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Personality predictors of vandal activity at preschool age

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Abstract

The article describes the causes of children's vandal activity at preschool age. Among others, one of the most important problems is to reveal children's inability to show pro-social self-realization in conditions of preschool. The results of the study (expert assessment of the behavior of 65 preschoolers aged 4-6 years old who attend kindergarten), define the basic personality predictors of vandal activity, which include focus on high performance, low personal resources and high behavioral activity. The article suggests that through cooperative efforts by parents and educators will create situations of success for preventing vandalism in children.

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1. Introduction

Spread of vandal behavior in modern society raises the awareness of the need for studying its causes and genesis [1]. Manifestation of destructive activity is not a problem of adolescence. This problem has deeper roots and is linked with the specifics of a child's development and education a child at early age stages. It is the interaction with adults in a family and preschool that helps children to learn the norms and rules of conduct with their own things and those belonging to others. Children discover and recognize that making harm to things is a way to relax, express strong emotions (as in case of defense replacement) or a way to influence other people (children's keying) [2].

Educators and other preschool specialists often face children's destructive behavior, but in most cases they find explanation in the shortcomings of family education. And it's not far from the truth. Many authors refer to the origins of children's destructive behavior formed in the family (I.V. Vorobyeva et al. [1], L.S. Pagani [3], L.P. Gaik [4], and others.). So, Calkins & Keane [5] say that the properties of a child's self-regulation mechanism

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should be of paramount importance in the efforts to curb children's destructive activity. Equal relations in the family are important moderators of more proximal mechanisms of child's self-regulation at the period of early ages. It is necessary for the development of pro-social behavior.

At the same time, we must understand that vandalism in the form of breakage, damage of one's own or others' property may be the result of formation of the active side of a child's personality (which is called "subjectivity" in Russian psychology). Demonstration of various forms of activity during an interaction with objects enriches the child's experience. It also makes it possible to understand interpersonal relationships and rules of their building. In this case, even destructive activity, sporadically manifested by a child, will be an essential element of personal development. And people's reaction to it becomes a predictor of the formation of personality borders and its effective self-realization.

However, vandal actions committed by a preschool child may be an element of tactical actions aiming to achieve other goals. And if that goal is reached, there will be a confirmation of their validity and effectiveness and their strengthening in child's behavior. In consequence, the admissibility of actions which are internally destructive (vandal) for children in relation to the material environment can contribute to the appearance and development of more serious deviations in their behavior.

At the same time these personality characteristics which have been formed earlier or are still being formed may create preconditions for a conscious and unconscious choice of a model for destructive interaction with the material environment. However, the list of personal characteristics data is not clearly defined.

2. Method

The goal of the study was to identify possible determinants of preschoolers' personal inclinations to vandal activity in preschool. To achieve this objective an expert assessment of the behavior of 65 preschoolers (of 4-6 years of age), who attended kindergarten, was carried out. The experts were preschool educators (10 persons), a methodologist and a psychologist. The evaluation was carried out with the help of the questionnaire "Evaluation of subjective characteristics", which was modified on the basis of the methodology "Biography of subjectivity" (O.I. Motkov) [6], and the monitor maps of the child's attitude to his own and others' toys that was developed in accordance with the author's approach to the understanding of motives of vandal behavior (I.V. Vorobyeva, O.V. Kruzhkova, S.A. Ostrikova) [7]. To process the data we applied clustering and regression analyzes, calculations were made by using the statistical package IBM SPSS Statistics 19.0.

3. Results and discussion

Initially, all the results of the experts were subjected to two-step cluster analysis. With a high degree of confidence (at $p \leq 0.01$), the sample of preschoolers was divided into two groups. The first group included children who were inclined to frequent vandal activity in relation to their own and others' toys. The second group included children inclined to occasional vandalism or unwilling to resort to it altogether. Subsequently, in each of these groups we conducted regression analysis, which found a model of possible determinants that lead to a destructive form of children's interaction with objects of the material environment (their own or others' toys).

As a result, for the first group predictors of vandalism was identified in destructive relation to their own and others' toys (Table 1). The characteristics of the models are $R^2=53.1\%$, $F=4.2$, $p=0.034$ and $R^2=92.2\%$, $F=71.7$, $p=0.000$ accordingly.

Table 1. Regression model for the sample of children with high vandal activity

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