension of adults' verbal instructions in contexts that were especially meaningful to them — most notably, role-playing activities — than in drawing or modeling tasks.

modeling a mushroom) and offer supportive hints when difficulties arose, for example, “The plasticine has cooled down, so it does not knead”.

The knowledge and skills that the subjects acquired were personality-focused, i.e. they enabled the children to understand not only what they were to make and how to make it or proceed following the adult’s instructions, but also to realize how far they themselves had gone in this understanding. One seven-year-old boy, for example, who drew and colored the fence in his drawing brown, was about to color the tree, but, short of the paint, suddenly exclaimed, “I have to make brown paint again!” He then slapped his forehead and said, “I forgot to color the tree! I have to mix it again now”, and set to mix brown paint by combining green and red (Morozova, 1948, p. 44).

Accordingly, children gradually developed motivation to understand adults’ verbal instructions in all their details. As a result, they eventually learned to structure their activity in relation of not only its goal-related but also operational aspects. N.G. Morozova’s findings thus provided compelling evidence that motivation, to borrow P.Ya. Galperin’s formulation cited above, had not only an energetic but also an orienting function.

This raises an important question: which type of psychotechnics should such psychotechnical tools be referred to? If we adopt A.A. Puzyrei’s well-known distinction between manipulation and maieutics as the two principal types of psychotechnics, then N.G. Morozova’s psychotechnical approach belongs, in our view, to neither category. We will attempt to substantiate this claim in the next section.

Neither manipulation nor maieutics: in search for an appropriate term

Since the child’s and the adult’s joint activities in N.G. Morozova’s study were aimed at building in the children a previously absent ability to understand the meaning of verbal instructions, it necessarily involved influence on the child and assistance in that developmental process. Then, according to the criteria proposed by A.A. Puzyrei (2005, p. 333), such an approach could be classified as a form of manipulative psychotechnics⁴.

At the same time, however, N.G. Morozova’s research clearly displayed what A.A. Puzyrei described as the “presence of the psychological practitioner’s or psychotherapist’s personality” (*ibid.*, p. 270) — that is, a genuinely dialogical interaction between the personalities which is typical of maieutics. This is evident from the examples discussed above. The adult participant in joint activity with the child acted as the facilitator and, in a certain sense, contributor to the “nascence” of phenomena that could not be “made” or

‘produced’ for and instead of another person” (*ibid.*, p. 322). Nevertheless, in our view, N.G. Morozova’s psychotechnical approach cannot justifiably be labeled as maieutic in the strict sense of the term. Her studies formed in children — albeit nonintrusively — motivation to attend to the details of the instructions given to them. According to the “classical version” of cultural-historical activity psychology, individuals are not born with the capacity to understand and accept other persons; consequently, no maieutic is possible here.

The children in the studies we are discussing grew aware of the need to attend carefully to what the adult was saying *on their own*, but as a result of *skillfully organized interaction*. E.Yu. Patyaeva, the author of a major monograph on the motivational structure and construction of human actions, referred to this type of interaction as a *motivational dialogue*, or a process of “joint action-plotting” (Patyaeva, 2018, p. 320). N.G. Morozova’s research jointly plotted actions in such a way that the children perceived the adult’s instructions not as unquestionable commands but as a means of structuring an activity meaningful to the child. According to E.Yu. Patyaeva, a dialogue of this kind “represents a way out of the situation of simple obedience or disobedience and a means of generating new intentions and decisions” (*ibid.*, p. 324), thereby fulfilling an important educational function as well.

Can this interaction therefore be described with the term psychagogy as used by A.A. Puzyrei? Perhaps it can, provided that one bears in mind that, “working with the psyche”, as noted earlier, always implies, within the context of the activity theory, building and correcting the child’s relevant activity.

Isn’t J. Bugental’s term ontogogics more appropriate for describing this type of psychotechnics? According to Bugental, contemporary psychotechnics, understood as a form of “enlightening activity”, involves the therapist’s or counselor’s effort to “support the patient’s or client’s intention to realize more fully the potentials of his or her being” (as cited in Leontiev, 2012, p. 172). Yet an important clarification is needed here. From the perspective of cultural-historical activity psychology, being (understood as the subject’s activity in the world) is not limited to what already exists, whether potentially or actually. It encompasses not only what *is*, but also what *may be* (Obukhova, 1996, p. 31). Moreover, this “*may be*” emerges in ontogenesis through the formation — whether spontaneous or systematic — of corresponding psychological processes in interaction with the Others.

D.A. Leontiev’s term “nootechnics” is, in our view, more felicitous. He defines it as “*facilitating effect on the trajectory of human development, resulting in either a holistic or partial structural transformation, that is, the transition of the ‘human’ system itself to a new structural quality and/or a new developmental trajectory on the*

⁴ According to Puzyrei (2005), this type of psychotechnics is consistent with both the classical version of Vygotsky’s cultural-historical theory (as opposed to his earlier formulations) and the “general psychological activity theory” (p. 319).

basis of processes of self-organization" (Leontiev, 2012, p. 170, emphasis added by Leontiev). It appears that N.G. Morozova's work entailed precisely that. Her studies fostered in children the capacity for such self-organization, specifically, the ability to govern their own actions and operations within activities meaningful to them and in accordance with adults' verbal instructions. This way led the children to higher developmental levels.

"Nootechnics" is particularly appealing to us (as it is to D.A. Leontiev) as the apter term because it definitely associates with V. Frankl's logotherapy where the category of meaning (*Sinn*) occupies a central position. That clearly resonated with the ideas of A.N. Leontiev's school concerning the decisive role of motive in the activity process, including its technical components. What gives us some pause, however, is a certain opposition between "stimulation (facilitation)" and "formation" that appears in D.A. Leontiev's paper. This may reflect implicit critique of approaches to psychological influence that imply systematic stage-by-stage formation of certain actions with "preset properties". As D.A. Leontiev argues, most forms of psychotherapy do not belong to this category because they are personality-centered and imply intensive work "whose end disappears into uncertainty" (Leontiev, 2012, p. 168). Nevertheless, in our view, N.G. Morozova's "intensive work" was both personality-centered and explicitly aiming to form motivation that children previously lacked – in this case, to form motives for understanding the meaning of the other individual's speech. The findings of her studies demonstrated that such formation of motives was the product of the elaborately organized interaction between the child and the experimenter.

For this reason, the term that seems most appropriate to us for describing this type of psychotechnics is life-enhancement (*zhiznetvorchestvo*), a concept also employed by D.A. Leontiev in the article⁵ we cited above. The term incorporates, in our view, the meanings conveyed by the three concepts referred to above: psychagogy, ontogogics, and nootechnics. It should be noted at the same time that D.A. Leontiev's own conception of life-enhancement refers to a form of non-therapeutic psychological practice designed to help *adults* address their personal life problems and expand their lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) while "emphasizing the anthropological ability to self-transcend" (*ibid.*, p. 177). However, this ability is not given to humans from the outset; rather, it forms in the course of ontogenesis.

As S.L. Rubinstein once argued, the formation of such abilities is entirely within the scope of what he called "pedagogy on a grand scale", because it implies

not dull "making" but the subject's creative *self*-activity (Rubinstein, 1986, p. 106). This process, in turn, is facilitated by the learner's involvement in joint activity with the educator who lives a "genuine life" (Rubinstein, 1997, p. 97)⁶. A.G. Asmolov reiterated these ideas in a recent interview, describing psychology as a science of "life constructing". One cannot simply approach a child and say, "You must understand this". Rather, it is necessary to create a situation where adults do not merely stand over the children or overhang them. Asmolov draws a particularly radical conclusion: "One should not merely talk to the child; one should live together with the child" (*Alexander Asmolov's Worlds and Meanings*, 2024, p. 134). N.G. Morozova's research provided a compelling demonstration of this principle. In order for the child to truly "hear" the adult, it is not enough to speak louder or to repeat instructions many times. What is really needed is having the adult's words acquire meaning for the child and thereby guide and govern the child's own activity.

Conclusion

Our analysis of a study conducted as early as the 1940s within the then cultural-historical activity tradition shows that both its methodology and its findings were fully consistent with those of L.S. Vygotsky, A.N. Leontiev's and many contemporary psychotechnicians' goals and aspirations to create a genuinely life-oriented psychology concerned not with a "laboratory specimen" but with living human beings and their real-life problems.

The study once again confirmed the idea repeatedly emphasized by Vygotsky: in order to understand fully developed psychological processes, it is necessary to examine the process of their emergence – that is, their formation in ontogenesis. N.G. Morozova's work fully implemented this required condition: diagnosis and formation of psychological processes integrated into a single unity, while the experiment served not only as an instrument of investigation but also as a means of development, education, and instruction.

Moreover, N.G. Morozova's study bears, in our view, upon even more fundamental issues within psychological science and practice. In particular, it indirectly addresses a problem that has become the subject of intense contemporary debates concerning the "spiritual dimension" of the human being and the nature of human freedom. The claims advanced by certain philosophers and psychologists that freedom "has no foundation"

⁵ It is hardly coincidental that, at approximately the same time – about fifteen years ago – E.Yu. Patyaeva developed a specialized practicum "The art of being: the basics" for students of the Faculty of Psychology at Lomonosov Moscow State University and, somewhat later, introduced an original next-generation course entitled "Psychology of creative life". The objectives of the courses which continue to be taught at the Faculty today extend beyond introduction of various approaches to life-enhancement. They also train students in deeper understanding of themselves and other persons and introduce them to a range of psychotechnical self-development exercises.

⁶ As is well known, a similar dialectic of formation and self-development of the child underlies the education of deafblind children through dosed jointly shared activities with the adult (Suvorov, 1999).

and is determined by no external factors⁷, but results instead from the action of an innate force or agency that impels individuals to realize their own spiritual values and goals — and that no formation in relation to such free phenomena as consciousness, moral action etc. is therefore possible — appear to us to constitute a rejection of the scientific explanation of the higher forms of human activity. In contrast, Vygotsky and, following him, his collaborators argued, “Freedom is not given but preset. It is not innate but achieved through difficult inner struggle. [...] It is not at the beginning but at the end of the human path. It is inaccessible to the child. It sits not in the depths but on the heights of the spirit” (Zavershneva, van der Veer, 2017, p. 435).

Therese researchers of A.N. Leontiev’s school subsequently demonstrated through numerous empirical studies of ontogenetic development that the individual does not attain these “heights” of the spirit or acquire “freedom of will” on his or her own, without interaction with Others: “The development of arbitrariness and will starts with compliance with external demands (whether strict or

soft). The child’s first arbitrary actions are responses to adults’ demands. However, if the child comes over time to accept these demands as personal values, those values begin to govern its behavior. Complying with the demands of others and directing others, the child learns to direct itself” (Ivannikov, 2021, p. 294).

It is noteworthy that N.G. Morozova’s research we examined in the present article also contributed to these conclusions. N.G. Morozova belonged both to L.S. Vygotsky’s well-known “group of five” disciples and to A.N. Leontiev’s collaborators at the Department of Child Psychology. This fact, together with attentive reading of her study, invites consideration of another important issue within the cultural-historical activity tradition, the relationship between Word and Deed, which has become the subject of intense debate in recent years. A detailed examination of this issue, however, is beyond the scope of the present article and requires a separate analysis drawing on additional empirical studies and practical developments by A.N. Leontiev’s school in the 1940s and the decades that followed.

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⁷ According to A.A. Puzyrei, “external factors” include “not only what is ‘external’ in the literal, physical sense, but also what is usually referred to as ‘internal,’ including psychological phenomena and, among them, what psychologists call motives and conventionally regard as the ultimate ‘causes’ of behavior” (Puzyrei, 2005, p. 353)

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Information about the author

Elena E. Sokolova, Doctor of Sciences (Psychology), Associate Professor, Associate Professor of the Department of General Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2239-0858>, e-mail: ees-msu@mail.ru

Информация об авторе

Елена Евгеньевна Соколова, доктор психологических наук, доцент, доцент кафедры общей психологии факультета психологии, Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова (ФГБОУ ВО «МГУ имени М.В. Ломоносова»), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2239-0858>, e-mail: ees-msu@mail.ru

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Cultural aspects of motivational psychotherapy for patients with alcohol dependence: problem statement

O.V. Rychkova^{1,2} ✉, T.V. Agibalova³

¹ N.V. Sklifosovsky Research Institute of Emergency Medicine, Moscow, Russian Federation

² Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, Moscow, Russian Federation

³ Peoples' Friendship University of Russia named after Patrice Lumumba, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ rychkovaov@mgppu.ru

Abstract

Relevance. Cultural influences are not only an important factor in the genesis of mental disorders, but also significant in the development of any psychotherapeutic models and technologies. However, the dependence of the latter on cultural influences is poorly taken into account during their implementation and dissemination. The request from routine narcological practice and somatic medicine for motivational psychotherapy targeting patients who use psychoactive substances (PAS) determines the practical significance of the problem. **The aim** of the authors of the article was to substantiate the need to modify motivational psychotherapy proposed for patients with alcohol dependence, taking into account cultural influences that are significant when it is carried out in modern Russia. **Hypothesis.** It was assumed that through a structured survey of expert narcologists, it would be possible to identify aspects of the stated problem that are significant for further study and practical use: the presence of cultural influences that are observed during motivational psychotherapy for a patient with alcohol dependence syndrome. **The material** for the pilot study was data from a survey of 20 Russian expert narcologists, conducted using authors' questionnaires described in the text of the article. **Results.** A survey of addiction experts identified anti-therapeutic attitudes and beliefs frequently observed in patients with alcohol dependence. These beliefs reflect the patient's view of alcohol usage as a primary form of recreation, a means of relaxation and pastime, and the conviction that external circumstances are the cause of alcoholism. A lack of understanding of chemical dependence as a serious disorder was identified, along with a negative attitude toward addiction treatment and addiction specialists. A belief that others will not accept the patient if they choose a sober lifestyle is present. These attitudes hinder motivation and subsequent treatment. **Conclusions.** The research perspective is to study the cultural aspects of the use of motivational psychotherapy for people with substances dependence in modern Russia for the subsequent improvement of its technologies.

Keywords: motivational psychotherapy, alcohol-use disorder, cultural influences, anti-therapeutic attitudes

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Культуральные аспекты мотивационной психотерапии пациентов с алкогольной зависимостью: постановка проблемы

О.В. Рычкова^{1, 2} ✉, Т.В. Агибалова³

¹ Научно-исследовательский институт скорой помощи имени Н.В. Склифосовского Департамента здравоохранения города Москвы, Москва, Российская Федерация

² Московский государственный психолого-педагогический университет, Москва, Российская Федерация

³ Российский университет дружбы народов имени Патриса Лумумбы, Москва, Российская Федерация

✉ rychkovaov@mgppu.ru

Резюме

Актуальность. Культуральные влияния не только являются важным фактором генеза психических расстройств, но и значимы при разработке психотерапевтических моделей и технологий. Но зависимость последних от культуральных влияний слабо учитывается при их внедрении и распространении. Запрос рутинной наркологической практики и соматической медицины на мотивационную психотерапию для пациентов, употребляющих психоактивные вещества (ПАВ), определяет практическую значимость проблемы. **Цель** авторов статьи — обоснование необходимости модификации предложенной для пациентов с алкогольной зависимостью мотивационной психотерапии с учетом культуральных влияний, значимых при ее проведении в современной России. **Гипотеза.** Предполагалось, что путем структурированного опроса экспертов-наркологов удастся выделить значимые для дальнейшего изучения и практического использования аспекты культуральных влияний, наблюдаемых при проведении мотивационной психотерапии пациентов целевой группы. **Материалом** пилотажного исследования стали данные опроса 20 российских экспертов-наркологов, проведенного путем использования авторских анкет, описанных в тексте статьи. **Результаты исследования.** Путем опроса экспертов-наркологов были определены антитерапевтические установки и убеждения, часто наблюдаемые у пациентов с зависимостью от алкоголя. Отмечаемые экспертами убеждения отражают взгляд пациента на алкоголизацию как ведущую форму отдыха, как средство расслабления и времяпрепровождения, и убежденность, что причиной алкоголизации являются внешние обстоятельства. Установлены отсутствие представлений о химической зависимости как серьезном расстройстве в совокупности с негативным отношением к наркологии и врачам-наркологах. Присутствует уверенность в непринятии окружающими пациента в случае выбора им трезвого образа жизни. Указанные установки препятствуют оказанию мотивирующего воздействия на пациентов и последующему лечению. **Выводы.** Перспективой исследования является изучение культуральных аспектов применения мотивационной психотерапии для лиц с зависимостью от ПАВ в современной России для последующего совершенствования ее технологий.

Ключевые слова: мотивационная психотерапия, синдром зависимости от алкоголя, культуральные влияния, антитерапевтические установки

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Culture, Mental Health, and Psychotherapy

In today's complex, globalizing world, awareness of the differences between cultures becomes mandatory, ensuring interethnic and interstate interaction, and creating a favorable atmosphere within any community that includes representatives of different ethnic groups. The influence of culture on individuals cannot be overstated.

Several cultural aspects can be considered etiological factors contributing to the increase in mental disorders (Neznanov, Kotsyubinsky, Mazo, 2020). This is reflected in multifactorial psychosocial models of mental disorders developed within the biopsychosocial approach, as well as in the emphasis on the macrosocial aspect that determines an individual's emotional well-being (Kholmogorova, 2011). This interpretation logically continues the tradition of studying the cultural mediation of

human mental processes, which is widely represented in Russian psychology and builds upon the ideas of Lev Vygotsky's cultural-historical concept.

The founder of cultural-historical psychology, L.S. Vygotsky, wrote about the specificity of the human psyche, highlighting its special instrumental structure and cultural origin (1983, 2007). He emphasized the importance of tools, signs, and language in the formation of higher mental functions, which are based on cultural norms and values, as well as widely accepted attitudes and beliefs. In this approach, the process of personality formation is also interpreted as dependent on the socio-cultural situation in which both the individual and their parents, family, and environment find themselves (Vygotsky, 2025). Cultural differences significantly predetermine the attitudes that individuals adopt towards a wide range of things.

Modern psychotherapy, as a powerful psychotechnical concept and highly significant social practice, has incorporated models and techniques proposed in various countries and cultures. It encompasses not just technologies, but also the products of a particular culture that emerged during a specific period of societal development, based on the specific concepts of relevant psychology during that time, reflecting the influence of that era. Moreover, the history of psychotherapy highlights the limited lifespan of many psychotherapeutic practices, as well as the underlying models of mental disorders. Accordingly, in the context of the development of society, psychological science, and social technologies, psychotherapeutic interventions must undergo changes, and it is necessary to adapt them to a different cultural context.

This topic has not yet been seriously addressed in the literature, and there is a lack of attention from psychotherapists or psychologists, and the number of publications is small (Naeem et al., 2019). Rather, the topic is of interest to healthcare administrators, who require the widespread introduction of psychosocial and psychotherapeutic interventions with proven effectiveness into medical or social practice (Escoffery et al., 2019; Movsisyan et al., 2019). It should be noted that the principles of evidence-based medical practice have become a universal requirement in healthcare, but their implementation in relation to psychosocial and psychotherapeutic interventions has proven to be a challenging task. This is particularly relevant in the field of narcology, where the role of psychotherapeutic and psychosocial interventions difficult to overestimate (Krupitsky et al., 2018; Trusova and Klimanova, 2018).

Why Motivational Interviewing?

The need to address the issue mentioned in the title has arisen due to the growing demand for the use of psychotherapeutic techniques in providing assistance to

individuals who use psychoactive substances, including those with alcohol addiction. This demand is evident in routine narcological practice and, to a lesser extent, in the field of somatic medicine. For example, in emergency medical settings, many patients in trauma, cardiology, and neurosurgery departments are admitted while intoxicated, which is a significant etiological factor in various pathological conditions. Data from toxicology centers confirms the presence of legal and illegal psychoactive substances in the structure of acute poisoning, especially in frequently hospitalized patients. This leads to a demand for technologies that motivate patients to seek specialized care and algorithms for patient routing. The absence of such technologies and algorithms inevitably leads to a portion of discharged patients returning to the use of psychoactive substances, resulting in repeated hospitalizations, worsening of clinical conditions, and an increase in the number of fatalities.

Short-term interventions to motivate patients with chemical addictions (or with episodic substance use) to seek specialized care were created based on several approaches (Prochaska, DiClemente, Norcross, 1992; Miller, Rollnick, 2002). This type of intervention is well-known to specialists, so we will not describe it in detail. It is important to note that their effectiveness has been studied and confirmed repeatedly, including in the context of emergency departments (Bogenschutz et al., 2011; Tait et al., 2016; Cimini, Martin, 2020). An important argument in favor of their use in emergency departments is that they reach patients who do not typically seek medical attention and are therefore inaccessible to treatment for their substance use problems (Neighbors et al., 2010). However, given the short-term stay of the patient in the emergency department, the severity of the patient population — low-motivated, often antisocial, with a high level of resistance to exposure — highly technological interventions are needed, precisely tailored to the target group.

What is important to consider when creating a motivational interviewing algorithm for patients using psychoactive substances in modern Russia?

The first point that requires attention is based on the theory of cultural-historical psychology as a scientific system relevant to any human-centered practices. This is L.S. Vygotsky's proposition that all higher mental functions have a social nature. The norms and patterns of activity accepted in society are assimilated and "ingrowed" into the individual's psyche, and appropriated by them. In accordance with cultural-historical theory, the sociogenic layer of the psyche constitutes the person's "personality", their "self." As L.S. Vygotsky wrote, "The Self is the social in us" (Vygotsky, 2025, p. 112). This thesis

is insufficiently taken into account in the planning and implementation of psychotherapeutic interventions. It appears that modern psychotherapy theory has yet to rethink it, for example, taking into account the well-known division of modern cultures into individualistic ("Western") and collectivist ("Eastern") cultures. When organizing psychotherapeutic assistance, it is impossible to ignore the role of the cultural and social context, the influence of this context on the social attitudes and values that the subject has internalized, and the processes of goal-setting and understanding reality.

The second point concerns the role of cultural context in the planning and implementation of psychotherapeutic interventions. This topic has only been addressed at the professional community level in the current century and has sparked significant controversy. Starting with the call "...to be aware of oneself and others from the point of view of culture" (APA, 2003), it was developed in the call for the formation of special "multicultural" competencies, involving going beyond judgments "...based on limited knowledge of individuals and communities" (Sorenson, Harrell, 2021). The question remains open as to how universal the multiculturalism approach is. Does it resolve all the contradictions of using psychotherapy models and technologies in different societies? Does it help to promote the widespread adoption of practices that are closely related to cultural differences? Is it possible to achieve high efficiency in psychotherapeutic technologies only through the development of specific competencies in specialists? Does this eliminate the need for "adjustment" and adaptation of psychotherapeutic techniques to the cultural context? It seems that at least some psychotherapeutic practices require evaluation of their ecological validity in a particular society, followed by modification based on the cultural context.

The third consideration is that there is a gap in the principles of organizing assistance to individuals with substance use disorders, as used by domestic and foreign specialists. This gap is related to fundamental differences in the organization of services. For example, in Western countries, the practice of substitution therapy and harm reduction programs is widespread, but these approaches have not been adopted in Russia. Recently, the gap has been exacerbated by the trend towards the legalization of drugs in many Western countries, which has not been supported in Russia. These (and other) differences require a well-founded, selective transfer of assistance practices widely used in Western countries. Interestingly, motivational psychotherapy technologies are not considered universal, and work on their adaptation to the cultural context has begun (Rimal et al., 2021; Self et al., 2023). Such work has not been conducted in our country.

The fourth point concerns the general cultural context in which we work. Potential differences in understanding the problem of alcohol dependence are linked

to attitudes, behavior patterns, values, and even myths that are reflected in the minds of both patients and the professionals working with them (representatives of the same culture). Perhaps before achieving changes in patients' perceptions, it is necessary to change the perspectives of specialists: psychiatrists, addiction specialists, psychotherapists, and clinical psychologists. Developing professional thinking and the ability to reflect on the cultural aspects of our work is a new and challenging task. Any distortions in the perspectives of specialists, misconceptions (regarding the psychoactive substance use and permissibility of it, the possibilities of therapy, psychotherapy, and other treatment methods, the potential of rehabilitation programs), prejudices (against psychotherapy methods, self-help communities, and patient stigmatization) inevitably change the context in which psychotherapeutic practices are used and impact their effectiveness.

The fifth point concerns the transtheoretical model of change as the basis for motivational interview, proposed for individual work with persons with substance abuse disorders (Prochaska et al., 1992). According to the model's logic, the process of abandoning psychoactive substances is discrete, and intervention should be tailored to the individual's current stage. This will ensure the effectiveness of the intervention. The transition from one stage to another involves changes in targets, conditions, and intervention techniques. In the real-life practice of an emergency department, it is possible to conduct a limited number of sessions with an unmotivated patient. And if these are patients at the contemplation stage (or even preliminary contemplation), then after the decision to maintain sobriety is made, it is crucial to understand how the patient's support will be organized through the action, support, and potential relapse stages (by whom, in what forms, and for what duration). The organization of support no longer depends on the efforts of the specialist conducting the motivational intervention in an inpatient setting. But who exactly will shoulder the burden of supporting the patient? How exactly will it be organized? In most cases, the question remains open.

Finally, **the sixth consideration**. It seems that a serious and well-founded cultural adaptation of a psychotherapeutic intervention must take into account a deep understanding of the community for which it is being implemented. This requires not only translating instructions, screening procedures, questions, or supporting materials into another language, but also taking into account linguistic differences, types and rules of interpersonal interaction, therapeutic and anti-therapeutic attitudes, the peculiarities of the emotional experience of representatives of a particular culture, differences in ideas of illness and health, and much more. This is especially important for motivational psychotherapy, which initially assumes not standard algorithmic inter-

ventions, but an individualized approach based on carefully monitored transition of the patient from one stage of "decision-making" to another, and adjusting psychotherapeutic techniques to the current stage (Prochaska et al., 1992).

The above considerations require consideration when developing an algorithm for motivational psychotherapy for patients using psychoactive substances in modern Russia (by "modern" we do not mean the period after 1991, which is often referred to as such, but rather the situation in recent years). The goal of the study was to improve the technology of motivational interviews by taking into account the cultural context. At the initial stage of the study, the following **research questions** were identified as relevant:

- What are the specific features or characteristics of patients with alcohol addiction in modern Russia that professionals providing such assistance note?
- What specific traits of patients should be taken into account when organizing assistance, and how should this be done?
- What specific medical and rehabilitation measures should be created or organized to support patients at all stages of recovery?

Pilot Study Data

The aim of the pilot study was to preliminarily identify aspects of the stated problem that are significant for further study and practical use.

Study Sample

Specialists with a high level of expertise were selected as respondents for this survey. 20 people were interviewed, and they were personally invited to participate in the study, with guaranteed anonymity during the publication of the materials. In addition to regular practical work assisting patients with alcohol dependence, completed training, and proficiency in motivational interviewing (5 people used it regularly, 11 occasionally), the experts were involved in scientific research, possessed the ability to scientifically analyze the problem, and were skilled in reflecting on their own work and the conditions under which it was implemented. Among the surveyed experts, 4 had a Doctor of Science degree, 11 had a Candidate of Science degree, and the rest are involved in ongoing scientific research. Professional affiliation of respondents: 17 people are psychiatrists-narcologists, 2 are psychotherapists, one person is a clinical psychologist.

Data Collection Methods

In the first stage, the "Narcologist Expert Questionnaire-1" was administered. It was completed independently by the experts in writing and included the following open-ended questions.

1. We believe that there are characteristics or specific traits that distinguish the clinical group of patients with alcohol dependence living in modern Russia and that are significant when organizing care for such patients. If you agree with this statement, please indicate which of these characteristics or patient attitudes you are aware of and consider most significant (you can list an unlimited number of items).

2. We believe that the characteristics you identified (and others) that characterize the clinical group of patients with alcohol dependence living in modern Russia determine specific principles for organizing care for such patients, as well as treatment and rehabilitation measures. Please indicate which of these characteristics you consider fundamentally important.

Later, the same experts were presented with the "Narcologist Expert Questionnaire-2". It contained a list of items selected based on the analysis of 20 completed Questionnaire-1s. In total, the Questionnaire-2 included 25 items. The answers to the Questionnaire-2 items were provided using a Likert scale, ranging from 0 (false) to 4 (true), depending on the degree of agreement with the item. The number of selections for each answer option on the Questionnaire-2 items was counted. Since the study was pilot-based, we do not provide the full text of the questionnaire. It should be noted that some of the items in the Questionnaire-2 were not identified by the experts as reflecting significant differences in the Russian sample of patients with alcohol addiction. Therefore, the analysis focused on evaluating and interpreting the responses to items that were either agreed upon by the expert respondents or had significant discrepancies in their assessments.

In the Questionnaire-1, in a number of cases, addiction specialists provided examples of formulations that reflect the anti-therapeutic attitudes of Russian patients. These attitudes appear to be related to the existing social practice of alcohol consumption and may be considered to have a cultural significance. These formulations were also analyzed, and some of them are discussed below in the results section.

Frequency Analysis Results and Expert Agreement

Of particular interest are the questionnaire items most frequently accepted by the experts, i.e., those for which expert agreement is high (3, 6, 7, 8, 17, 20, 22, 24, 25, and 12). Also of interest are items for which divergence in expert opinion was noted (5, 13, 18) (see table).

Since the results of the survey among addiction specialists are preliminary, the data analysis is presented more in terms of formulating hypotheses that require testing in subsequent studies.

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

As can be seen from the data presented in the table, the most frequently cited characteristic of patients with

Table

Frequencies of selection/rejection of Questionnaire 2 item by expert respondents (N=20)

Items Questionnaire-2	N/% of ratings in the expert group*		
	true	mostly true	incorrect
3. For a Russian patient, drinking alcohol is the main form of entertainment long before the development of alcohol dependence	17/85	2/10	0
6. The patient believes that the risks associated with alcoholism are greatly exaggerated («everyone drinks, and nothing happens»)	13/65	3/15	0
7. The patient is sure that he will always have to hide the fact of treatment from a narcologist, as he will be condemned for it	12/60	2/10	0
8. The patient confidently states that one cannot condemn «drinkers,» since alcoholization has serious external causes, and the person is a victim of circumstances	11/55	2/10	0
17. The patient believes that after a considerable period of sober lifestyle, he will definitely be able to return to normal alcohol consumption (drink «like everyone else»)	11/55	3/15	0
20. The patient is convinced that the cause of alcoholization is an unfair or difficult social life	16/80	0	0
22. The patient believes that it is possible to give up alcoholization without the participation of a doctor, by “force of will”	15/75	1/5	0
24. The patient believes that narcologists are primarily concerned with controlling patients	16/80	0	0
25. The patient believes that narcologists seek to limit his rights (driving a car, job profile, etc.)	11/55	1/5	0
5. The patient with alcohol dependence is not going to transition to a sober lifestyle under any circumstances and does not take such a prospect seriously	6/30	1/5	7/35
12. The patient believes that alcohol dependence is a disease, and he needs the help of doctors	0	0	12/60
13. The patient believes that the success of his alcohol dependence treatment depends primarily on the competence of the specialist	2/10	0	5/25
18. The patient is sure that people will stop drinking only if the strictest “dry law” is introduced in the country (other measures will not be effective)	2/10	1/5	4/20

Note: the answers are presented in the gradations “incorrect”, “mostly true” and “true” (other answers are not reflected).

alcohol dependence observed in Russia is the statement that “drinking alcohol is the main form of entertainment long before the development of alcohol dependence.” This statement, in our view, reflects the widespread use of alcohol as a form of recreation, relaxation, and leisure, and also indicates the paucity of alternative forms of entertainment among some of the population. Among the attitudes cited by the experts as typical for the target group of patients were: “I drink in a civilized manner and rarely relapse,” “I drink like everyone else. At funerals or weddings, everyone has to drink,” and “Not drinking at a birthday party is disrespectful” (these statements are typically encountered by patients during the preliminary consideration stage). The experts also cited patients’ beliefs such as, “I’m not an alcoholic, I drink like everyone else, I don’t just hang out on the streets,” and “I have a drinking problem, but how can I not drink? How to communicate with friends then?” (These attitudes are observed during the contemplation phase of change).

Some attitudes reflected in the expert questionnaires reveal widespread misconceptions among Russian patients regarding alcohol dependence disorder. For example, patients are poorly informed about the logic and stages of disorder development, risks, and symptoms.

They are convinced that “the risks associated with alcoholism are greatly exaggerated” because “everyone drinks and nothing happens”; they believe that “it is possible to quit drinking without the participation of a doctor” and “by force of will” (see items 12 and 22 in the table). Responses to Questionnaire 1 include statements such as: “I would go to treatment, but what about 100 grams for appetite?” (more likely expected at the decision-making stage), “I’m ready to treat my liver, but I don’t have a drinking problem, so I don’t need an addiction specialist” (at the action stage). These statements reflect a lack of understanding of substance dependence as a serious disorder, which clearly reduces the demand for specialist help.

According to experts, Russian patients are convinced that external circumstances are the cause of their alcoholism: “an unfair or difficult social life,” “serious external causes, and the person is a victim of circumstances” (see points 8, 20 in the table). The strategy of self-justification (and simultaneously blaming others, attributing responsibility for their alcoholism to them) is an anti-therapeutic attitude that must be taken into account when providing assistance to patients. It is important to note that this attitude is difficult to overcome, as it

requires a radical change in patients' attitudes towards the events and circumstances of their own lives. This requires serious psychotherapeutic or psychosocial interventions beyond motivational psychotherapy. Therefore, such assistance must be organized.

We consider the negative beliefs of Russian patients about narcology and narcologists to be very disturbing: "The patient believes that narcologists are primarily concerned with controlling patients," "The patient believes that narcologists seek to limit his rights" (see items 24 and 25 in the table). They also expect a negative attitude from others towards themselves as potential patients of a narcologist: "The patient believes that he will always have to hide the fact of treatment from a narcologist, as he will be condemned for it" (see item 7 in the table). These attitudes reflect a widespread distrust, devaluation, and negative attitude towards specialized medical care, which prevents patients from seeking professional help. As a result, patients do not seek a competent doctor and disagree with the statement that "the success of alcohol dependence treatment depends primarily on the competence of the specialist." The possibilities for overcoming these negative attitudes are beyond the scope of this article, but they should not be ignored by the professional community.

The experts' belief that patients "can return to normal alcohol consumption" (drinking "like everyone else") after a considerable period of sober lifestyle appears unjustifiably optimistic. In our opinion, this attitude also reflects an underestimation of the problem and a desire to continue drinking rather than stop. Patients' statements about the fact that they cannot give up alcohol because "I don't want to change my friends" also deserve attention. Patients thus emphasize that others will not support their desire for sobriety.

According to the expert survey data, the ability to motivate patients with alcohol addiction through multiple sessions is limited due to existing anti-therapeutic attitudes and beliefs. Following a stages of change model can help the patient's transition from the "contemplation" stage to the "decision-making" or "action" stage through multiple sessions. However, the mechanisms underlying behavior change vary depending on the stage and require specific techniques to support the change process. Finding such technologies, taking into account the characteristics of modern patients, is an important task that requires further research in the context of therapeutic and anti-therapeutic factors. We assume that in order to promote the desired changes in patients' behavior, it is necessary to create a social network, develop serious support programs, including the use of resources from both in-person and online events, computerized forms of support, a virtual community, remote chatbots, and other tools. It cannot be ruled out that in some cases, it is necessary to abandon overly ambitious plans to achieve complete sobriety in patients and

rather promote a strategy of reducing alcohol consumption (Agibalova et al., 2015). There is evidence in the literature that such a strategic goal is effective, at least for young people, if it is properly managed in the long term (Walton et al., 2017).

A significant number of interventions exist that address the need for long-term patient support to maintain sobriety. These are such controversial practices as the method of situational control of consumption through the use of rewards ("Contingency Management for Substance Abuse Treatment") (Petry, 2011); and Relapse Prevention (Marlatt, Gordon, 2005); and directed self-change ("Self-change from addictive behaviors") (Klingemann and Sobell, 2007). The use of support programs in Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programs deserves special attention. Their analysis should take into account the cultural context and carefully assess the possibility of their application in modern Russia. This is an important perspective and task for the fields of addiction medicine and psychotherapy.

Conclusions

In foreign studies, the idea of modifying psychotherapeutic technologies, even such well-known ones as motivational intervention for individuals with chemical addiction, is reflected and serves as a subject of interest and study. Unfortunately, this topic is not adequately covered in the works of Russian authors, although as the social situation and patient population change with the passage of time and the generation shift, psychotherapeutic technologies must evolve to remain effective and suitable for a wide range of individuals in need of assistance.

A small pilot study conducted with expert addiction specialists allowed us to outline ways for further study of significant aspects of the use of motivational interventions for individuals with alcohol dependence. In the future, we plan to improve this technique and develop an algorithm for its use in emergency departments, where problematic patients who do not seek medical attention are admitted. Assisting these patients in abstaining from substance use or reducing their alcohol consumption will require the development of specific tools and strategies to support their efforts, which is also a promising area of this study.

Limitations. This article presents the results of a pilot study. The study sample includes 20 expert narcologists with experience in motivational psychotherapy techniques. The questionnaires used for the expert survey are also proprietary, created specifically for this study, and therefore do not possess the psychometric characteristics required for psychological tests. The article is problem-oriented and outlines ways for further study of the problem.

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Information about the authors

Olga V. Rychkova, Doctor of Sciences (Psychology), Professor of the Department of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy, Deputy Dean for Educational and Methodological Work, Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, Leading Researcher, N.V. Sklifosovsky Research Institute of Emergency Medicine, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2866-2810>, e-mail: rychkovaov@mgppu.ru

Tatyana V. Agibalova, Doctor of Sciences (Medicine), Principal Researcher, Moscow Research and Practical Centre for Narcology of the Department of Public Health; Professor of the Department of Psychiatry, Psychotherapy and Psychosomatic Medicine, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia named after Patrice Lumumba, Moscow, Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1903-5265>, e-mail: agibalovatv@mail.ru

Информация об авторах

Ольга Валентиновна Рычкова, доктор психологических наук, профессор кафедры клинической психологии и психотерапии, заместитель декана по учебно-методической работе, Московский государственный психолого-педагогический университет (ФГБОУ ВО МГППУ), ведущий научный сотрудник, Научно-исследовательский институт скорой помощи имени Н.В. Склифосовского (ГБУЗ «НИИ СП имени Н.В. Склифосовского»), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2866-2810>, e-mail: rychkovaov@mgppu.ru

Татьяна Васильевна Агibalова, доктор медицинских наук, главный научный сотрудник, Московский научно-практический центр наркологии Департамента здравоохранения г. Москвы (ГБУЗ МНПЦ наркологии ДЗМ); профессор кафедры психиатрии, психотерапии и психосоматической медицины, Российский университет дружбы народов имени Патриса Лумумбы (ФГАОУ ВО РУДН), Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1903-5265>, e-mail: agibalovatv@mail.ru

Contribution of the authors

Olga V. Rychkova — ideas; planning of the research; control over the research; annotation, writing and design of the manuscript; Tatyana V. Agibalova — planning and conducting of the research; data collection and analysis.

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