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MAJOR ASPECTS OF STUDYING GENDER IDENTITY OF CHILDREN IN THE TEACHING AND EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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Summary. *The world is constantly changing and the roles of men and women in modern society are changing accordingly. In recent years, public interest in gender issues has significantly increased. Among the remarkable achievements of the indigenous science is the study of the phenomenon of gender identification, the influence of gender stereotypes and gender polarization in preschool age. In a "gendered" society, the appropriate gender-role identification of children is carried out, which determines the specifics of primary gender socialization, becomes an internal regulator of social activity of an individual. Gender, established at birth, cannot mechanically determine the type of gender identification, that is why its formation is a complex process of choosing and mastering one of the two patterns of gender behavior. The topic of our study is relevant because of the importance of the period of gender and age identification of the adolescent, whose clear and irreversible idea of his gender is being formed, as well as understanding and acceptance of the roles of sexes, recognition of the irreversibility of gender as a major component of self-awareness and self-identification. Child's gender perceptions are actively formed in preschool age and are an integral component of person's gender identity. Child masters the social norms, patterns of behavior and cultural values*

of his/her nation. The gender approach to the upbringing of the preschool children should be focused on the formation and establishment of equal, gender-independent opportunities for self-realization of the individual. However as practical experience shows, the gender component and its methodological data are insufficient in terms of the content of preschool education. In preschool institutions, gender education takes place spontaneously, educators use the traditional approach to forming child's self-esteem and his stereotypes of self-perception only on the basis of gender, so it is important today to pay more attention to gender education and socialization.

Experimentally it has been investigated the peculiarities of gender and age identification of the preschoolers of the preschool institution of a combined type #9 of the city of Chernivtsi. According to the research, the greater part of children of 5-6 years old are aware of their belonging to the male or female sex, having the already formed gender identity. Gender perceptions of preschool children are gender-appropriate: girls' - feminine, and boys' - masculine. In addition, they are stereotypical: boys have instrumental role, girls-expressive.

We believe that gender approach is the theoretical basis for effective learning, education and socialization, and a priority part of modern education.

Keywords: *femininity, masculinity, androgyny, gender representations, gender identification, gender stereotypes, gender.*

1. Introduction

Ukraine's gradual entry into the European educational space in recent times has determined the great interest to pedagogical science regarding the problems of gender education and gender culture in the sphere of education. Rethinking traditional, usually stereotypical ideas about the social roles of women and men in view of the new socio-economic conditions, is relevant and promising in terms of the progressive changes in the modern system of national education.

Most scholars see the purpose of gender education in the formation of gender culture of children of different genders, equally capable of self-realization and revealing the potential opportunities in the modern world, reconstruction of traditional cultural constraints of gender development, understanding and creating conditions for self-realization and disclosure of abilities of boys and girls in the process of pedagogical interaction.

The gender approach to the upbringing of the preschool children lies in the investigation of the peculiarities of their gender ideas and provide an individual approach to the behavior of boys and girls of preschool age and purposeful use of various methodological tools by the educators which contribute to the formation of the preschoolers' gender identity.

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The formation of gender resilience, according to the psychologists and educators, is directly related to socio-cultural norms and depends, in particular, on how parents treat their child, as well as on the types of parental instructions, and ways of upbringing in a preschool institution.

Child's gender perceptions are actively formed in preschool age and are an integral component of a person's gender identity. Such ideas are not formed in and

of themselves, but they are directly influenced by gender stereotypes, attitudes, knowledge and considerations, values that are common in a particular society. Child realizes his/her sexual identity not from birth, but gradually, and the most important in this sense is the period of childhood. The process of socialization of preschoolers is intensive and meaningful: the child masters social norms, patterns of behavior and cultural values of his nation. This process of socialization of the child is significantly influenced by existing gender-role stereotypes, which determine his/her general orientation. In the process of gender socialization, preschoolers take in a generalized image of masculinity, femininity, androgyny. Due to the formed gender perceptions, the child receives an individual gender experience, which is manifested in his/her emotions, motivation and behavior. Gender ideas of preschoolers, mastered at the cognitive level in the form of schemes, latent formations, are their guidelines for the polar female and male world.

Modern advantages in the education of preschoolers lie not in the establishment of the basic standards of masculinity and femininity, but in studying partnerships and fostering sincerity, mutual understanding, complementarity of boys and girls.

2. Problem Statement

The relevance of the research problem is due to a number of contradictions among:

- modern needs of society in the egalitarian gender culture of the individual and the state of the educational process, focused on gender-role stereotypes of gender relations;

- potential opportunities of the educational environment for the formation of gender culture of preschoolers and conservatism of content, traditional methods and forms of educational work;

- the necessity to carry out the formation of gender culture in the preschool institution and the insufficient readiness of educators to implement it.

The results of theoretical research and educational practice show insufficient study of the formation of gender culture of preschool children and necessitate the implementation of a gender approach in the educational process of preschoolers.

The gender approach to the upbringing of the preschool children should be focused on the formation and establishment of equal, gender-independent opportunities for self-realization of the individual. However as practical experience shows, the gender component and its methodological data are insufficient in terms of the content of preschool education. In preschool institutions, gender education takes place spontaneously, educators use the traditional approach in the formation of self-esteem of the child's personality and his stereotypes of self-perception only on the basis of gender. Therefore, it is important today to pay more attention to the gender education of the preschool children, the educators in preschool educational institutions should conduct more different classes and role-playing games that would contribute to the formation of their pupils' gender ideas and socialization.

The problem of gender education of preschool children has been studied by: I. Kon, (1999), V. Kahan, (2000), S. Bern, (2001), A. Pali, (1996), O. Kikinezhdi (2006), T. Bendas, (2005), T. Govorun, (2004), N. Belopolska, (1999), P. Gornostay, (2004), O. Kononko, (2000), T. Titarenko, (1989), O. Lutsenko, (2004), S. Kharchenko, (2013), V. Kravets, (2003), O. Kikinezhdi, (2006), etc.

The scholars have proved that the high femininity of women and the masculinity of men do not always guarantee social and psychological well-being in a society. The child's gender perceptions are actively formed in preschool age and are an integral component of a person's gender identity.

Analysis of native and foreign psychological literature on this issue shows the diversity and ambiguity of interpretations of the mechanisms of influence on the formation of gender identity of a child, in particular: identification with parents and peers (Z. Freud, (1993), the system of incentives and punishments from adults, addressing a child instructions and reinforcement of typical gender behavior (E. McCobby & K. Jacqueline, 1974), the child's activity in the development of gender roles and self-categorization of gender (L. Kohlberg, 1966), and the development of gender identity is identical to the stages of cognitive development of a child according to J. Piaget, (2004). According to the concept of J. Piaget, awareness about the gender constant is achieved through the ability to retain in memory some impressions, images, ideas inherent in children in the process of transition from concrete way of thinking to concrete-abstract. Assessment of a child's behavior by adults, and later peers, about compliance or non-compliance with gender norms, significantly affects self-esteem as a representative of the gender (I. Kon, (1999), J. Kolominskyi,(1985), V. Kahan, (2000), Kikinezhdzi, (2011)).

Sh. Bern has described four stages in the formation of gender identity: *gender identification* (when the child refers himself/herself to a certain gender); *gender constancy* (awareness that gender cannot be changed); *differential inheritance* (child's wish to be the best); *gender self-regulation* (when the child controls his/her own behavior) (Bern, 2001).

Primary gender identity is formed at the age of 1.5-3 years, when children correctly relate themselves and others to a particular gender, but children's awareness of gender differences remains limited, because at this age children allow gender reassignment. The process of gender socialization of preschool children in the scholarly literature is covered by the statement of two provisions: up to the age of 2-3 years the child identifies his/her biological sex, up to 5-6 years he/she realizes its irreversibility. Secondary gender identification occurs in childhood, adolescence and young age (Hovorun, 2004).

According to V. Kahan, gender-role behavior is a system of actions that is expected of a particular gender and depends on socio-gender status, socio-gender role and perception of oneself as a person of the corresponding gender. In one of the studies on the interaction of peers, there has been identified 5 levels of social interaction of small children: 1) playing alone (no interaction); 2) observation game, when a child playing with other children is limited to observing their play; 3) a parallel game in which a child plays with another one, using the same toys, but does not interact with his/her peer; 4) associative game, when children exchange toys, there is a certain interaction between them, but they do not coordinate their actions on a single plot, purpose; 5) a joint game, during which children are engaged in a common cause (build a house out of blocks, etc.). Parallel play is typical for two-year-olds, associative - 4-5-year-olds; 6-7-year-old children play role-playing games (Kahan, 2000).

Many scholarly studies and publications point to the importance of preschool childhood for the formation of psychological gender and related personal new

formations; in the current programs followed by modern preschool educational institutions of Ukraine ("Child/Dytyna", Basic program "I am in the World/ Ia u Sviti", "Ukrainian preschool/ Ukrainske Doshkillia") (Bilan, Vozna, Maksymenko, 2012), the tasks of sex education of children are absent; therefore original programs and methodical developments on sexual education of preschool children have been introduced; modern pedagogical journals and pedagogical press (Kachina, 2005) highlight the ideas of gender education (Kikinezhdi, 2006), organization of groups of separate education and upbringing of children (Fialo, 2003) with the help of subject-development environment in the institutions of preschool education; since sex education of preschoolers is not expected to be carried out in preschool institutions, but is considered a personal matter of parents, some educators in preschool institutions independently make attempts at sex education in their own sense.

In particular, the scholar O. Kikinezhdi notes that the traditional system of differences of gender roles is based on the equality and complementarity of the psychological properties of the sexes: women are obedient, timid, focused on care, and men are thought to be strong, fearless, courageous.

O. Kikinezhdi, summarizing the ideas of education of boys and girls, which have been in focus of humanistic pedagogy, came to the conclusion that they are built on the principles of gender equality, and emphasized that:

- mastering any type of occupation does not depend on gender, but on individual aptitudes and interests;
- in the family circle and in terms of upbringing of a child, both husband and wife have equal roles;
- to master job skills and abilities in different occupations, both boys and girls have the same opportunities;
- in the process of upbringing the children, it is important to consider their equality and same opportunities for life scenarios for the future;
- children cannot be contrasted by gender in games, education, various spheres of life, plans for the future, etc.;
- both boys and girls are different, but also have much in common;
- it is necessary to teach children to resist gender role expectations and stereotypes, because such acceptance limits and impoverishes private life;
- it is necessary to support the friendly coexistence of genders in education. Both boys and girls should respect each other; receive the same education, be involved in the same activities (Kikinezhdi, 2006).

Analysis of psychological and pedagogical research on gender development of a child, has shown significant interest of scholars towards the problems of gender identification and gender stereotypes in preschool age.

Therefore, the study of gender attitudes of preschoolers is important because they are a key component of self-awareness and self-identification, without which development is impossible. Thus, the importance and relevance of the problem have led to the choice of the topic of the article.

3. Research Questions

Older preschool age is an important period in the formation of gender and age identification of an adolescent, who goes through a formation of a clear and irreversible idea of his/her gender and becomes especially important in terms of

accepting the role of a representative of his/ her gender. Two mechanisms of socialization take part in its formation: individualization and gender-role typification, which are determined by the context of the culturological environment and depend on the specific living conditions of each child.

We try to find out the content of the primary ideas of girls and boys in the senior preschool age and their acquisition of gender identity.

Girls and boys are most often educated by women in preschool educational institutions, so the forms and methods of work of the educators in kindergartens are most often designed for girls. Naturally, a female teacher does not have a childhood experience that boys face. Therefore, when communicating with them, educators are guided only by their ideas that boys must be determined, strong, enduring. Thus, for many boys, gender resilience is formed without men's participation in a preschool educational institution (Kravets, 2003).

What are the psychological differences between the sexes? Science has not yet been able to give an unambiguous answer to the question about what differences between men and women are insurmountable, set biologically, and which are determined by parental guidelines, expectations, microclimate in the family, cultural stereotypes.

Let us consider the differences between boys and girls in the intellectual sphere, which are quite significant in the preparation of a child for school. It is known that mental abilities are judged by language. Girls start speaking, reading, writing a little earlier than boys, have wider vocabulary, they use complex grammatical constructions more often. Boys' vocabulary is slightly different, they use more exclamations and verbs, which indicate their activity, the desire not to observe, but to transform, change the world around them. The language of girls is rather subject-evaluative, contains more nouns and adjectives. Girls' thinking can be conditionally called verbal, while boys are better oriented in space, they have a more developed visual-spatial imagination. There is evidence that boys learn to distinguish the essential from the secondary earlier than girls, tend to generalize, and girls more carefully analyze the facts and events, delve into the details. The girl better feels the purpose of the thing, its function, knows why she needs an object and what can be done with it, and the boy is more interested in the structure of a thing, the mechanism by which it functions (Tytarenko, 1989).

The reasons for gender differences in intellectual development are purely social: different expectations from adults, dissimilar cultural stereotypes of behavior of men and women, learned from an early age by children. Boys and girls often know well what qualities are more inherent in representatives of one or another sex. Children see that the women around them are characterized by a developed language, a tendency to read, dance or paint, and men are characterized by technical intelligence, interest in chess, puzzles, math problems and physical exercise (Bendas, 2005).

Adults notice that girls are more likely to show anxiety and fear. They are more conservative, tearful, capricious. However, at the same time, girls are less impulsive and have better control over their emotional reactions. Their vulnerability can be explained by the fact that emotional reactions arise not only in response to the content of someone's assessment, but also to the very form of expression: tone,

intonation, subtext. Girls, thus, are more sensitive to the praise and criticism of the elders, perceive the evaluative judgments closer to the heart from people around them. It's easier to make them laugh, make happy, bring to tears. Boys' emotional manifestations are less polar and unexpected, but also more thorough and stable. Boys begin to catch the irony in the tone of an adult much later than girls, so they need to be taught the ability to relate the cheerful phrase of the mother with the gloomy expression on her face, to understand the intonation, the subtext. Boys are more focused on the content of statements, more straightforwardly perceive criticism (Kononko, 1996).

The most striking emotional differences of the sexes are manifested in the ability to empathize, ie care about other people's feelings. The tendency to empathy and compassion is observed in females much more often than in males, at all ages. The ability to share other people's joy, fear or despair - these and similar manifestations of empathy are common for girls almost from the first months of their life. The formation of sensitivity requires special educational efforts for boys. However, with age the situation changes a little and even becomes opposite. Boys after the feeling of empathy "learn" to help others, and girls to some extent "lose the ability" to "read" the condition of another person from the tone or gestures. Peculiarities of socialization affect the development of empathy primarily in boys, while girls are endowed with this ability to a greater or lesser extent by nature. Obviously, those are girlish qualities that explain the ease of their relationship with children, the early manifestation of a tendency to care, success in communicating with peers (Kononko, 2000).

The preschool period is very important in terms of formation of children's gender perceptions. Researchers distinguish the following stages in the formation of children's gender perceptions: 1) gender labeling. At the age of 2-3 years, the child already knows his/her gender well; 2) gender stability has already been formed at the age of 3-4 years. But at this stage, children do not yet understand that gender cannot be changed, they think that due to external changes, one can change his/her gender; 3) gender irreversibility is realized by a child at the age of 4-7 years, when he/she already knows that sex does not depend on what clothes person wears, hairstyle, or what toys he/she plays with, and so changing the gender, despite his/her attempts, will be unsuccessful. The formation of sexual identification of a child continues from 2 to 7 years, and the formation of his/her imagination occurs in the process of socialization through: identification, imitation, following, modeling, direction, self-determination, encouragement, self-acceptance, self-reflection, cognitive dissonance (Hornostai, 2004).

The introduction of a gender approach in pedagogical education, according to O. Lutsenko (Lutsenko, 2004), should be understood as the expansion of living space for the development of individual abilities and inclinations of each child, the teachers' release from thinking within the scope of gender-role stereotypes.

Gender education as a purposeful organized process of formation of socio-cultural mechanisms of constructing relationships between representatives of different sexes, aims to implement educational guidelines on the basis of equality, parity and interchangeability, regardless of biological affiliation.

In our opinion, at the present stage of development of education, the formation of gender culture of the individual as an organic part of gender socialization of children becomes urgent. Implementation of this task requires great effort, because educators are the main carriers of traditional patriarchal ideas about the role and place of men and women in society. Modern researchers (T. Govorun, 2004; V. Kravets, 2003; O. Kikinezhdii, 2011; O. Kiz, 2004) claim that gender culture within the humanities and the educational process is a system of socio-psychological conditions of society, which contributes to the formation of man and woman as equal social human beings.

We are convinced that the problems of gender development of personality acquire special importance because it lies in the culture of people, that not only gender behavior is formed, but also the concept of male and female psychology, love, procreation.

In Western Europe and the United States, the issue of gender relations entered the educational program in the late 1960s (Kharchenko, 2013). In Ukraine, gender education has been developing since the early 1990s and already has significant achievements, but at the same time there are problems in the formation of gender culture in the education system. According to the position of Ukrainian scholars (T. Govorun, 2004; O. Kikinezhdii, 2011; V. Kravets, 2003), the need to integrate a gender approach into the national education system is motivated by such objective phenomena as new social realities, namely:

- destruction of the traditional system of gender stratification and weakening of the polarization of female and male social roles;
- leveling of fundamental differences in the norms of behavior and psychology of women and men, given the commonality of their work and the compatibility of education;
- fundamental transformation of marital and family relations;
- significant changes in cultural stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, which become less violent and polar (Govorun, 2003).

Accordingly, at the present stage of development, the gender approach is organically intertwined with the current concept of Ukrainian education, because it is aimed at revealing personal potential, self-realization of the individual, harmonization of sexual relations.

At the same time, the priorities of modern education and the theory of the gender approach are based on the position that human nature is characterized by self-actualization. Therefore, the introduction of a gender approach in the educational process maximally contributes to the realization of the inner potential of each child, regardless of gender; it enhances opportunities for pedagogical interaction, creates a gender-comfortable situation for both teachers and pupils. The educator focuses on real talents and abilities, regardless of gender, which contributes to the realization of the inner potential of girls and boys with different gender types and their self-realization in different activities.

We believe that gender approach is the theoretical basis for effective learning, education and socialization, and a priority part of modern education. Accordingly, the study of various issues related to gender aspects in pedagogy have not only theoretical but also practical significance for educational institutions.

Analysis of psychological and pedagogical studies on gender development of a child has revealed a significant interest of foreign and national scholars in this problem. Among the remarkable achievements of the indigenous science is the study of the phenomenon of gender identification, the influence of gender stereotypes and gender polarization in preschool age. The topic of our research is relevant because of the importance of the period of gender and age identification of the adolescent, whose clear and irreversible idea of the own gender is being formed, as well as understanding and acceptance of the roles of sexes, recognition of the irreversibility of gender as a major component of self-awareness and self-identification.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of our research is to determine the peculiarities of the formation of gender identity of children, to clarify the level of gender perception of older preschoolers and the impact of stereotypes on the understanding of their gender. The awareness of the roles and irreversibility of gender contribute to the further development of their personality.

5. Research Methods

Among the research methods we single out the following: the method of analysis of scientific, pedagogical and methodological literature on the problem of the research; the methods of comparison, generalization, descriptive method and empirical: observations, testing, surveys, projective technique.

In the course of our research a set of psychodiagnostic tools has been applied: questionnaire "Quality" by A. Palii, (1996), V. Kahan's, (2000), interview "Study of gender attitudes", narrative method "Favorite toy", G. Gaimans' (Bendas, T.) (2005). method "Study of gender stereotypes" and the methodology of determining gender identity by N. Belopolska, (1996).

Using the questionnaire by A. Paliy, (1996) "Qualities", we have identified different types of children's gender perceptions, in particular, masculine, feminine, androgynous. Among them were boys with atypical gender representations. In particular, this can be explained by the feminine identification of the boy (with his mother); the predominance of the feminine environment in the preschool institution or the absence of a father. Feminization of girls is faster than masculinization of boys. In preschool age the theories of gender schemes have a simpler, traditional character (boy is usually active, strong-willed, determined..., girl - gentle, loving, caring).

To clarify the results on the type of preschoolers' gender perceptions, as well as to determine the level of their formation, an interview of W. Kagan (2000) has been applied. This technique involves an individual survey of the child and consists of six questions. It examines the state of awareness of the child's gender, understanding and acceptance of the roles of the sex, the recognition of the irreversibility of gender.

To determine the influence of social stereotypes on the formation of gender perceptions of preschool children, G. Gaimans' s method has been used. This technique determines the stereotyping, schematic gender thinking of preschoolers.

Methodology of "Gender Identification" by N. Belopolska, (1999) consists of two sets of cards on which male and female characters are depicted in different periods of life. It is designed to define the level of formation of the aspects of self-awareness

that are associated with the identification of sex and age of the child. It is used for research purposes, in the diagnostic examination of children, in counseling the child and for correctional work. In terms of content, this technique is based on the positions according to which children (already in preschool age) have certain ideas about the change of a person's physical appearance, his gender and social roles according to age. This knowledge is provided by the attribution of social experience and the development of the child's self-awareness. The basis of this technique is the study of the process of gender and age identification.

Analysis of the results of the method "Gender Identification" is aimed at identifying age, individual and pathological peculiarities of children. The child's abilities and self-identification with generalized gender and age images are taken into account, as well as self-identification, gender and age roles in the past, present and future; the ability to construct a complete sequence of images. The obtained data present the information about the degree of formation of the child's self-identity and generalize this knowledge to other people and to their own way of life. Social situation of the child's development and his personal experience influence his choice in the construction of gender and age sequence of both attractive and unattractive images. The adequacy or inadequacy of these advantages, the arguments given by children to explain their choice, help to identify the hidden emotional and affective complexes of the child, the peculiarities of self-awareness and motives for his behavior.

According to the narrative method "Favorite Toy", we have found out that the qualities that children ascribed to their characters, differed significantly in boys and girls. The most important values for girls are beauty, kindness, care, intelligence and courtesy, for boys - agility, speed, strength.

The choice of these methods is due to the fact that they provide an opportunity to show the level of formation of gender perceptions of preschool children, awareness of irreversibility and acceptance of the roles of their gender.

6. Findings

Scientific and theoretical analysis of features of children's gender identification and their perceptions, that take place in the process of socialization, has necessitated our empirical research, in which we have identified the level of gender perceptions, gender stereotypes of preschoolers and revealed the psychological features of the formation of gender identity in a preschool institution.

Our research on gender perceptions and stereotypes of preschoolers was conducted during February-May 2019 among 50 respondents, in particular, 26 children of the senior group of preschool educational institution of combined type №9 and 24 children of senior group of preschool educational institution №45 in the city of Chernivtsi.

6.1. The Results of the Research

At the first stage, a theoretical understanding of the problem has been carried out, an analysis of the literature on this topic has been conducted, and the experience of foreign and national scholars has been investigated.

Older preschool age is an important period in the formation of gender and age identification of an adolescent, individualization and gender-role typification are the two mechanisms of socialization which take part in its formation.

In the table (Table 1) the age characteristics of gender orientation of preschoolers are presented.

Table 1

Gender Development of a Preschooler

Age (years)	Gender Identity	Gender Stereotypes	Typical Behavior for the Genders
0-2,5	The ability to distinguish between males and females arises and improves. A child can clearly define himself/herself as boy or girl.	Some gender stereotypes arise.	A child selects toys and plays games which are appropriate to his/her gender. A child more often plays games with the representatives of his/her gender (gender "segregation").
3-7	Child realizes that his/her gender cannot be changed.	Activities and interests become stereotypical.	The advantages of belonging to a particular gender can be observed through the selection of toys, kinds of games, which become more distinct, especially among boys. Gender "segregation" intensifies.

At the stage of the ascertaining experiment, a set of psychodiagnostic tools has been applied to determine the level of formation of gender identity of the preschoolers: questionnaire "Quality" by A. Palii, V. Kahan's interview "Study of gender attitudes", narrative method "Favorite toy", G. Gaimans' method "Study of gender stereotypes" and the methodology of determining gender identity by N. Belopolska.

According to the method of "Quality" (Palii, 1996) masculine gender ideas prevail in boys of preschool age (Fig. 1). The feminine type of boys' gender representations is 26% and indicates that they are characterized by gender-atypical gender representations. The androgynous type comprises 11%, and the lowest results belong to the gender-neutral type 6%, which indicates the gender uncertainty of the preschool boys. Basically, boys' gender perceptions are gender-appropriate, they are dominated by the masculine type of gender perceptions.

According to our results, girls do not have masculine gender perceptions at all. And the feminine type of gender representations comprises 75 percent that characterizes their orientation on gender-typical forms of behavior. The androgynous type of gender representations is 21%. And a small percentage of girls have a gender-neutral type of gender perceptions.

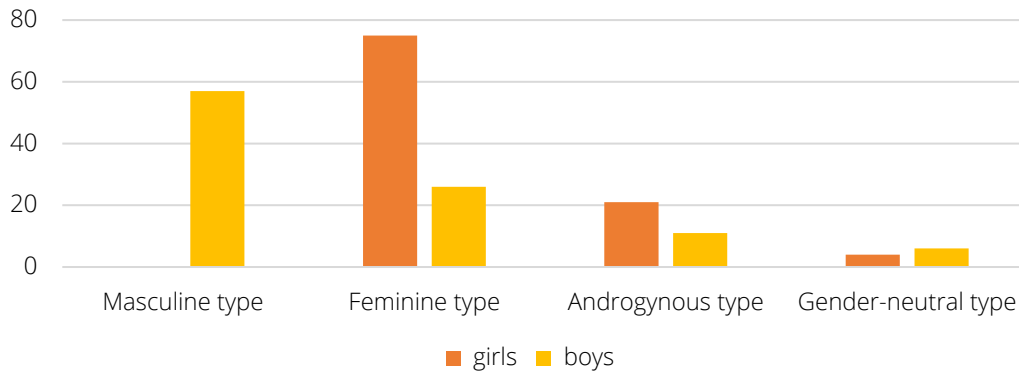


Fig. 1. Gender perceptions of preschool boys and girls

This result can be explained with the help of the theory of gender schemes, due to which the child forms gender ideas. In preschool age the schemes have a simpler, traditional character (boy is usually active, strong-willed, determined..., girl is gentle, loving, caring).

The results of our study using the method of "Quality" showed that boys, as opposed to girls, have a significant indicator of femininity (26%), which can obviously be explained by the presence of primary feminine identification of a boy with his mother and the existing predominant female environment in preschool educational institution. It is obvious that feminization of girls is faster than masculinization of boys.

According to V. Kahan's "Study of gender attitudes"(Kahan, 2000) in order to determine the level of formation and refine the results on the type of gender perceptions of the preschoolers, we have found that 99 percent of girls are dominated by the feminine type of gender attitudes (Fig.2). The level of formation of gender perceptions in preschool girls is high. This fact suggests that girls are dominated by gender-typical gender attitudes.

There is no doubt that all children have gender attitudes. Preschool children possess gender attitudes, that correspond to the sex of the child: girls - 99%, boys - 84%. The preschoolers are well aware that their gender cannot be changed. In general, the gender perceptions of the preschool children are gender-appropriate, however boys have slightly lower masculinity rates (75%) than girls (89%). The exception is girls (11%), whose gender perceptions are not differentiated by their sex.

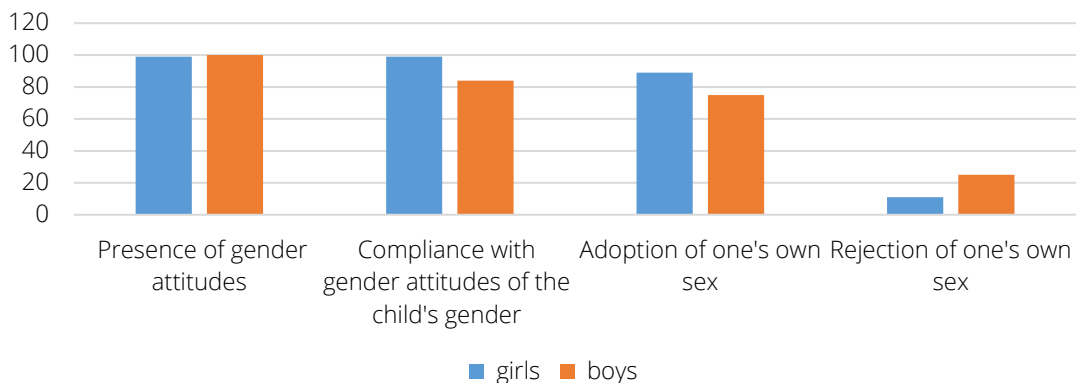


Fig.2. Gender attitudes as a percentage

According to the scale, the level of boys' masculinity is high (76%), there is also a low (7%) level of feminine type among them. It is worrying that almost a third of the preschool boys surveyed reject their own gender. It can be assumed that they are influenced by a gender-neutral or feminine parent who spends little time with their children, or that his behavior is more feminine than purely masculine. Obviously, they experience the influence of social stereotypes on the formation of gender perceptions of the preschoolers has been determined by the G. Gaimans' method, which acknowledges the stereotypes and schematics of gender thinking (Fig. 3).

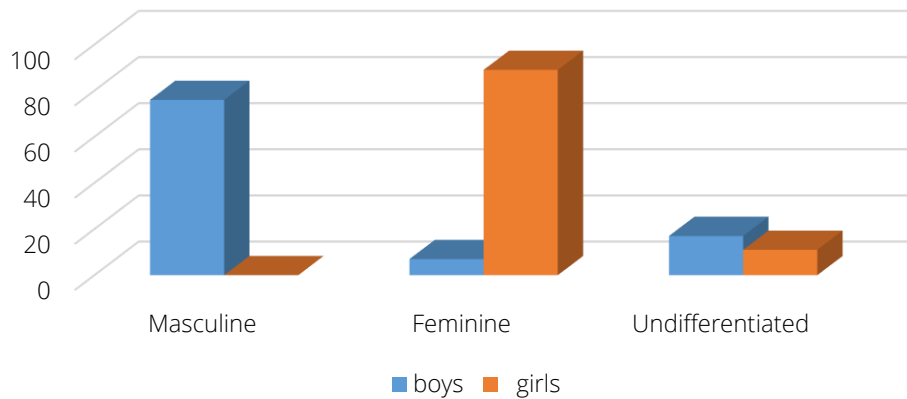


Fig. 3. Type of gender attitudes

Social stereotypes, especially of masculinity-femininity, affect both boys and girls. Such stereotypes are manifested in the fact that most children believe that a man should be active, independent, determined, strong-willed, and a woman is usually passive, dependent, caring, communicative.

With the help of the method "Favorite Toy", we have found that the qualities that children ascribed to their characters, differed significantly among boys and girls. Overall, girls represent domination of gender associated characteristics. Only 15% of girls have atypical gender characteristics (Fig.4-5).

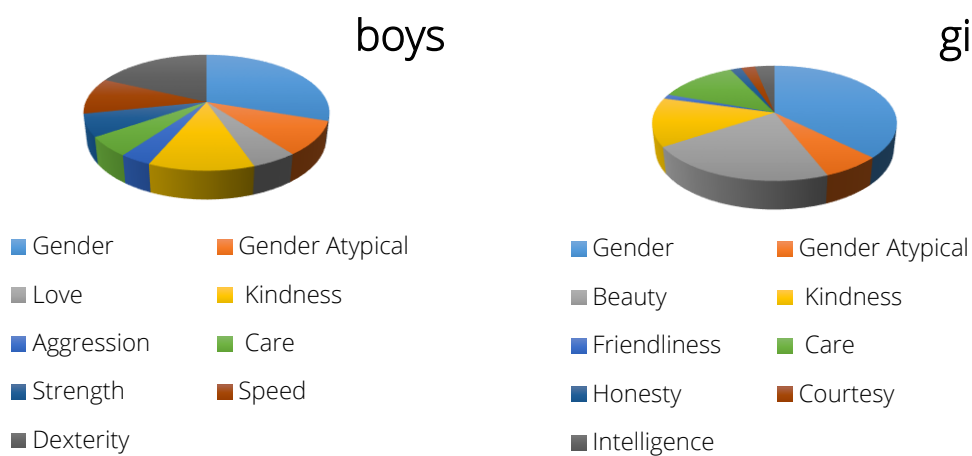


Fig.4-5 Semantic characteristics of gender representations of girls and boys (according to the method of "Favorite Toy")

The most important value for girls is beauty (49%). It is followed by kindness, care, intelligence, courtesy, honesty and friendliness. According to the girls, external beauty and attractiveness are important characteristics of women's behavior, and in the boys' stories these features are absent. Boys are characterized by agility, speed, strength, which are traditional for the masculinity of preschool boys. Most boys choose characters who are brightly masculine, in addition, they choose moving games that require speed, determination, courage.

To determine gender and age identification, we have used N. Belopolska's method. The study has been conducted in two stages.

The task of the first stage was to assess the child's ability to identify his real, past and future gender and age status on the presented visual material. The ability to adequately identify the future life path is tested. The second stage presupposed the comparison of the child's ideas about the self-present, self-attractive and self-unattractive.

Analysis of the results of the method "Gender Identification" is aimed at identifying age, individual and pathological peculiarities of children. The child's abilities and identification of himself with generalized gender and age images are taken into account, as well as the definition of himself, his gender and age roles in the past, present and future, and the construction of a complete sequence of images. The data obtained in this case present the information about the degree of formation of self-identity and generalize this knowledge to other people and to their own way of life. Social situation of the child's development and his/her personal experience influence his/her choice in the construction of gender and age sequence of both attractive and unattractive images. The adequacy or inadequacy of these advantages, the arguments given by children to explain their choice, help to identify the hidden emotional and affective complexes of the child, the peculiarities of self-awareness and motives for his/her behavior (Kikinezhdi, 2011).

With the help of N. Belopolska's method (Belopolskaia, 1999), we have found that children determine their gender correctly (Fig.6-7) 44% of children identified themselves by choosing a card with a picture of a child with a toy. 38 percent chose the image of a child with a briefcase (schoolboy), because some children were already attending a preschool kindergarten at the time of the study. And 18% of children chose the image of a young man or girl.

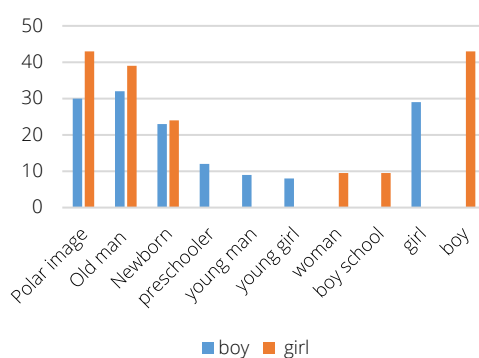


Fig.6. Results of the preschoolers "Unattractive images"

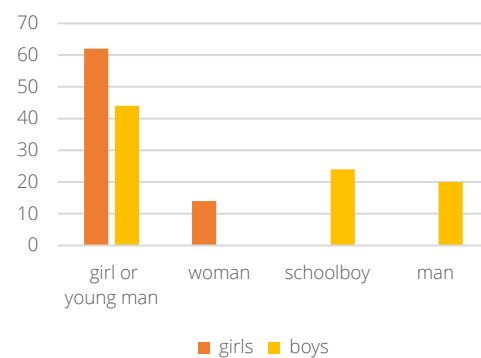


Fig.7. Results of the preschoolers "Attractive images"

At the second stage of our research psycho-correctional work with the preschoolers and their parents has been conducted by the educators. The gender approach presupposed the conformity of the methods of game management to their content and the specifics of play activities of children of different sexes. In order to contribute to the formation of gender competence in preschool children, there have been conducted group, interactive, art therapy (sand therapy, fairy tale therapy), relaxation and training exercises, which provided an opportunity to expand gender perceptions of children, the formation of gender competence, development of reflection, boys' acceptance of the own gender, enrichment of ideas of the preschoolers about masculine patterns of behavior. It was also necessary to involve parents in the activities of preschool educational institution: the organization of modern subject-development and play environment in groups (creation of film libraries, audio and game libraries, libraries; creating family books, creating teaching material, practical help in the group, etc.) Significant positive changes have been found in those children whose parents actively participated in these activities.

It has been found that after the relevant work, there is a clear tendency to balance internal role inconsistencies. The percentage of boys who do not accept their own gender has decreased among the preschoolers in the experimental group. The level of acceptance of one's own gender has increased slightly (8%), which has a positive effect on interpersonal relationships with peers. The control group of preschoolers has not shown a significant change.

In the course of observation of children's game activities it has been revealed that older preschool children have a tendency to gender segregation. In the result of the analysis of children's game activities, the interrelation between the level of formation of the child's gender identity and his behavior during games has been revealed. The characteristic features of game activities of boys and girls with a high level of gender identity have been identified: for boys - the prevalence of rivalry and dominance as ways of game interaction, focus on action, the desire to play primarily with children of the same sex; for girls - the predominance of partnership and cooperation as ways of playful interaction, focus on communication, focus on involving children of the opposite sex in games.

7. Conclusions

1. The results of theoretical research have shown the importance of the period of formation of gender and age identification of older preschoolers, who form a clear and irreversible idea of their gender.

The analysis of scholarly literature on the topic has helped to determine the potential of the educational environment in the process of forming the gender culture of preschool children and the level of relative conservatism of content, established methods and forms of educational activity in preschool educational institutions.

2. Thus, according to the results of our experimental research it has been found that the vast majority of children of 5-6 years old are aware of their belonging to the male or female sex and do not want to change their gender. This means that in older preschool age, almost all children possess gender identity.

3. The analysis of the results of the study showed that boys' "dissatisfaction with their own gender" is much higher than girls'. Gender perceptions of preschool

children are gender-appropriate: girls' - feminine, and boys' – masculine. In addition, they are stereotypical: boys have instrumental role, girls-expressive.

4. The purpose of gender education in preschool institution is primarily to establish the patterns of behavior of a particular sex for the children, to cultivate the culture of gender relations and deepen the understanding of the role of women and men in society. Therefore, educators in preschool institutions face the following tasks: to respond competently to sexual manifestations in the process of a child's development; to expand and deepen children's knowledge about the features of the two genders; to promote their gender identification and the fulfillment of gender-appropriate social roles; to cultivate curiosity and positive attitude towards themselves as an object of knowledge; create conditions for gaining experience in relations with the environment; to maintain the physical and mental health of children, their optimistic attitude towards other people; to get children know more about the main functions of the family and the implementation of gender-appropriate social roles.

Perspectives for further research lie in studying various issues related to gender aspects, which within the scope of Pedagogy, have not only theoretical but also practical significance for educational institutions.

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