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EMOTIONAL CLIMATE IN PRESCHOOL GROUPS AS A FACTOR OF CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT**Djanpeisova Gauhar Erkinovna**

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Abstract: This study examines the role of emotional climate in preschool groups as a key factor influencing children's educational engagement. It analyzes its structure and impact on cognitive activity, speech development, and motivation. Special attention is given to the context of Uzbekistan's preschool education system.

Keywords: emotional climate, preschool education, educational activity, psychological well-being, cognitive development/

Introduction

The emotional environment in which a child spends a significant part of the day plays a decisive role in shaping both developmental trajectories and attitudes toward learning. Preschool childhood is characterized by heightened emotional sensitivity: children are highly responsive to the emotional states of adults, the nature of interpersonal relationships, and the general atmosphere of the educational setting (Veraksa & Veraksa, 2021).

Modern approaches to the quality of preschool education increasingly emphasize not only the content of instruction but also its psychological conditions. In Uzbekistan, the Law "On Preschool Education and Upbringing" (2019) guarantees every child the right to a psychologically safe and supportive educational environment. In the context of the rapid expansion of preschool institutions, ensuring a positive emotional climate becomes particularly relevant.

Despite growing recognition of children's psychological well-being, empirical studies on emotional climate in Uzbek preschool institutions remain limited (Yusupova, 2023). This determines the relevance of the present study. The aim of this research is to analyze the concept of emotional climate in preschool groups and to substantiate the mechanisms of its influence on children's educational activity.

Emotional Climate of a Preschool Group: Concept and Structure

In contemporary psychological and pedagogical research, the emotional climate of a preschool group is considered a multidimensional construct. Gudareva and Smirnova (2020)



define it as a system of relatively stable emotional states that characterize interpersonal interactions and determine the overall affective tone of joint activity.

The authors identify three interrelated components:

- affective (general emotional background),
- communicative (quality of relationships),
- activity-related (emotional richness of joint activities).

A central role in shaping the emotional climate belongs to the teacher. The educator's emotional state, communication style, and empathic abilities significantly determine the group atmosphere (Meshcheryakova & Galanov, 2022). This position aligns with Vygotsky's concept of the unity of affect and intellect, according to which emotional processes are not secondary but integral to cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1996).

Another important theoretical framework is the concept of psychological safety in education (Baeva, 2019), which highlights that emotional insecurity directly hinders both intellectual and social development.

Impact of Emotional Climate on Educational Activity

Empirical research consistently demonstrates a strong relationship between emotional climate and key indicators of children's learning activity. A large-scale longitudinal study by Whittaker and Pianta (2018) involving more than 4,500 children found that emotional support from teachers is a strong predictor of cognitive engagement ($\beta = 0.48$; $p < 0.001$).

Similarly, Gudareva and Smirnova (2020) showed that children in emotionally supportive groups demonstrate significantly higher levels of speech initiative. Psychological safety fosters openness, encourages dialogue, and supports active communication.

This is particularly important in Uzbekistan, where children often develop bilingual competence. Emotional security enhances their willingness to engage in communication in both languages (Yusupova, 2023).

Motivation is also strongly influenced by emotional climate. According to Ansari and Pianta (2019), emotionally supportive environments significantly improve school readiness and reduce avoidance behaviors.

Results and Discussion

Empirical and theoretical studies consistently show that the emotional climate of preschool groups affects several key areas of child development.

First, it influences cognitive activity. Children in emotionally supportive environments demonstrate higher levels of attention, curiosity, and initiative (Ansari & Pianta, 2019).

Second, it affects speech development. A positive emotional environment encourages children to communicate more actively and confidently, which contributes to vocabulary expansion and communicative competence (Gudareva & Smirnova, 2020).

Third, emotional climate plays a crucial role in motivation. According to Whittaker and Pianta (2018), emotionally supportive teacher-child interactions significantly increase children's



engagement in learning activities.

Additionally, emotional climate contributes to the development of self-regulation skills, which are essential for school readiness and lifelong learning.

Specific Features in the Context of Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, discussion of emotional climate in preschool settings should be situated within the broader transformation of early childhood education over the last decade. National reforms have focused not only on expanding access but also on improving the quality of preschool provision, including curriculum renewal, early learning standards, and teacher professional development. UNICEF's country materials on Uzbekistan note that support for preschool quality has included review of the preschool curriculum, Early Learning Development Standards, and teacher training arrangements, while more recent reform documents emphasize child-centred pedagogy and stronger practitioner capacity as priorities of system improvement.

This reform context is directly relevant to emotional climate. A shift toward child-centred preschool education implies a corresponding shift in the teacher's role: from a transmitter of content to an organizer of emotionally safe, responsive, and developmentally supportive interaction. That interpretation is consistent with both international evidence and current reform discourse in Uzbekistan, where improving teacher capacity is repeatedly linked to education quality. UNICEF's recent education materials for Uzbekistan explicitly connect quality improvement with strengthening teacher competencies, improved curriculum implementation, and support for inclusive, effective instruction.

At the same time, the Uzbek context has socio-cultural features that may shape how emotional support is enacted in preschool groups. Community-oriented values, respect for adults, and norms of socially regulated behaviour can provide a strong basis for orderly, cohesive, and respectful classroom life. At the same time, in more hierarchical or restraint-oriented interactional cultures, educators may require explicit professional support to translate warmth, sensitivity, and child perspective-taking into everyday pedagogical practice. This is best understood as an inference grounded in comparative classroom-interaction research rather than as a uniquely Uzbek deficit. The practical implication is that professional development should address not only methods and curriculum, but also teacher-child interaction quality, emotional responsiveness, and reflective practice.

A further reason this issue is salient in Uzbekistan is the system's rapid expansion. UNICEF reports that preschool participation and access have increased substantially since the late 2010s, which makes the question of quality assurance more urgent: when systems scale quickly, structural expansion must be matched by attention to process quality inside classrooms. Emotional climate belongs precisely to this "process quality" domain, because it is expressed through day-to-day interactions, teacher sensitivity, and children's experience of safety, belonging, and engagement.

The available international evidence strongly supports the educational significance of this domain. In large studies of prekindergarten classrooms, emotionally supportive teacher-child interactions have been associated with gains in children's academic, language, social, and self-regulatory outcomes. Mashburn et al. found that observed classroom quality, including emotionally supportive interactions, was linked to children's development across multiple domains, while later work by Hamre and colleagues showed that professional development



focused on teacher–child interactions can improve classroom processes that matter for children’s learning. More recent synthesis work led by Pianta and colleagues also continues to identify emotionally supportive and well-organized classrooms as beneficial for children’s self-regulatory and social-behavioural development.

For this reason, the use of validated observational tools such as the **CLASS** framework is especially promising for Uzbekistan. CLASS conceptualizes classroom quality through domains such as emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support, making it suitable for examining not only what teachers teach, but how children experience the learning environment. Given Uzbekistan’s current emphasis on quality improvement, teacher development, and child-centred pedagogy, adaptation of such tools could help make emotional climate more visible within monitoring, mentoring, and in-service training systems. This would align national reform priorities with a substantial international evidence base on the role of teacher–child interactions in early learning.

Conclusion

The analysis confirms that the emotional climate of a preschool group is a core structural element of the educational process rather than a secondary condition. Its influence operates through motivational, regulatory, and communicative mechanisms.

The teacher remains the central agent in shaping this climate. However, current data in Uzbekistan indicate that many educators do not fully utilize emotional support strategies.

Therefore, enhancing teachers’ emotional competence should become a priority in both initial training and professional development systems.

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