SCTCMG 2019

International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism»

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOLCHILD IN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Liliya Zhikhareva (a)*, Elena Kolchik (b)
*Corresponding author

(a) Crimean Pedagogical Technical University, 8 Uchebny per., Simferopol, Republic of Crimea, Russia,
79787901004@mail.ru, +7(978)7901004
(b) Crimean Pedagogical Technical University, 8 Uchebny per., Simferopol, Republic of Crimea, Russia
+7(978)0770034

Abstract

The paper studies the issues of psychological safety of the individual in the educational environment. The authors propose a structure of psychological safety that includes three components: a psychologically healthy person, a psychologically safe educational environment, and a reference environment (social status). Each of the components also exhibits its own structure: a psychologically healthy personality includes affective, cognitive and behavioral components. Psychologically safe educational environment implies psychological safety of the individual in the school environment. Reference environment is a symbiosis of the features of building a dialogue, cooperation, attitude to school and reference significant people. The paper discusses the results of an empirical study to analyze the characteristics and conditions of the psychological safety of the primary schoolchildren in the school educational environment. The study employed methodological materials to diagnose the characteristics of the primary schoolchildren's self-esteem, the level of anxiety, the attitude to school and studying at school using the Color Test of Relationships and the projective methodology "I am at school". These parameters were used to perform the diagnostics of teachers and parents. The study revealed that the majority of schoolchildren are characterized by a high level of subjective well-being and social acceptance. However, more than 30% of schoolchildren experience unsafety, increased anxiety, and tension in interpersonal relations in the educational environment. A significant part of teachers also feel uncomfortable in the school educational environment, so they do not associate their nearest future with school.

© 2019 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.UK

Keywords: Psychological safety, primary school age, educational environment.

1. Introduction

One of the most important tasks of the educational environment is formation of a harmonious, comprehensively developed and psychologically healthy personality (Bayeva, 2005; Krushelnitskaya, 2017). Special attention should be paid to the study of the psychological safety of the individual in the school educational environment, where the schoolchild spends most of the time. In this environment, the subjects of group interaction are developed and formed. In the psychologically safe educational environment, the schoolchild feels confident and freely expresses his opinion, displays his creative abilities and his individuality (Dmitrievsky, 2002).

The structure of psychological safety includes many aspects (Luchinkina, 2018). In this study, we consider a socio-psychological aspect of safety, which affects the issues of normal functioning of the individual in interaction with the social environment. The working definition of psychological safety of the primary schoolchild implies a mental state caused by the nature of the educational environment manifested through the feeling of safety, self-confidence, self-satisfaction as a subject of activity and social relations (Zhikhareva, 2018; Luchinkina, 2018).

2. Problem Statement

Researchers identify a number of factors that determine the specificity of the psychological safety of the individual in the educational system. Despite a significant number of studies on this issue, the characteristics of the psychological safety of the primary schoolchild in the school educational environment are poorly studied, in particular, its socio-psychological aspect.

3. Research Questions

Psychological safety of the individual is considered as a state of safety, which ensures its integrity as an active social subject. This mental state caused by the nature of the school educational environment implies feeling of safety, a sense of subjective well-being, self-confidence, and self-satisfaction as a subject of activity and social relations (Bayeva, 2005).

Thus, the real way to improve psychological safety is to understand the objective and subjective safety/hazard factors, practical implementation of modern psychological knowledge and research and methodological developments aimed at shaping a person's psychological readiness for activities in any situations, including critical ones (Pakhalyan, 2006). Special affective states (conflict, dissatisfaction, choke behavior, anxiety, fear) are to be considered and assessed to actualize one's own potential to challenge hazards (Popova, 2017). Focus on subjective factors and individual characteristics of the individual removes a number of problems in the assessment of psychological safety.

The educational environment is a complex organized system to fulfill not only educational tasks, but to develop socialization and psychological of the individual (Krushelnitskaya, 2017; Popova, 2017). In the study, we consider and describe the safe educational environment of the school as "effective", "comfortable", "humane", "optimal", and "favorable" for activities, relationships and harmonious personal development of its subjects. The safe educational environment should ensure saturation (enrichment of the

resource potential), structuredness (optimal organizational tool), variability (individual development trajectories of the subjects of the educational process) (Zhikhareva, 2018; Sachkova, 2017).

This type of environment is primarily favorable for all-round development and preservation of the psychological health of the subjects of the educational environment in an educational institution.

4. Purpose of the Study

The study aims to identify the features and conditions of psychological safety of the personality of the primary schoolchild in the school educational environment.
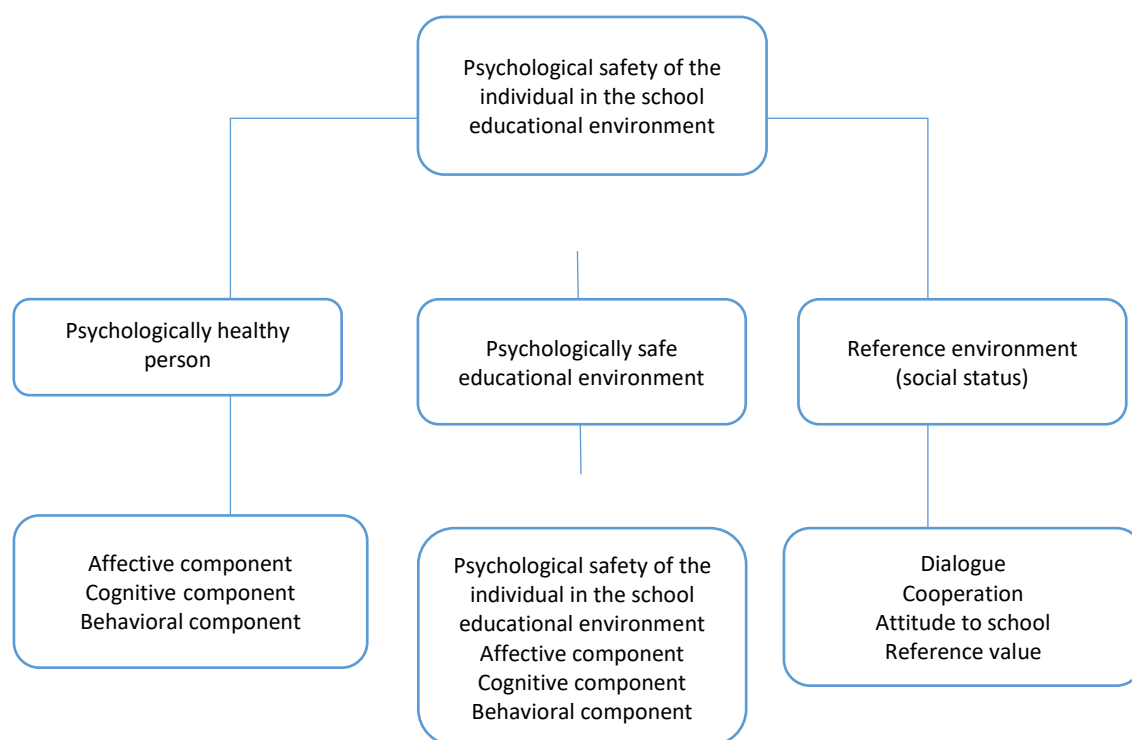
5. Research Methods

Figure 01. Diagram of the study

The methods used: the "Ladder" technique by V.G. Shchur to study the level of general self-esteem development; SMAS (technique modified by A.M. Prikhozhan); questionnaire; relationship color test; projective technique "I am at school"; questioning of children and teachers (Bayeva, 2005; Dubrovina, 2004).

Reliability and validity of the research results were ensured by the analysis of classical and modern views of scientists on development of the studied problem (Figure 01). The validity of the survey results implied expert assessment performed using the results of our observations. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of empirical data was carried out using the techniques of mathematical statistics of the psychological-pedagogical science using a standard SPSS Statistics 20. The study involved 275 people that included 180, schoolchildren of 4 classes at the age of 10–11 years, 20 teachers, and 75 parents.

6. Findings

The empirical study showed that 46.87% of primary schoolchildren are characterized by high level of anxiety, 44.90% of the respondents show a medium level, and 8, 23% exhibit a low level of anxiety.

The study showed that a high level of anxiety (29.15%) is more typical of girls than of boys (17.72%). A qualitative analysis of the manifestations of school anxiety indicators showed that a high level of anxiety among primary schoolchildren was caused by: social stress (24.05%), need to achieve success (11.23%), fear of self-expression (7.34%) and fear of knowledge assessment situations (4.25%). At the same time, in 24.56% of primary schoolchildren, a high degree of sensation of problems and fears was revealed in relations with teachers, and 22.31% of primary schoolchildren showed an increased level of fear of non-compliance with the expectations of others.

The experience of negative modality emotions affects formation of self-esteem of the individual as a child's holistic attitude towards himself, which is a consequence of the integration of self-images and is based on the child's holistic activity.

A high level of self-esteem significantly distinguished boys and girls. An overestimated level of overall self-esteem was found in 8% of boys and 12% of girls, and 28% of girls and 29% of boys displayed an underestimated level of self-esteem.

In order to study the psychological safety of the personality of the primary schoolchild in the school educational environment, a survey was conducted among the main participants of the educational process. During the survey, the level of psychological safety was studied: the nature of the attitude of teachers, schoolchildren and their parents to the school in which they (or their children) study or work, the level of satisfaction of their basic social needs at school, and the level of psychological protection of schoolchildren and teachers from school violence.

The analysis of the attitudes of schoolchildren to school showed that only half of schoolchildren have a positive attitude towards their educational institution. Almost 12% of schoolchildren say that they like their school a lot, 39.6% of schoolchildren generally like their school, 45% of schoolchildren do not really like it, and 3.4% of schoolchildren dislike it. If the schoolchildren could re-choose their educational institution, only 63.5% of respondents would choose their school again, 26.6% are not sure about this, 10.8% of respondents would not go to school again. All this shows a mediocre level of school reference for schoolchildren.

Parents turned out to be more optimistic about the school education of their child. About 30.5% of parents said they really like this school, 39% of respondents generally like it, 24.4% of parents do not like it very much, and 6.1% of respondents dislike it.

Teachers show an ambiguous attitude towards the school and their work at school. About 70.5% of those surveyed say that they generally like their work, 25.9% of teachers do not like it very much, and 3.6% of the respondents dislike it. At the same time, if there was an opportunity to get another specialty, 30.5% of the teachers would like to get it. Only 38.5% of the respondents do not want to change anything and continue to work at school in the future, 31% of the teachers are not sure they want to work in the future at school. In the near future (within 1–2 years), 10.2% of teachers plan to change their place of work, 17.4% of those surveyed are considering this. Teachers are more satisfied with such aspects of the school

environment as respect for them, preservation of their own dignity, and relationships with colleagues and children, although they admit certain difficulties in their professional activities.

Schoolchildren are generally less satisfied with relationships with other schoolchildren, with respect shown to them, and somewhat less satisfied with relationships with teachers. However, schoolchildren do not appreciate the way their personal difficulties and problems treated at school, and they also assert threats to their own dignity.

The results of the survey and conversations showed that only 39.5% of schoolchildren feel completely protected from threats and violence from classmates, 47% of schoolchildren are completely protected from teachers, and 31.1% of respondents feel protected from other schoolchildren. About 11.8% of schoolchildren feel protected from violence by classmates. About 19.2% of respondents feel protected from the teachers (almost every fifth schoolchild feels threatened by teachers), and 13.5% of respondents feel protected from other schoolchildren.

The answers of respondents to the question "Have you been bullied, pressured or abused by other schoolchildren?" were as follows: "yes" – 15.2%; "Yes, sometimes" – 11.4%; "Often" – 5.1%, "Once or twice in my life" – 25.3%; "Never" – 43%.

It is should be noted that only 48% of schoolchildren said that teachers never humiliate or offend them. About 41.5% of boys and girls admitted that their teachers sometimes insult and humiliate them, and 6% stated that they often become a target for psychological abuse by teachers. In addition, 4.5% of schoolchildren admitted that they insult teachers in response to aggression or threat. According to the results of our study, only 39.2% of schoolchildren feel safe and comfortable at school. It turned out that teachers at school feel even less protected: only 29% of those surveyed feel completely protected, 29.8% of teachers feel completely protected from schoolchildren's threats, 32% – from colleagues, and 26.3% – from the administration.

The study employed the projective technique "I am at school" to study interpersonal relations and adaptation of children in the classroom. Children were asked to draw their class the way they see it.

The following results were obtained on correspondence or inconsistency of the picture with the theme: 16% of those surveyed drew pictures that did not correspond to the theme. This may indicate that these children are not adapted to school, and they may have conflicts with classmates or teachers.

About 49% of children drew learning situations that indicate high school motivation and learning activity. Thus, we can say that this group of children is well adapted to school and do not have conflicts with others. Almost 35% of children presented a game situation. Therefore, we can say that they have positive relations with classmates. However, 16% of children have a primary emotional disadaptation, which indicates a negative attitude towards school and refusal to attend school.

The question about the presence/absence of a child in the drawing revealed the following: 38% of children painted themselves together with other children. This means that they "include" themselves in the image of the class, which can be interpreted as successful adaptation to school, these children feel comfortable in the class; 37% of children did not draw themselves, which means that this category of children have some difficulties in adaptation or in relations with the class. About 9% of children depicted only themselves in the classroom, which may also indicate problems in relations with classmates and teachers, or egocentrism; 16% of children drew a picture that did not correspond to the theme. When

answering the second question, the majority of children who drew themselves associate themselves with the class. However, there are schoolchildren who have difficulties with adaptation and relations with classmates.

The third question deals with the presence/absence of other people in the drawing. About 35% of children drew teachers, classmates and themselves, which indicates normal interaction of the child with teachers and classmates. The absence of teachers and classmates in the drawings of 15% of children indicates possible problems in relations with those whom they "did not include" in the drawing. Also, 34% of children depicted only walls, school furniture or flowers, which indicates external motivation.

The drawings of 16% of children did not correspond to the theme. Thus, based on the responds to the third question, we can conclude that 35% of children are in normal relations with teachers and classmates, since the drawing shows both of the groups. Others have certain problems in their relations with others.

The next stage of processing the results was to analyze the empirical data obtained using color sociometry. This method determines not only the relations, but also the psychological state of the child, reveals the severity of complex of symptoms such as safety, anxiety, distrust, feelings of inferiority, hostility, conflict, difficulties in communication, and depression.

Table 01 presents the percentage distribution of the peculiarities of the emotional attitude of schoolchildren to their classmates.

Table 01. Percentage distribution of the emotional attitude of schoolchildren to their classmates

No	Indicators of the emotional attitude of schoolchildren to their classmates	%
1	Emotional acceptance, positive attitude	27%
2	Partial emotional acceptance of the personality, neutral attitude or slightly negative	46%
3	Emotional rejection, negative attitude	27%

Thus, a high occurrence of black, gray, brown, and purple colors can be observed in the drawings of the children surveyed. At the same time, insignificant percentage of primary colors (red, blue, yellow, and green) was noted.

This allows us to conclude that most of the respondents have disharmonious relations with classmates. Their choice of colors indicates distance and detachment in relations (brown, purple) and conflict relations (black, gray).

Along with a generalized analysis of color choices, the distribution of colors relative to the teacher was analyzed. Table 02 presents the results for the frequency of occurrence of colors.

Table 02. Percentage distribution of the emotional attitude of schoolchildren to teachers

No.	Emotional attitude of schoolchildren to teachers	%
1	Acceptance, positive attitude towards teachers	66%
2	Partial acceptance, neutral or slightly negative	34%
3	Rejection, negative attitude	-

As can be seen from Table 02, red, yellow, and blue colors dominate relative to the partners preferred for communication. Interpreting the color choices, we note the leading motives that are realized in interpersonal communication. This is the need for active and cheerful communication, implementation of which may be irregular and unstable (red). Thus, schoolchildren want to communicate with a teacher who has authority and want to be closer to this person.

Table 03. Percentage distribution of the emotional relations between teachers and schoolchildren

No.	Emotional attitude of teachers to schoolchildren		%
1	Acceptance of the schoolchild's personality, positive attitude towards teachers		53%
2	Partial acceptance of the schoolchild's personality, neutral attitude		17,8%
3	Emotional rejection, negative attitude towards schoolchildren		29,2%

Table 03 shows that the teacher accepts 53% of schoolchildren – the majority of the class. However, the teacher does not accept a rather large number of schoolchildren – 29.2%. Moreover, this is often a complete emotional rejection of the schoolchild's personality. Partial emotional acceptance of schoolchildren can be observed in 17.8% of the cases.

The technique is based on semantic differential, which allows for an anonymous survey. According to the proposed technique, the psychological atmosphere in the group is assessed as the sum of indicators. The smaller the sum, the better the psychological atmosphere in the group is. Among descriptive statistical characteristics, we note that the average profile is 48.33; the median is 50.00, and the mode is 53. The statistics show that the majority of schoolchildren negatively assess the psychological atmosphere in the class. Since the author of the technique offers to analyze the average profile in the group, we plotted the average profile as a graph based on the data obtained on assessment of the psychological atmosphere during the survey. The determination of these parameters made it possible to assess the psychological atmosphere in the study groups (Figure 02).
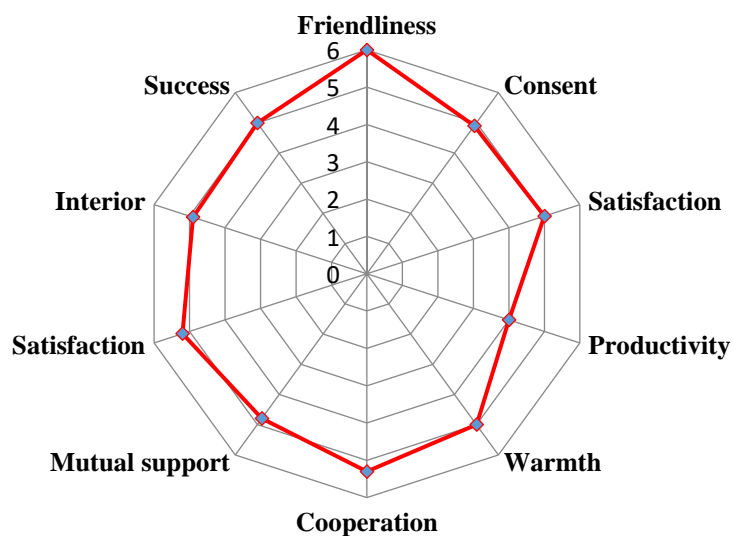

Figure 02. Averaged profile of the psychological atmosphere in the class

At the final stage of processing the obtained empirical data, the leading components of the empathy manifestation in interpersonal communication of children of senior preschool age were determined. To this end, the empirical data obtained using the main scales and techniques were processed using the method of factor analysis. Statistical data were processed using SPSS Statistics 20.

Table 04. Results of the factor analysis

Measured characteristic	Factor 1	Factor 1	Factor 2
Anxiety, safety	**0.886938**	**0.883989**	-0.038421
Emotional well-being	**0.936684**	0.667180	**0.711571**
Subjective well-being (relation system)	-0.440435	0.185030	0.060338
Subjective well-being	**0.750015**	**0.969807**	0.621343
Success in activity (behavior)	0.677499	0.477593	-0.251471
Expl.Var	3.602476	2.429422	1.812922
Prp.Totl	0.600413	0.404904	0.302154

Table 04 shows the results of the factor analysis with respect to the structural components of the psychological safety of the personality of primary schoolchildren in the school educational environment. Our assumption was confirmed, and 3 factors (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) were singled out, the total percentage of dispersion was 96.6%: factor 1 – 30.4%; factor 2 – 30.2%, factor 3 – 30.4%.

7. Conclusion

The following structure of the psychological safety of the individual in the school educational environment is characteristic of primary schoolchildren. Most of the respondents of this age (67%) demonstrate a sufficient level of emotional and subjective well-being, acceptance in communication and joint activities with other schoolchildren and with teachers. They are characterized by a pronounced need for warm and intimate relations; they seek to be friendly with their peers, understand their emotional state, and expect the same attitude from them. These are children oriented to society, showing a desire for cooperation and joint activities. Other respondents (33%) are characterized by low level of emotional and subjective well-being, unsafety in the classroom, increased anxiety, tensions with peers and teachers, and this affects the success of educational activities and behavior. The psychological atmosphere in the class is not sufficiently comfortable and confident for them, which can affect their level of psychological safety in the educational environment.

References

Bayeva, E.A. (2005). *Psychological safety in education*. St. Petersburg: PETER.
Dmitrievsky, V. A. (2002). *Psychological safety in educational institutions*. Moscow: AST-Press.
Dubrovina, A.V. (2004). *Practical psychology of education*. Moscow: Sphere.
Krushelnitskaya, O. B. (2017). Socio-psychological resource of improving the educational environment. In *Social psychology and society* (pp. 165–172). Moscow.
Luchinkina, A. I. (2018). Information and psychological safety of the educational environment. In *Scientific opinion* (pp. 73–78). St. Petersburg.
Pakhalyan, V. E. (2006). Psychoprophylaxis and safety of children's psychological health. In *Applied psychology* (pp. 5–8). Moscow.

Popova, S. I. (2017). Development of the ability of a teenager to self-regulation in the educational environment of the school. In *Psychological science and education* (pp. 99–108). Moscow.

Sachkova, M. E. (2017). Specifics of the attitude of teachers to schoolchildren with different status in the school class. *Psychological science and education* (pp. 31–38). Moscow.

Zhikhareva, L.V. (2018). Socio-psychological characteristics of suicidal infection of the individual in the Internet space. In *Scientific opinion* (pp. 79–85). St. Petersburg.