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Sociology Of Preschool Childhood: Age Dynamics Of The Child's Play

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Abstract

The article presents the results of a poll of 1936 parents, who's preschool children visit Moscow kindergartens, about organization of child's play activity. It continues a cycle of works about preschool sociology conducted by researchers of Institute for Sociology of Education RAE. Special attention is given to the consideration of place of joint play of parents with their child in general structure of family leisure time and involvement of parents in child's play. Besides we analyze representations of parents about game preferences of preschoolers: what toys and games are preferred by their children. The analysis is conducted on the impact of a number of demographic (gender, age) and social stratification factors (material status, education level, composition of the family, etc.).

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Keywords: sociology of preschool childhood; child's play activity; family leisure time; game preferences of preschoolers.

1. Introduction

The article presents the results of a poll of 1936 preschool children parents about organization of child's play activity. It continues a whole cycle of our works about preschool sociology [1], [2], [3], [4], [5]. Special attention is given to the consideration of place of joint play of parents with their child in general structure of family leisure time and involvement of parents in child's play. Besides we analyze representations of parents about game preferences of preschoolers: what toys and games are preferred by their children. The analysis is conducted on

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the impact of a number of demographic (gender, age) and social stratification factors (material status, education level, composition of the family, etc.).

Value of play activity for the child's mental development can hardly be overestimated. Specialists note that in role-playing game are formed and rapidly developing all higher mental functions and personality characteristics of the child: voluntary attention and behavior, memory, motivation, etc. The game has a great influence on the mental development of the preschooler. It helps to ensure that the child goes to thinking in images and representations, develops abilities, allowing to understand the other point of view [6], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11]. The representation about play as leading activity in preschool age is accepted in Russian psychology (L.Vygotsky, A.Leontev, D.Elkonin etc.) [12], [13], [14]. At the present moment a great number of researches concern features of children's play and its influence on development and formation of child's personality [9], [10], [11]. It should be noted that if within psychological science a rich tradition of research devoted to child's play activity exists, sociological works on this subject are almost absent. Taking into account importance of the play as the leading activity of preschool age, we have tried to discuss this topic in our sociological research.

2. Joint play in the structure of family leisure time

In order to find out what place is occupied by joint play of parents with their child in general structure of a family leisure time a special question was asked to respondents concerning the typical way of spending free time with their child at home. The general average data on preferences of various kinds of joint activity at leisure time by parents of preschoolers is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Joint activity of parents with their child at leisure time (%)

Types of joint activity	%
Reading of books	53,9
Joint play	49,1
Walks	44,5
Watching TV	25,5
Watching DVD, video	18,3
Involving the child into housework	16,8
Building, constructing	16,2
Modeling, drawing	15,2
Music listening, singing	10,2
Playing the computer	6,1
The child organizes his free time himself	9,3

Apparently from the data resulted in the table, among various kinds of activity preference to joint play with the child at leisure time is given by almost a half of interrogated parents (49,1%). And significant distinctions in answers of fathers and mothers are not revealed. At the same time it is indicative that the gender of a child makes significant impact on the opinions of parents concerning joint play. Parents of boys choose joint play more often, than parents of girls (accordingly: 52,2% and 44,5%; $p = .001$).

Parents' preferences of play activity in leisure structure also depend on the age of the child. Thus, parents of the senior preschool children (5-7 year old children) choose the given type of activity much less often, than parents of younger children (accordingly: 43,7% and 57,9%; $p = .0001$). It is important to highlight that when a child reaches this age the general structure of joint leisure of parents with him also changes.

And finally, the material status of a family plays also an important role: needy parents choose joint play with their child essentially less often than prosperous (accordingly: 42,8% and 51,6%; $p = .0004$).

3. Involvement of parents in their child's play

In order to find out the degree of parental involvement in play activity with their child, a special question has been offered to the respondents: «Do you play together with your child?». It is necessary to notice that answers

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