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# SECTION 1.

# EDUCATION



# POSSIBILITIES FOR SENIOR PRESCHOOLERS' TEAM BUILDING THROUGH PROJECT-BASED ACTIVITY

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## *Abstract*

*The article discusses the possibilities for senior preschoolers' team-building through project-based activity. Various approaches to team building, their psychological and pedagogical characteristics, possibilities for forming preschoolers' teams are analyzed, and discussed. The goal of the article is to identify the possibilities for effective organization of senior preschoolers' team-building (ages 5–6) through project-based activity. **Methodology:** the study involves an analysis of professional literature related to the topic, as well as observations, surveys, and an experiment organized through project-based activities. At each stage of the project, senior preschoolers' team-working skills were assessed. **Results:** The findings indicate that project-based activity contribute not only to the effective implementation of team building but also to the development of the child's personality, the formation of responsibility and collaboration skills, decision-making abilities, and the awareness of a shared goal. **Keywords:** senior preschoolers, team building, project-based activity, collaboration, common goal awareness.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In today's world, the success of institutions and organizations depends on team building, the quality of their work, the functions they perform, the goals they set, and the awareness of a common purpose. The success of institutions is the result of effective interaction among team members and their unification around a common goal. Working in a well-organized team also contributes to the professional and personal growth of each member, the development of their skills, increased self-confidence, and advancement.

According to studies, however, the issue of team building remains largely unresolved, resulting in a number of problems. Improper team building can disrupt collaboration and, consequently, lead to

undesirable outcomes (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006), low levels of trust and cohesion (Mathieu, et al 2019), and the neglect of deep-level differences among team members (such as values and attitudes), which negatively affect team interaction (Harrison, et. al., 2002).

In recent years, considerable attention has been given to the question of how to create an environment that fosters psychological safety and reduces the phenomenon of “social loafing”, which occurs when some group members feel that their efforts are undervalued and begin to withhold effort (Salas, et. al., 2018). These circumstances indicate that, within groups, individual goals are often prioritized over the team’s common goal. In practice, individuals fulfill their assigned responsibilities, but these efforts are not necessarily directed toward the overall objective of the institution or organization. Moreover, both objective and subjective factors can hinder team formation (such as predispositions, subjective perceptions, lack of willingness to engage in teamwork, etc.).

However, for team building, it is essential to create conditions for self-development, self-organization, and self-expression, where the “I,” while preserving its individuality, is oriented toward engaging in the “We” structure — pursuing the goals of the “We,” yet at the same time not neglecting individual goals, which can serve as a source of intrinsic motivation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Team building (from English: the combination of words “team” and “building” – construction, creation) is defined as a system of interventions and activities aimed at uniting the team, enhancing interaction, and promoting effective collaboration (Salas et al., 1999).

The idea of team building originated in the field of sports, where both group and individual successes depend on effective interaction within the team (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998). Later, the spread of the team-building concept was driven by the socio-economic development and management needs of industrial society. In the 1940s, targeted experiments were conducted in the USA and Western Europe aimed at improving collaboration among employees and enhancing work efficiency within organizations (Mills, 2007).

In the post-war period, the role of the workforce in economic recovery was emphasized, leading to the realization that productivity can be stimulated not only through technical means but also through socio-psychological factors and by building effective interaction among members of the organization. This idea was theoretically substantiated in Kurt Lewin’s field theory, which explains the mechanisms of group dynamics, interaction, and behavior formation. It was established that the behavior of group members can be predicted and shaped by creating an appropriate social and psychological environment, as human behavior (B) is the result of the interaction between the individual (P) and their environment (E):  $B = f(P, E)$  (Lewin K., 1936).

According to this approach, team was viewed as a self-regulating social system, with role distribution, norms of interaction, and internal driving forces that directly affect the outcomes of group activities (Burnes B. & Cooke B., 2013).

Later, theoretical approaches were proposed by Karl Rohnke under the name “Outdoor Ropes Course”, which took the practical methodology of team building to a new level. His approach was based on the principle of experiential learning, according to which knowledge is best acquired through interaction, experience, and joint activities, fostering trust, communication, and collaboration skills among group members (Rohnke, 1989). This, in turn, contributes to strengthening team identity, increasing the effectiveness of the activities carried out, and reducing potential conflicts.

In the team-building process, the “7C” model has also been proposed, which encompasses the key components of effective team performance: 1. capability (the knowledge, skills, and experience of team members necessary to achieve the goals), 2. cooperation (the willingness of team members to work together and complement one another; 3. coordination (the proper organization of actions and resources within the team), 4. communication (the exchange of ideas and discussion of problems among team members), 5. cognition (understanding of common tasks by team members, their abilities to analyze situations), 6. coaching (leadership that supports team development and problem-solving), 7. conditions (the contribution of the environment, resources, and other external factors that ensure team effectiveness (Tannenbaum & Salas, 2020).

With the evolving demands of the modern era, “virtual” teams are emerging alongside traditional, co-located teams. In the context of remote work, the process of team formation acquires new dimensions: the establishment of virtual teams emphasizes the development of mechanisms for building trust within digital environments and ensuring transparent communication (Bell & Kozlowski, 2008). Furthermore, contemporary international organizations are increasingly forming multinational and multicultural teams, where the process of team formation necessitates the acquisition and application of intercultural communication skills.

The issue of team building has also been examined in the field of pedagogy (Markova & Taysever, 2005; Russell, 2015), where the main emphasis is placed on educators’ communicative and collaborative skills, adherence to the ethics of pedagogical communication, ensuring teacher–child interaction, and fostering a collaborative atmosphere in the educational process.

In the history of pedagogical thought, the concepts of “collective”, “children’s group” are also emphasized (Makarenko, 1984; Sukhomlinsky, 1971). It was noted that the effectiveness of children’s upbringing and moral development largely depends on their involvement in group activities, which contribute to the formation of their collaborative and social skills.

Nevertheless, in the classical approaches presented, the process of team building as a systematic and goal-oriented activity was not yet emphasized. The main focus was placed on the teacher’s personal



skills, the creation of a general atmosphere for forming a group, and the organization of group activities and children's participation in them—rather than on processes and mechanisms that facilitate team building, foster understanding of common goals, enhance individual responsibility for achieving those goals, and coordinate group dynamics. The aforementioned approaches highlight the terms “collective” and “children's group” whereas the concept of a “team” is fundamentally different. Let us examine these differences. The terms “collective” and “group” are understood as an aggregation of individuals united in space and time, where cooperation is often limited and situational in nature (Cartwright & Zander, 1968).

In groups, members may act side by side while pursuing their individual goals, which sometimes leads to conflicts of interest, mutual distrust, and the emergence of disputes. A “team” by contrast, is defined as an organized social unit whose activities are directed toward the achievement of a clearly formulated common goal. Team interaction involves shared responsibility for results, mutual support, and the distribution of roles, which ensures coordination (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Conflict within a team is not seen as an obstacle but as an opportunity for growth and innovative solutions, while communication is organized in an open and constructive manner, encouraging the generation and acceptance of new ideas.

Therefore, the team-building process is a multi-layered, integrated process that combines psychological, managerial, and technological factors. It serves not only as a means of enhancing the motivation of team members but also as a strategic resource for the organization, contributing to the improvement of its competitiveness.

Hence, team-building is aimed at:

- formulating the team's overall goal and uniting team members around it,
- increasing the level of mutual trust and collaboration among team members,
- improving the psychological climate within the team and reducing tension,
- encouraging creative and non-standard solutions, and fostering openness to innovations.

Thus, a team is a group of people working towards a common goal. Team building involves the process of enabling the group of people to reach their goals. It consists of steps like goal achievement; facing the identified challenges and enabling the achievement of the goals (Ada-Mac Ozigbo, et. al., 2020).

It should be noted that the issue of team-building has not yet been subjected to comprehensive and purposeful analysis in the field of preschool education. It is generally discussed in the approaches of various authors, for example, it is mentioned that the stages of team development proposed by psychologist Bruce Tuckman (forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning) are also applicable

among older preschoolers (Tuckman, 1965). In addition, it can be noted that L. S. Vygotsky's theory of the "zone of proximal development" also relates to the concept of team-building among preschoolers, as it emphasizes that children's social interactions promote their ability to focus on common goals and make joint decisions (Vygotsky, 1978).

In our view, the team-building process, as a systematic, unified, and comprehensive process, which includes defining a common goal, planning strategies and actions to achieve educational content and expected outcomes, assigning roles, and organizing interaction among team members, can be effectively implemented among preschoolers through project-based activity. This is supported by the fact that, on the one hand, project-based activity involves clearly identifying objectives, planning actions, assigning roles, collaboration, and analysis, on the other hand, children aged 5–6 already possess developed social skills, cooperate with one another, follow established rules (Slavin, 2015; Veraksa et al., 2015), form small play groups by taking on various roles, and participate in group activities while attempting to solve assigned tasks (Fisher et al., 2011; Utyumova et al., 2020, Sypchenko, 2017). Therefore, project-based activities can provide an effective opportunity for the formation of teams among senior preschoolers and the development of team-working skills.

## METHODOLOGY

To investigate 5-6 years old preschoolers' teamwork skills, an experiment was conducted involving 30 preschoolers. During the study, project-based activity was implemented, and the children were organized into three subgroups, each comprising 10 preschoolers. It is noteworthy that the formation of subgroups within the team further reinforces the team-building process, as each subgroup, while completing its assigned tasks, engages in collaborative interactions both within the subgroup and across the entire team, collectively working toward the attainment of the common goal.

The project-based activity was carried out in stages:

### **The first phase: "Topic Selection"**

Together with the children, we discussed and selected the following topic: "Maintaining the cleanliness of the environment." Subsequently, for each subgroup, we assigned one specific question and suggested that they gather information related to their respective questions: 1) Who pollutes the environment? 2) What are the consequences of environmental pollution for humans? 3) How should we maintain environmental cleanliness? In addition, since the team was also tasked with creating a model of their ideal playground, we organized role assignments for each subgroup: the "Designers' Team" (responsible for designing the playground model), the "Builders' Team" (responsible for constructing various structures using LEGO, such as the playground, benches, and swings), and the "Decorators' Team" (responsible for supporting the other two subgroups in choosing colors, models, and shaping the

constructions).

### **The second phase: “Implementation of the Action Plan”**

In this phase of the project-based activity, the children carried out the tasks assigned to them. They collaboratively discussed the work to be performed, collected information related to their designated questions, and exchanged ideas. It should be noted that, in order to answer the questions, the children engaged in discussions not only within their own subgroups but also with other subgroups, including consultations with their parents.

For the creation of the playground model, the subgroups also collaborated with each other. The “Designers’ Team” designed the playground, discussed their ideas collectively, and presented them to the “Builders’ Team”. After these discussions, the “Builders” began constructing the structures with LEGO, consulting with the “Decorators’ Team,” who provided support regarding the selection of models and colors. This type of collaborative activity not only promoted teamwork within each subgroup but also fostered intergroup collaboration, encouraging discussion, problem-solving, and joint decision-making, thereby facilitating the planning of subsequent steps.

### **The third phase: “Presentation of the Results”**

In this phase, the children finalized and presented their work. The outputs of the three subgroups were combined, and each subgroup presented and explained the tasks they had completed. This approach helped the children recognize that each of their contributions played a role in achieving the overall outcome and fulfilling the common goal. Additionally, the children presented the information they had gathered during the project.

### **The fourth phase: “Reflection”**

During the reflection phase, we discussed children’s achievements with them, the difficulties encountered during the activity, and the strengths and weaknesses of their work. The children enthusiastically shared their feelings and impressions, which contributed to strengthening team spirit.

## **DISCUSSION**

To examine the development of teamwork skills among children during the project-based activity conducted with the experimental group, a diagnostic and assessment table was created, aligned with the phases of the project-based activity. For each phase, specific teamwork skills of the children were defined and evaluated on a 1–3 scale, corresponding to low, medium, and high levels (Table 1).

It should be noted that the selected skills were derived from approaches presented in the theoretical analysis of team-building.

**Table 1.**

**Assessment of 5–6-Year-Old Children’s Teamwork Skills According to the Phases of Project-Based Activity**

Phases	Teamwork Skills	Assessment
	Expression of ideas, discussion	
Topic Selection	Reaching a common agreement	
	Awareness of a common goal	
Implementation of the Action Plan	Awareness of one’s role	
	Carrying out coordinated actions	
	Problem solving, mutual support, involvement	
Presentation of the results	Demonstration of creative approaches	
	Combination of ideas	
	Mutual respect, ability to listen to each other	
Reflection	Assessment of own and a peer’s skills	
	Mutual evaluation within the team and between subgroups	
	Identifying the positive and negative aspects of the work	

Using the table presented above, we assessed each child’s teamwork skills both before the implementation of the project-based activity - through questions and observation of various forms of children’s activities (such as games, creative tasks) to obtain initial results - and at the end of each phase of the project-based activity to obtain final results. The obtained results are presented in the table below (Table 2).

**Table 2.**

**Level of Development of 5–6-Year-Old Children’s Teamwork Skills.**

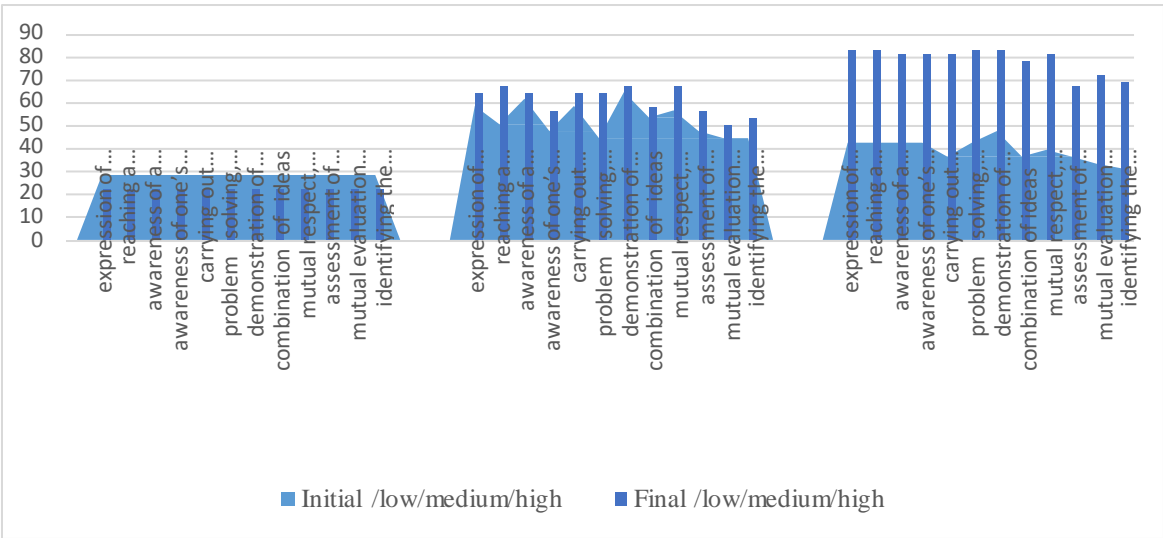
Results/Levels	Low level		Medium level		High level	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Initial results	10	33	14	47	6	20
Final results	8	27	12	40	10	33

The table clearly demonstrates changes in the results between the initial and final phases. In the initial phase, the low level accounted for 33% (10 children), the medium level for 47% (14 children), and the high level for 20% (6 children). In the final phase, the proportion of children at the low level decreased to 27% (8 children), the medium level increased to 40% (12 children), and the high level rose to 33% (10 children).

The correlation analysis revealed that project-based activity is positively associated with the teamwork skills of 5–6-year-old children ( $r = 0.55$ , Pearson correlation coefficient). This result indicates a significant and positive relationship between the variables. The correlation is moderately high, suggesting that when children are actively engaged in project-based activity, their teamwork skills also improve. The dynamics of the development of children’s teamwork skills are presented in Diagram 1, where positive shifts across low, medium, and high levels are clearly visible (Chart 1).

**Chart 1.**

**The dynamics of the development of senior preschoolers’ teamwork skills.**



# CONCLUSIONS

Based on our research, we can assert that:

- the team-building process is a complex task, as it involves a range of conditions and factors, with an emphasis on the principle of working together. A team is based on common goals, mutual trust, and collaborative relationships,

- the results obtained from the experiment justify the effective potential for team-building among senior preschoolers through project-based activities, which contributes to children's understanding of the common goal,
- project-based activity plays a crucial role in fostering children's teamwork skills, as it creates authentic opportunities for collaboration, shared problem-solving, and mutual responsibility,
- the subgroups within the team during project-based activity promote the development of both team-level and subgroup-level collaboration. Through engaging in meaningful tasks, children not only practice working together but also develop communication, negotiation, and decision-making skills that are essential for effective teamwork.

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## **“4Cs” COMPETENCES OF THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE STATE STANDARDS OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION OF THE RA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In an era of chaotic changes and unpredictable crises, society needs individuals who can navigate real-life situations and make decisions. The competency-based approach in preschool education provides preschoolers' individual potential development in the formation of 21<sup>st</sup>-century competences, which will teach a child from an early age to act independently in various problem-based situations.*

*The key competences of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not only knowledge and skills, but also a value-based attitude towards the world and personal qualities that help individuals successfully realize themselves in the context of teamwork and cooperation. Within the framework of the 21<sup>st</sup> century key competences, countries adapt universal skills to the specific goals of their national education systems.*

*The analysis of competences presented in the State Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia will allow us to identify their correspondence to the basic competences of the generally accepted “4Cs” model, to define the strengths and weaknesses of the state standard and to formulate a matrix for the holistic development of a future citizen of Armenian society—a personal vision of the “educated person”.*

*Preschool education implies:*

- *to explore the surrounding environment independently and perceive the world holistically,*
- *to communicate and respond adequately, empathize, forgive, and live in harmony with others,*
- *to control own behavior and form identity,*
- *to think creatively, discover new things through the search for non-standard, alternative solutions,*
- *to value national culture and embrace universal human values,*
- *to feel a sense of belonging to one's nation and country.*

**KEY WORDS:** State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia, key competences of the 21st century, “4Cs” model, comparative analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

At present, two processes are happening simultaneously in education: the clarification of universal 21<sup>st</sup> century competences and the transformation of national education systems in accordance with the urgent problems of each country and the international challenges of the labor market. The content of education is developed depending on the 21<sup>st</sup> century key competences and the subsequent revision of education system standards, particularly school education (Dobryakova, M. S. & Frumin, I. D., 2020).

The competency-based model of education is currently the most widely recognized internationally. It allows for the revision of key competences and, consequently, guides the selection of educational content towards the development of new literacy/educational foundations.

The bases of education are formed in preschool age. The process of upbringing, rather than formal teaching, reveals the individuality and uniqueness of each child, prioritizing human values and qualities, love, and dignity.

Nobel Prize laureate James Heckman (Hackman D. A., Farah M. J., 2009) demonstrated that the return on investments in preschool socialization programs is significantly higher than that of investments in school and professional education programs. The exceptional importance of preschool education in the formation of competences is also emphasized by Alexander Adamsky, Scientific Director of the Institute for Educational Policy “Eureka”:

“Preschool education can rightfully take a central place in the education system, because today there is a well-established opinion among experts that even key professional competencies are formed during preschool and early school years — from the ability to work in a team to the development of imagination and creativity. If these abilities are not formed at this age, no university can make up for this gap later” (Borzova, I. G., 2022).

The key competences of the 21st century were proposed by the international UNESCO commission led by former President of the European Commission Jacques Delors (Delors, J. (Ed.), 1996). He outlined four fundamental principles as the basis of the 21st century education: *learning to live, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to coexist*.

The report, prepared for UNESCO by an independent commission, strongly urged allocating more resources to education both in individual countries and worldwide, and strengthening international

cooperation in this field. The commission believed that a more flexible system—providing diversity of courses, organic links between professional experience and skills development—would adequately address the gap between labor market demand and supply of specialists. Flexibility, diversity, and accessibility of education in time and space allow individuals to understand themselves and their environment and to fulfill their social role in work and community life.

In other words, education has a social character: during the process, children discover and enrich relationships with others, and acquire the skills of living together. This process must begin in preschool age and take various forms depending on the situation, with active involvement of both family and society.

The “4Cs” competence model, which includes four core competences according to international understanding—**critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration**—is the structural nucleus of 21st-century competences, upon which national education standards are built.

The “4Cs” model, developed in the early 21st century within the initiative *Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21, USA)*, represents four competences that are considered fundamental meta-competences enabling individuals to function effectively under conditions of uncertainty, innovation, and digitalization (Trilling & Fadel, 2009; P21, 2019). These competences are seen as the foundation for forming skills such as digital literacy, leadership, self-organization, and civic responsibility (OECD, 2018).

Modern researchers (Fullan & Scott, 2014) consider the 4Cs as fundamental competences for designing “deep learning pedagogies” aimed at developing critical thinking and creative self-realization of students.

The 4Cs model serves as a bridge between traditional cognitive knowledge and socio-emotional skills, ensuring the transition from a knowledge-centered paradigm of education to a competency-based one, focused on the development of personality as an active subject of activity and communication.

Modern studies emphasize that the formation of basic 21st-century competences begins in preschool age (OECD, 2018). Theoretical justification for this is provided by Vygotsky’s cultural-historical approach, D. B. Elkonin’s theory of play as the leading activity, and research by Trilling & Fadel.

According to the cultural-historical approach (Vygotsky, L. S., 1984), a child’s development is mediated by social interaction, meaning that communication and collaboration become the driving force of development and learning.

Play activity (Elkonin, D. B., 1989) creates unique conditions for the natural development of creativity, initiative, and problem-solving ability. Through joint play and communication, children learn to negotiate, propose ideas, critically evaluate situations, and find alternative courses of action—that is, to master the first forms of 4Cs competences (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

The formation of the 4Cs at preschool age occurs primarily in integrated educational situations, where the child acts as an active participant in interaction with the surrounding world. Research shows that the use of play and project-based learning contributes to the development of cooperation and communication skills, while the organization of research activities fosters critical and creative thinking (Fullan & Scott, 2014). Thus, preschool age can be regarded as a sensitive period for the formation of the 4Cs meta-competences.

From birth to school, considering the importance of forming socio-behavioral skills such as the ability to communicate, negotiate, and avoid conflict, the preschool educational process should focus on the development of independence, responsibility, emotionality, and civic sense. The emphasis of modern education on the formation of socio-behavioral competences is a demand of the time.

Thus, in shaping the education and competence of preschoolers, the leading role belongs to the Preschool Education Standard. The main principle of this document is to take into account the educational needs of the modern preschool child in the context of informational socialization. The Preschool Education Standard should give children the opportunity to realize their individuality by expanding their personal potential and forming vital competences.

The State Standard of Preschool Education represents a set of state guarantees and requirements for programs, conditions, and outcomes of quality education. The quality of preschool education is assessed based on the formulation of predetermined basic competences.

In the State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia, the key competences are identified according to the following principles:

- correspondence to the 21<sup>st</sup> century key competences,
- continuity – consideration the competences of primary education,
- enrichment of competences with value and meaning.

The State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia (2024) presents **nine competences**:

1. Linguistic and communication competence.
2. Cognitive and motivational competence.
3. Self-knowledge and socialization competence.
4. Democratic and civic competence.
5. Digital and media competence.
6. Cultural competence.
7. Mathematical and technical competence.
8. Economic competence.
9. Physical culture and health maintenance competence.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The article presents an analysis of the theoretical foundations for identifying the basic competences of the 21st century, substantiates the importance of forming key competences beginning in preschool age, and highlights the necessity of considering universal 21<sup>st</sup> century competences when developing state educational standards.

The article also reveals the system of preschool children's competences, which is a distinctive feature of the 2021 State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia. The principles underlying their identification are characterized, and a comparative analysis is carried out regarding their correspondence to the "4Cs" competence model.

In the research process, empirical methods were used: theoretical analysis of scientific sources, questionnaires, and interviews.

Generally accepted views on the four basic competences (**critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration**) are fundamental both for describing their manifestations and for determining the degree of their formation.

- **Critical thinking** – a system of cognitive strategies and communicative qualities that enable effective interaction with informational reality.
  - **Creativity** – the result of innovative thinking, a new way of understanding and perceiving things, and the ability to act unconventionally.
  - **Communication** – the ability to express and interpret thoughts, feelings, and facts, and to communicate in various social and cultural contexts.
  - **Collaboration** – readiness and ability to work in a team: to ask for help, to listen to others' opinions, to agree with alternative proposals, to define one's own contribution, and to evaluate the collective result as one's own.
1. The basis for understanding critical thinking is the approach formulated in the works of **K. Popper** (Popper, K. R., 1994): *we learn from mistakes, not through the accumulation of data*. The best condition for critical thinking is the social situation of communication and interaction: *"You and me may be wrong, but together we can gradually approach the truth"* (Popper, K. R., 1966, p. 225). Critical thinking develops through active interaction, exchange of opinions, and critique in the process of joint learning.
  2. In assessing creativity/creative thinking, the guiding framework is **B. Lucas's model** (Lucas, B., 2016). Lucas defines creativity as a set of *habits of mind* that are manifested in actions and can be purposefully formed through learning. He identifies **five key dimensions of creativity**:
    - **Curiosity** – the ability to ask questions, explore, and notice new opportunities.

- **Imagination** – the ability to envision the new, play with ideas, and mentally model different possibilities.
  - **Persistence** – the readiness to overcome difficulties and patiently work on an idea.
  - **Discipline** – organization, attention to detail, and the ability to develop and implement ideas.
  - **Collaboration** – openness to teamwork, idea exchange, acceptance of one’s own mistakes and others’ viewpoints.
3. Communication and collaboration are easier to describe than the other components of the “4Cs” since these skills manifest externally and are therefore easier to observe. The ability to work in a team, interact, and cooperate is considered one of the key elements in the competence system of the **State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia**.

**The structure of communicative competence includes:**

- **Readiness for communication:** absence of fear when entering into communication, initiation of communication, readiness to respond to someone else’s question, readiness to ask questions.
- **Adaptation to the purpose, context, and communication partner:** in various communicative situations, the ability to choose different verbal and non-verbal means of communication, guided by the emotional state of the partner.
- **Persuasive communication:** the use of verbal (vocabulary and knowledge of language rules) and non-verbal means (gestures, facial expressions, intonation) to achieve the communication goal.

**The structure of collaboration (cooperation) includes:**

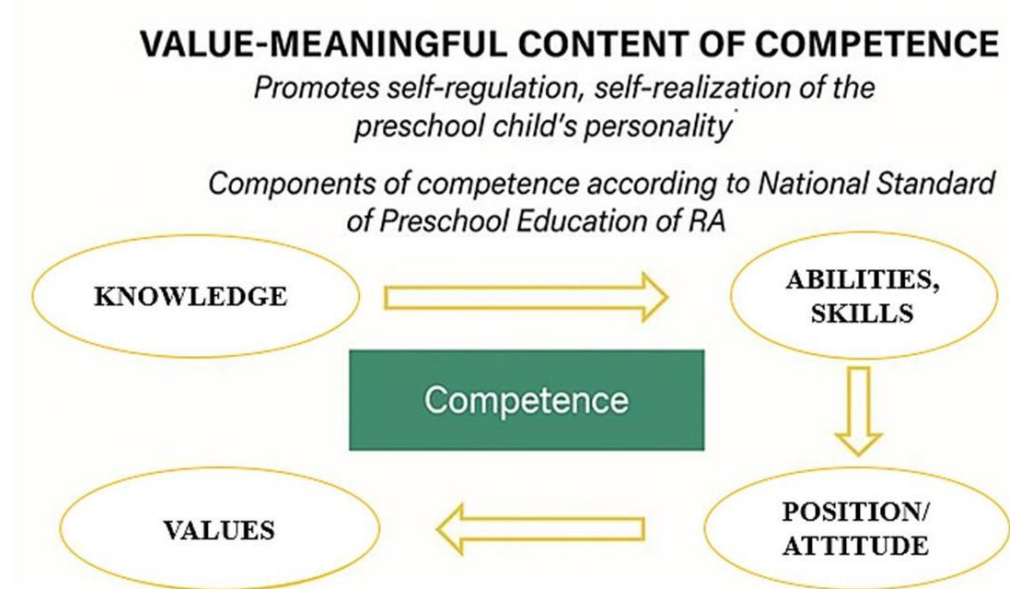
- **Acceptance of common goals:** the ability to share the goals of the team and place them above personal goals, work in a team, integrate one’s work into the collective solution, and manage one’s emotions in teamwork.
- **Social interaction:** participation in discussions, the ability to negotiate, interact respectfully, listen and accept the opinions of others, coordinate one’s actions with those of other team members; willingness to help them; readiness to take responsibility for the overall result.
- **Fulfilling commitments:** readiness to take on a position and assume a role that is effective for teamwork; responsible performance of one’s part of the work, achievement of a quality result.
- **Independence and initiative:** the ability to work independently and show initiative within the framework of the assigned task; the ability to involve all team members in solving the task, provide them with support, and motivate them.

The experiment involved 100 preschool educators, whose opinions were taken into account during the process of grouping the competences.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Since the objective of our research was to study the correspondence between preschool children's competences presented in the State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia and the universal competences of the 21st century—particularly the “4Cs”—that is, to determine the compatibility of preschool competences with 21st-century education competences, we considered it appropriate to present the comparative results in the form of tables and figures. These illustrate the degree of compatibility between preschool competences and the “4Cs”.

To provide a full picture of the emphases within the State Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia, we first describe the structural components of the concept of “competence” according to the accepted definition in Armenia. The structural indicators demonstrate the priority given to social-behavioral competences.



**Figure 1. Components of the Concept of “Competence” According to the State Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia**

As mentioned in the introduction, the **State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia** identifies nine competences which, in essence, correspond to the semantic content of the “4Cs” competences. However, it was necessary to group them in order to both facilitate their formation in practice and to provide educators with a clearer understanding of the final outcomes of preschool education as indicators of its quality.

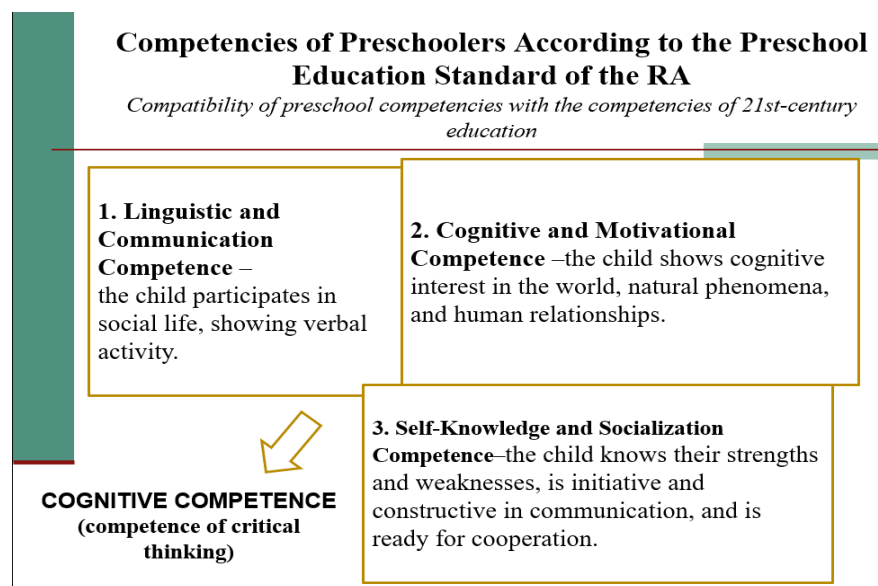
Competences for preschoolers were also formulated in harmony with the competences proposed by **Jacques Delors**.



The competence of **critical thinking** can be presented as following (Table 1).

<b>Competences of Critical Thinking The State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia</b>	<b>General Characteristics of the State Standard Competences</b>	<b>Characteristics of Critical Thinking in the “4Cs” Model</b>
<b>1. Linguistic and Communicative Competence</b>	The child participates in social life, demonstrating verbal activity. Easily uses speech structures in communication with adults and peers.	Curiosity, initiative, ability to explain the course of one’s thoughts.
<b>2. Cognitive and Motivational Competence</b>	The child shows cognitive interest in the world, natural phenomena, and human relationships. Engages in various types of activities on their own initiative.	Purposeful, self-regulated judgment; consistency of cognitive actions.
<b>3. Self-Knowledge and Socialization Competence</b>	Demonstrates cognitive activity. The child knows own strengths and weaknesses, is initiative-taking, constructive in communication, and is ready for cooperation.	Self-regulation (control), reflection, self-assessment, and correction.

**Table 1. Critical Thinking Competence According to the State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia**



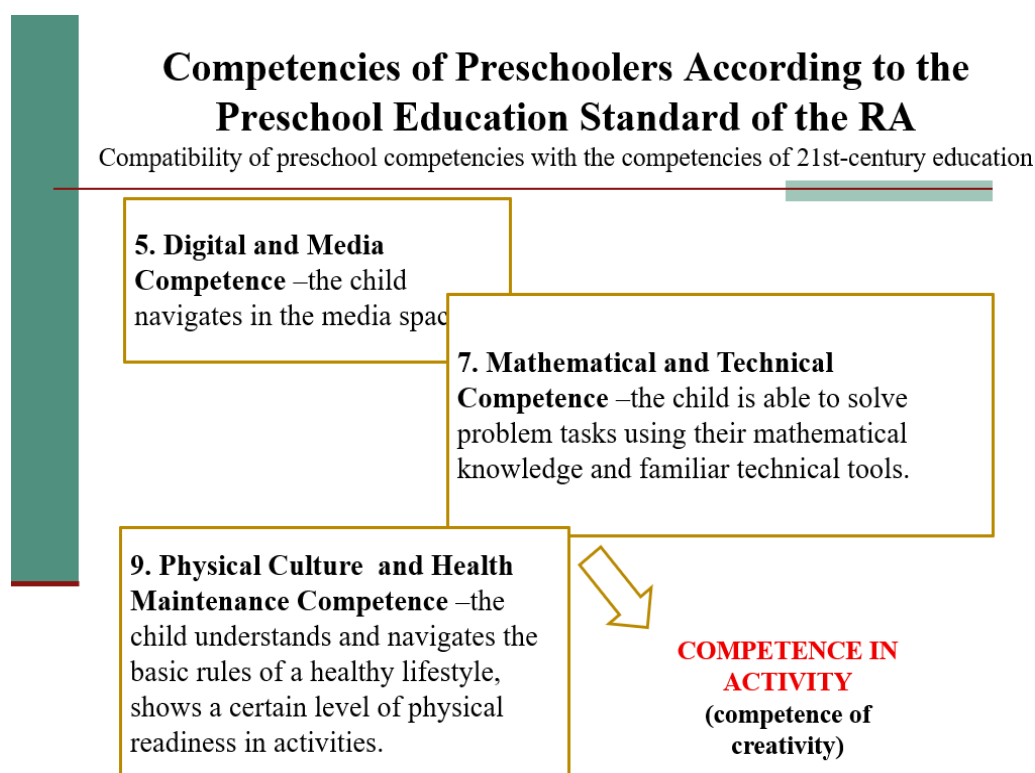


**Figure 2. Components of Critical Thinking Competence / Cognitive Competence**

Creative thinking competence can be presented as following (Table 2).

<b>Competencies of Creative Thinking (State Standard)</b>	<b>General Characteristics of Competencies (State Standard)</b>	<b>Characteristics of Critical Thinking according to the "4Cs" Model</b>
<b>5. Digital and Media Competence</b>	The child is able to navigate the media space, use basic media tools while following rules, being aware of risks and personal responsibility.	Curiosity, initiative, interest in the surrounding world and desire to learn more about it using media tools. Active search for new information.
<b>7. Mathematical and Technical Competence</b>	The child is able to solve problem-based tasks using mathematical knowledge and familiar technical tools.	Independent search for answers to own questions. Ability to generate a large number of ideas, originality of proposed ideas.
<b>9. Physical culture and health maintenance competence.</b>	The child understands and navigates the basic principles of a healthy lifestyle, demonstrates certain physical readiness and willpower in activities.	Ability to quickly adapt activities to changing conditions, readiness for new actions.

**Table 2. Competence of Creative Thinking according to the State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia**

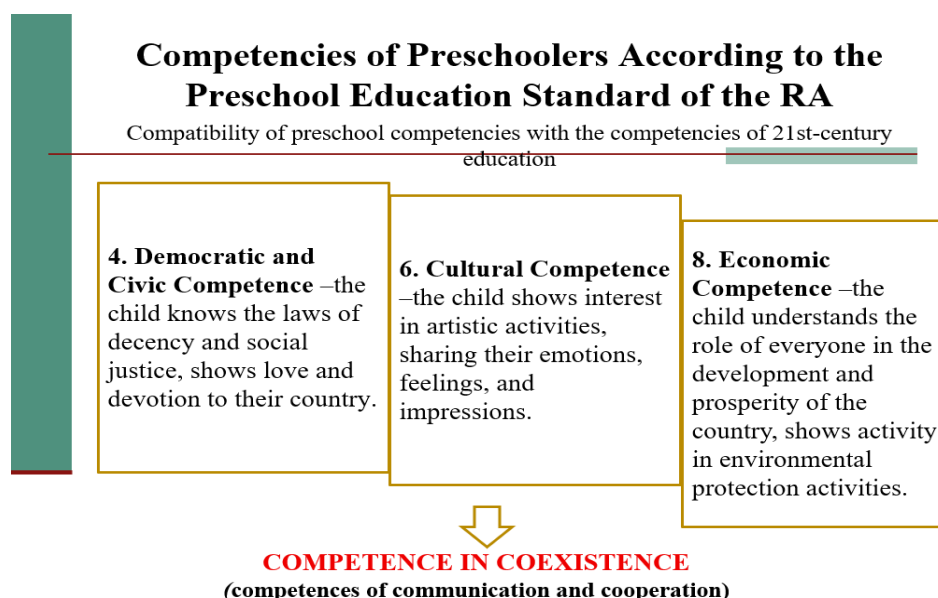


**Figure 3. Components of Critical Thinking Competence in Activity**

Communication and cooperation competences can be presented as following (Table 3).

<b>Competencies of Communication and Cooperation (State Standard)</b>	<b>General Characteristics of Competencies (State Standard)</b>	<b>Characteristics of Critical Thinking according to the "4Cs" Model</b>
<b>4. Democratic and Civic Competence</b>	The child knows the rules of decency and social justice,	In different communication situations, the ability to
	shows love and devotion to their country, knows its symbols, and has basic understanding of their rights and responsibilities.	choose verbal and non-verbal means of communication depending on the partner's emotional state. Ability to negotiate, interact respectfully, listen to and accept the opinions of team members. Readiness to help.
<b>6. Cultural Competence</b>	The child shows interest in artistic activity, shares emotions, feelings and impressions, distinguishes samples of national and world culture.	Ability to communicate effectively in various social and cultural contexts. Capacity to work independently and show initiative within a given task. Ability to involve team members in problem-solving, support and motivate them. Readiness to take such a position that is effective for teamwork. Use of verbal and non-verbal means to achieve communication goals.
<b>8. Economic Competence</b>	The child understands the role of each person in the development and improvement of the country, shows activity in environmental protection events. Able to discuss the results of their own and others' work.	Readiness to answer and ask questions. Ability to share the team's goals and put them above own goals, work in a team, integrate the results of own work into the collective solution, control emotions in teamwork.

**Table 3. Competencies of Communication and Cooperation according to the State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia**



**Figure 4. Components of Communication and Cooperation Competencies / Competence of Coexistence**

Kindergarten teachers actively participated in the experiment, being involved in the process of grouping competencies in accordance with the “4Cs” competencies. At the end of the joint work, the teachers were asked to answer two questions:

1. Do the competences of the State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia correspond to the key competencies of the “4Cs”?
2. How effective is the grouping of competences in terms of understanding their content?

Questions	Number of Respondents	Correspond	Partially Correspond	Do not Correspond
1. Compliance of the competences of the State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of RA with the key competences of the “4Cs”?	100	50 teachers – 50%	30 teachers – 30%	20 teachers – 20%
2. Effectiveness of grouping competences in understanding their content	100	70 teachers – 70% (Effective)	25 teachers – 25% (Partially effective)	5 teachers – 5% (Not effective)

The answers are presented in **Table 4.**

**Table 4. Results of the Survey of Preschool Teachers**

## CONCLUSION

Analyzing the work carried out, the following should be noted:

- The formation of socio-behavioral competences from an early age is a challenge of the time; therefore, the competences presented in the national education standards should be identical to the key “4Cs” competences.
- The competences presented in the State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of the Republic of Armenia, in terms of values and meaning, do not differ from the competences of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: their content reflects the principles of education developed by the International Commission under UNESCO, with a clear emphasis on the formation of competences that reflect the effectiveness of interaction and teamwork.
- The competences presented in the State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of RA are formulated strictly based on the age characteristics of preschool children, and in their descriptions there are some inconsistencies with the key “4Cs” competences. However, the spirit of cooperation and the priority of communicative-cooperative competences are clearly visible.
- A stronger correspondence is observed between the key “4Cs” competences and the formation of the final results, presented in dynamics across the areas of preschoolers’ development.

Thus, the matrix of holistic development of the future citizen of Armenian society implies:

- the ability for independent cognition of the environment and holistic perception of the world,
- the ability to communicate and respond adequately, the capacity to empathize, forgive, and live in harmony with others,
- the ability to control behavior and form own identity,
- the ability to think creatively, discover the new through the search for non-standard, alternative solutions,
- the ability to value national culture and perceive universal human values,
- a sense of belonging to the nation and country.

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# APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF SYSTEMICITY AS A MEANS OF INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING IN BIOLOGY COURSES

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## ABSTRACT

*This article reveals the issues of using a systematic approach in teaching biology. The aim of the article is to clarify the possibilities of systematic teaching of natural science subjects in the process of teaching biology through pedagogical research, to systematize students' knowledge through integrated lessons, contributing to the formation of their worldview. The study was conducted in grades 7-9 of the secondary school No. 2 named after Khachatur Abovyan in Yerevan, in which 180 students from the experimental and control groups participated. The results of the experimental study indicate that the application of the principle of systemicity in the process of teaching biology contributes to the development of students' thinking, increases motivation to learn and helps to increase the level of knowledge.*

**Keywords:** learning, biological system, integrity, system approach, method, activity, integration, pedagogical process, motivation to learn.

## INTRODUCTION

In the learning process, the younger generations must assimilate what has already been accumulated by society, that is, to master the knowledge corresponding to their level of development, to master certain work skills, to assimilate the norms of behavior and the experience of society, to develop a certain system of views on life. To achieve this goal, it is important to introduce integrated learning, which determines the relevance of this work.

At the present stage of the development of biological science, the leading methodological direction is the system approach. As is known, the system approach in pedagogy involves an attitude to

pedagogy as a system - a set of well-structured and closely interrelated elements. This approach, in contrast to the traditional subject-based approach, is more qualitative and modern. The principle of systemicity is a category of philosophy and methodology, according to which all objects and phenomena of the world are considered as holistic and complex systems of varying degrees.

An important methodological task in the learning process is to ensure that the knowledge acquired by students is not fragmented facts, but has a systematic character based on causal relationships. Biological knowledge will only be a formal assimilation of facts if they are not realized and not based on deep conviction. Both in nature and in the learning process, everything must be interconnected and purposeful. K.D. Ushinsky noted: "A head filled with fragmented, disjointed knowledge is like a pantry in which everything is in disarray and the owner himself cannot find anything" (Ushinsky, 1993).

The purpose of the work: The purpose of this work was to clarify the possibilities of systematic teaching of natural science subjects in the process of teaching biology through pedagogical research, to systematize students' knowledge through integrated lessons, contributing to the formation of their worldview. To this end, the task was set:

- to study the possibilities of organizing the implementation of the principle of systemicity in the courses "Biology" in the main school,
- to develop examples of biological systems, apply them in the course of biology, systematizing the knowledge and skills obtained in the natural science subjects.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The system approach became a recognized scientific direction in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Its founder is considered to be the Austrian biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy (Blauberg, et al., 1978). The systemic way of thinking not only accumulates previous styles of thinking in a transformed form, but also acts as an integrator of various methodologies, ways, and methods of cognitive activity into a single systemic process of interdisciplinary research (Reshetova, 2002).

The principle of systematics suggests that nature should be viewed as a whole. Any biological object can be represented as a system, and in its study, one should first apply a macroscopic approach-considering the object as a whole and its functioning in the external world-and then a microscopic approach-isolating its components, identifying subsystems, and examining their interconnections. The forms of learning should also be systematic: lessons, excursions, homework, extracurricular and out-of-school activities (Vernadsky, 2001).

Afanasev wrote, "Only a systematic approach allows us to integrate heterogeneous specific tasks, bring them to a common denominator, and thus represent the most complex group of various tasks as a single problem" (Afanasev, 1986).

The systematic approach is not only a methodological tool that directs research and defines the nature of cognitive procedures, but also a means that determines the conceptual system produced (the elements of knowledge, their content, structure). A system is the unity of elements that depend on one another and exist in certain relationships, forming a particular integrity. An element is the foundation of the system's integrity: it represents a quantitative and qualitative unit of its structure. Regardless of the complexity of its organization, an element is viewed as an indivisible object within the system (for example, the system of natural numbers consists of whole numbers, not fractions; a ship's crew consists of individual people, not parts of the human body). Connections are the relationships between the elements (subsystems) of the system (internal connections) and between the system and the external environment (external connections). The system-forming factors are those that play a leading role at a given stage of the system's development in maintaining its integrity. The set of mechanisms that ensure the integrity of the system is called integration. Hierarchy reflects the multi-level organization of complex systems, where its elements and their sets are combined into relatively autonomous aggregates of different ranks (subsystems) (Tsibulevsky, 2008).

The number of different elements and their relationships that a system includes determines its complexity. If the absence of elements in a group does not affect either the group or an individual element, then such a group is not a system. For example, a pile of apples and an apple tree, or a pile of wheat grains and a single wheat seed. A single seed taken separately is a system, while a pile of seeds is not. In principle, the elements of systems can themselves be represented as systems, and a given system in another context can act as an element or subsystem of a more complex system. For instance, a tissue is a system for a cell and a subsystem for an organ. The cell, in turn, can also be considered a system.

When applying the principle of systematics in biology courses, examples should be presented that are common to all forms of the organic world-growth, development, nutrition, reproduction, etc-justifying the idea that all phenomena in nature are connected by causal relationships, have a systematic nature, and follow a certain developmental course. Students need to be convinced that biological systems also play a significant role in understanding the world.

In biology, unlike physics and chemistry, there are fewer generalizations accepted in the form of laws. This is due to the complex structure of living systems. A systematic interpretation of laws and regularities enhances the effectiveness of the acquired knowledge and understanding and can contribute to new discoveries, which can be achieved theoretically and experimentally. The creation of systems is



necessary at all levels of biological organization: cell, organism, population, species, biocenosis, biosphere. It is much easier to see, perceive, and remember a biological phenomenon in a system than in an isolated state.

Knowledge based solely on mechanical memory is unstable and quickly forgotten. In contrast, systematically organized, sequentially acquired knowledge is much more stable, though more challenging to obtain. For example, a student may understand water absorption by roots and evaporation from leaves, but understanding the movement of water within the plant and the interrelation of organs in this process will be more complex. To facilitate this understanding, it is necessary to consider the plant as an integral system. Thus, water absorption by roots does not occur without the involvement of other organs of the plant; this is facilitated by the evaporation of water from leaves. At the same time, the question arises as to how water reaches the leaves. The stem serves as the intermediate link in the transportation of water in the plant-it is another element of the holistic system. The stem alone cannot transport water. The transportation of water through the stem involves root pressure-the force pushing water toward the stem-and the suction force from water evaporation at the leaves. However, the stem does not perform a passive transport function. It contains water-conducting vessels with capillary structure, through which water moves much more easily. Moreover, in the water-conducting vessels, there is a force of cohesion between water molecules-a force of mutual attraction. In other words, a connected, unified system for the absorption and transportation of water has been created. Ultimately, all processes occurring in the plant are directed toward a single common "goal"-the formation and maturation of reproductive organs-flowers, fruits, and seeds-ensuring the preservation of the species (Tangamyang, et al., 2011).

To activate students' learning activities and stimulate their cognitive interests, all means of organizing and conducting educational activities are employed-oral, didactic (demonstrative), and practical methods, methods of reproduction and search, as well as inductive and deductive methods (Gevorgyan, 2012).

## METHODOLOGY

In the process of teaching biology, subject-oriented learning predominates, while systematic learning allows students to compare various biological phenomena and make different discoveries and interpretations through sequential and systematic connections. The use of traditional teaching methods in the educational process often makes the material uninteresting and dull. In contrast, a schematic representation of the lesson based on the principle of systematics has a positive impact on the quality of

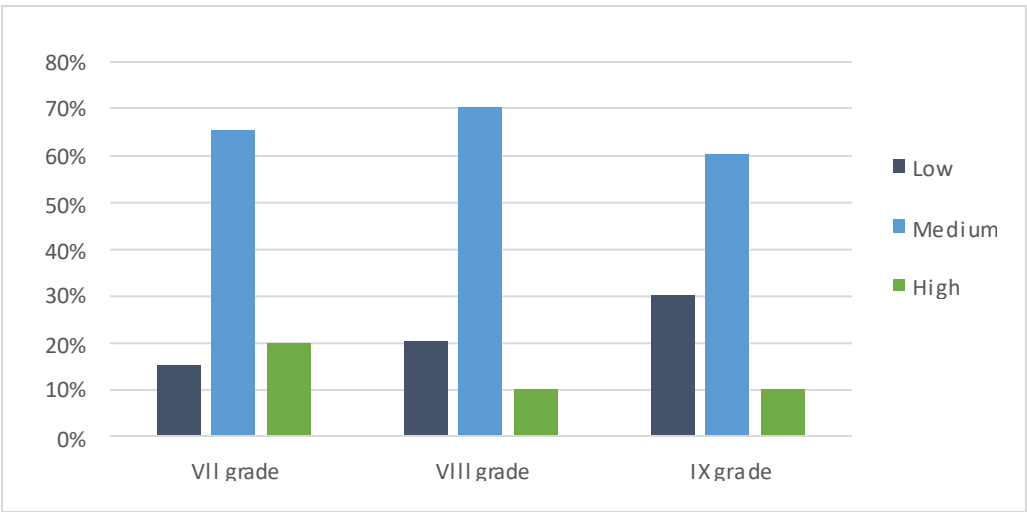
student learning, as it develops not only perception and thinking but also visual memory, reasoning, and logical analysis.

Considering these issues and aiming to study and interpret the discussed topics, we conducted an experiment at school No. 2 named after Khachatur Abovyan in Yerevan. Through the systems we developed, testing, and individual interviews, we carried out special surveys to determine the initial state of students' knowledge and their readiness to participate in the experiment. The study involved 180 students from grades 7-9. Based on the diagnostics, we selected methods, tools, and forms of research and transitioned to the formative stage. In the formative stage of teaching, we utilized a number of biological systems intended for educational purposes that were included in the school biology curriculum. Let's introduce some of the topics of the written works: "Protozoa", "Structure and diversity of flowering plants", (7th grade), "Organ, organ systems", "The internal environment of the organism", (8th grade), "Plastic and energy exchange", "Photosynthesis" (9th grade), (Esayan, et al, 2023; Tangamyany, Sisakyan, 2008; Tangamyany, Safaryan, 2014).

For the experiment, students with relatively equal levels of preparation were chosen. Teaching in the control classes was organized in a traditional manner, while in the experimental classes, thematic integrated systems were used. Upon completion of the research, a final assessment was conducted. For this purpose, the assignments also included broader philosophical questions, the answers to which were evaluated according to the levels established by V.P. Bospalko: correct, partially correct, incorrect, and erroneous answers (Bospalko, 1989).

**RESULTS**

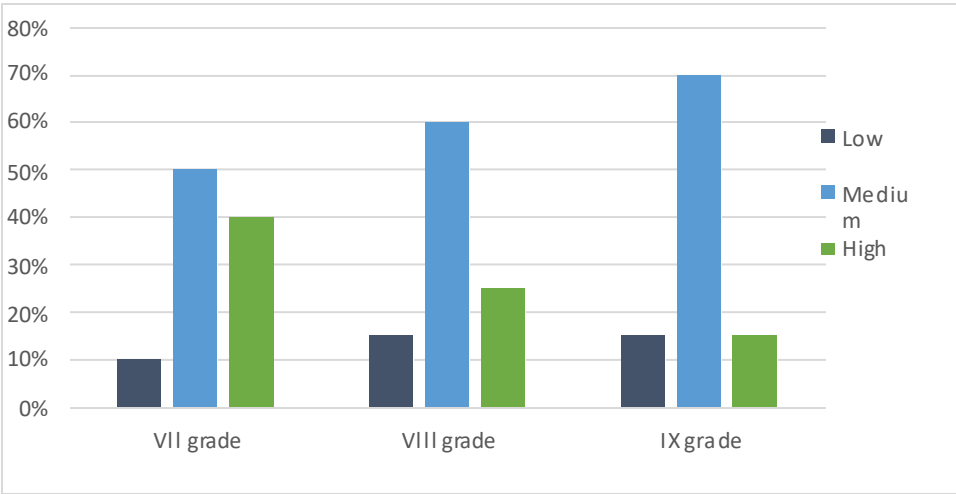
Below are the results of the thematic work conducted in the experimental and control classes. In a 10-point grading system, scores of 8-10 were recognized as high, 6-7 as average, and 4-5 as low.



**Diagram 1: Results of thematic written work in control classes**

The final results of the thematic work showed that in the control classes across all three grades, students predominantly demonstrated average results, with the percentage ranging from 60-70% (diagram 1).

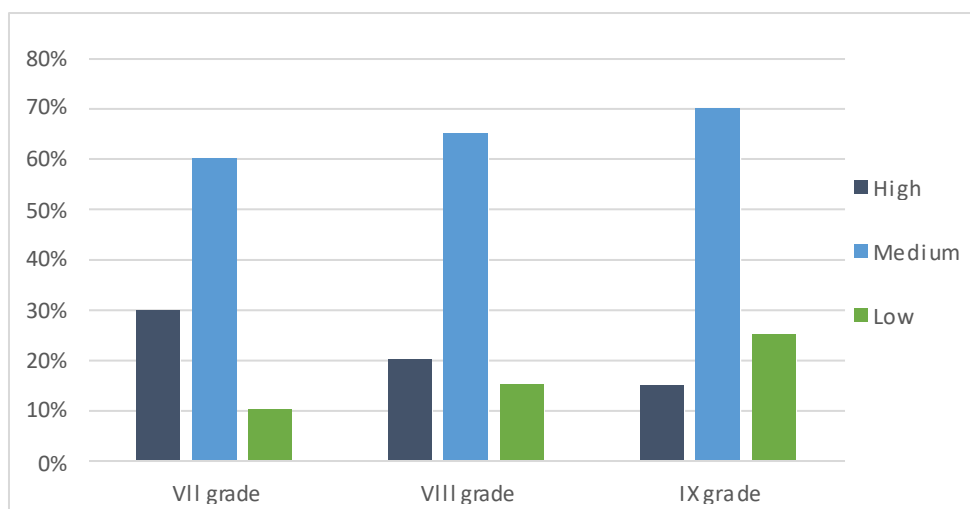
High scores were recorded in the experimental 7th grade at 40%, in the 8th grade at 25%, and in the 9th grade at 15%. In contrast, the control classes showed the following results: 20% in the 7th grade, 10% in the 8th grade, and 10% in the 9th grade (diagrams 1 and 2).



**Diagram 2: Results of thematic written work in experimental classes**

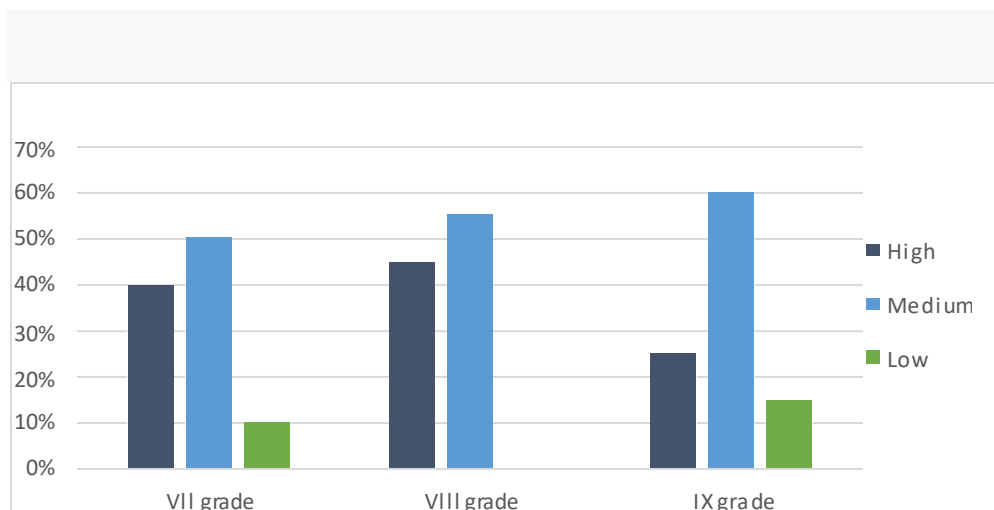
These results indicate that in the experimental classes, the application of a systematic approach increased the percentage of average and high scores. Therefore, we can conclude that systematic learning enhances the effectiveness of education.

To determine the effectiveness of the systematic approach to teaching, a comparison was also conducted at the end of the year. The assignments included broader questions based on the principle of systematics. The results are presented in Tables 3 and 4. In the experimental class, 40% of 7th graders answered correctly, while the control class had correct answers at 30%. In the 9th grade, the trend continued similarly: 60% in the experimental class compared to 70% in the control class.



**Diagram 3: Results of semester written assignments in control classes**

In the 8th grade, the situation was as follows: 20% in the control class answered correctly, while 45% did so in the experimental class. Incorrect answers were also noted: in the control class, 15% were incorrect, whereas in the experimental class, only partially incorrect answers amounted to 55%.



**Diagram 4: Results of semester written assignments in experimental classes**

Data at the end of the year further confirm that the trend persists: assignments based on the principle of systematics applied in the experimental classes had a positive impact, leading to more effective lessons and higher performance.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Thus, the results of the experimental study indicate that the application of the principle of systematics in the process of teaching biology contributes to the development of students' thinking, increases motivation for learning, and enhances their level of knowledge.

In our view, to improve the effectiveness of biology education, it is necessary to present the subject matter in a systematic form, ensuring interdisciplinary connections and interpretations of causal relationships of phenomena, so that students form holistic logical representations and beliefs about the objective world.

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# SECTION 2.

# PSYCHOLOGY



Psychology

# EXPLORING ETHNIC STEREOTYPES AND ADOLESCENT VALUES: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

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## ABSTRACT

*This study explores how ethnic stereotypes influence adolescent identity and values. It draws conclusions from a*

*qualitative focus group of 12 participants (ages 11-52) from various cultural and generational backgrounds, including members of the Armenian diaspora and other ethnic minorities. The study identified eight key themes: identity formation and cultural duality, media portrayal, daily stereotyping, internalized perceptions, generational changes, coping mechanisms, value influences, and constructive solutions. The findings highlight the complex and changing experiences of youth navigating ethnicity within a multicultural society, emphasizing the important roles of education, media, and family in shaping identity.*

**Keywords:** ethnic identity, adolescence, stereotypes, diaspora, qualitative research.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Human behavior, encompassing thoughts, emotions, and actions, cannot be explained solely by natural laws; cultural rules and norms play a decisive role (Eckensberger, 1990). Culture, while widely invoked, remains a complex construct referring to shared beliefs, values, norms, and practices that shape human experience (Valsiner, 2009; Kashima, 2019). Psychology conceptualizes culture as both shaping and being shaped by individuals, emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between mind and culture (Shweder, 1995).

Over time, shared cultural values may crystallize into stereotypes, simplified and often distorted beliefs about social groups. Ethnic stereotypes, whether positive or negative, can obscure individual variation and contribute to prejudice and discrimination (American Psychological Association [APA], n.d.-b). Adolescence represents a particularly sensitive developmental period in which social feedback and cultural narratives significantly influence identity formation (Erikson, 1968; Phinney, 1990).

Previous research demonstrates that stereotypes can shape adolescents' self-concept, aspirations, and interpersonal behavior through mechanisms such as social identity processes and stereotype threat (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Steele & Aronson, 1995). However, few studies have qualitatively examined how adolescents articulate, justify, and critically evaluate ethnic stereotypes across cultural and generational contexts. The present study addresses this gap by examining how ethnic stereotypes are experienced and negotiated in relation to adolescent value development, with particular attention to diaspora and cross-generational perspectives.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Participants

The study included 12 participants aged 11 to 52 years. The sample consisted of adolescents (ages 11–21) and adults reflecting on adolescent experiences. Participants identified as Armenian (from Armenia and diaspora communities in Germany, Lebanon, and Iran), Mexican American, and German.

## 2.2 Selection Criteria

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling. Inclusion criteria were: (a) identification with a distinct ethnic or cultural group, (b) direct experience with adolescence in a multicultural or monocultural context, and (c) willingness to discuss experiences related to ethnic stereotypes and values. Adults were included to provide cross-generational reflections on adolescent development. Participation was voluntary, and all participants provided informed consent; parental consent was obtained for minors.

## 2.3 Data Collection

Data was collected through a semi-structured focus group discussion. Guiding questions addressed experiences with ethnic stereotyping, identity formation, cultural integration, value transmission, and perceived generational differences. The focus group was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

A thematic analysis approach was employed following Braun and Clarke's qualitative framework. Analysis proceeded through six stages: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts, (2) initial open coding to identify meaningful units, (3) clustering codes into preliminary themes, (4) reviewing themes for internal coherence and distinctiveness, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the analytic narrative.

Coding was conducted iteratively, with ongoing comparisons across participants and age groups. Analytic saturation was considered reached when no new themes or substantive insights emerged from the data.

# 3. RESULTS

## 3.1 Identity Formation and Cultural Duality

Participants reported hybrid identities, particularly among those in diasporic contexts. Adolescents described being Armenian at home while integrating seamlessly into host cultures (e.g., German or Iranian society). This dual identity offered cultural adaptability but sometimes led to internal conflict when cultural expectations diverged. These experiences are consistent with Berry's (1997) model of acculturation and Phinney's (1990) research on bicultural identity development.

Berry proposed a model of acculturation that categorizes individual adaptation strategies along two dimensions (Berry, 1997). The first dimension relates to whether a person maintains or abandons their native culture. The second dimension concerns the adoption or rejection of the host culture.

Phinney's (1990) research on bicultural identity development focuses on the process by which individuals develop a sense of belonging to both their ethnic group and the dominant culture. She proposes that exploring ethnic identity involves understanding one's cultural heritage, recognizing the implications of group membership, and making informed decisions about the role of ethnicity in one's life.

Identity formation and development patterns vary due to differences in individual backgrounds and social



environments (Seaton et al., 2006).

### 3.2 Media Representation and Its Impact

Media representation, the way different groups and ideas are portrayed in media, significantly shapes societal values and norms. It influences how individuals perceive others, understand identities, and ultimately, how the world is viewed. While positive representation fosters empathy and inclusiveness, negative portrayals may reinforce prejudice and inequality.

Participants in this study emphasized the decisive role of media in shaping stereotypes and self-perception. A common concern among the participants was media misrepresentation. For instance, a Mexican-American attorney criticized the lack of positive Latina role models, while Armenian participants noted inaccurate portrayals of diaspora Armenians in homeland media. These media depictions influence adolescents' self-image and societal expectations (Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000).

### 3.3 Stereotypes in Daily Life and Education

Stereotyping was evident in both educational and community settings. Lebanese-Armenians reported facing judgments based on language use, while Germans, influenced by their historical experiences and collective guilt, tended to avoid overt stereotyping. Informal biases were also evident in community narratives, often reflecting urban-rural divides.

These findings highlight the widespread presence of both explicit and implicit bias in institutional and informal settings (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000). Explicit bias refers to conscious, deliberate prejudices or beliefs about specific groups. Unlike implicit bias, which functions unconsciously, explicit bias is something individuals openly admit and express. Implicit bias theory concerns unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that influence individuals' decisions and actions. (APA, n.d.-a).

### 3.4 Internalized Stereotypes and Self-Worth

Internalized stereotypes are stereotypes and misinformation that a person believes are true about themselves (APA, n.d.-b; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Participants showed varying responses to internalized stereotypes. Some reported strengthened identity and pride (e.g., rooted in Christian heritage), while others experienced diminished aspirations due to societal bias, particularly around academic or professional goals.

These outcomes align with research on stereotype threats and their impact on performance and ambition. Introduced by Steele and Aronson (1995), stereotype threat occurs when individuals from stigmatized groups internalize negative stereotypes, which can harm their self-esteem and performance and, consequently, lead them to incorporate negative stereotypes associated with their group identity (e.g., race, gender) into self-perception and behavior.

### 3.5 Generational Shifts

A notable generational difference emerged, with older participants displaying more rigid ethnic worldviews, whereas younger adolescents (11-15 years) exhibited more fluid and open attitudes. The younger group often reported limited or no experience with stereotyping, was more tolerant, and was much more accepting of diversity, suggesting that evolving societal norms, globalization, and increased digital exposure may be having a lasting influence on their beliefs and shaping their perspectives.

Arnett and Ward et al. offer complementary perspectives on the impact of globalization and digital exposure on younger generations. Arnett (2000) highlights the extended period of exploration and identity formation in "emerging adulthood", driven by technological advancements and globalization. Ward et al. (2001) focus on the psychological and social processes underlying intercultural adaptation, which are intensified by globalization and digital connectivity.

### 3.6 Coping Mechanisms and Resilience

In this study, participants' responses to stereotyping included adaptive strategies such as education,

mentorship, and social media engagement. Some participants combined cultural preservation with integration into mainstream society. However, many found this balance challenging, a finding that echoes Berry's (1997) and Ward et al.'s (2001) ideas on cultural resilience and identity negotiation in multicultural settings.

### 3.7 Influencers of Values: Family, Educators, and Media

All participants emphasized that family, teachers, and media profoundly shape adolescent values. While families instill ethnic pride, educators and media serve as agents of inclusion or exclusion. As Jeffrey Arnett concludes in his study, "The growing role of social media was noted as both a risk and a tool for cultural empathy. The proliferation of media around the world means that adolescents now have access to the cultural beliefs, values, and practices of people in other parts of the world, allowing for both imitation and critical reflection." (Arnett, 2000, p. 473)

### 3.8 Constructive Recommendations

The group collectively advocated nuanced heritage education, emphasizing the importance of teaching history and cultural heritage with depth and complexity, while avoiding indoctrination and encouraging critical thinking. They also promoted intercultural respect and empathy, aiming to foster an environment that supports understanding, mutual respect, and compassion across diverse cultures and perspectives. Additionally, they supported the creation of inclusive environments in schools and communities, spaces that value diversity, promote inclusivity, and celebrate a wide range of cultural backgrounds.

As one participant astutely observed, "Stereotypes say more about the people who create them than about you." This insight highlights the importance of addressing biases and stereotypes in education and community settings.

## 4. DISCUSSION

This study reveals how ethnic stereotypes impact adolescents in complex ways. It demonstrates that multiple influences shape identity, as adolescents navigate both their heritage culture and the culture of their surroundings, which can significantly affect their sense of self. Positive reinforcement plays a crucial role. Consistent with findings by Steele and Aronson (1995) and Cheryan and Bodenhausen (2000), support from education, family, and media representation can enhance adolescents' self-worth. In contrast, negative stereotypes may damage aspirations and lead to feelings of alienation. Furthermore, generational differences are significant. While stereotypes persist in many areas of life, younger, digital-native generations are increasingly driving a shift toward greater inclusivity.

The persistence of stereotypes in both institutional and informal settings indicates the need for targeted interventions. To address these issues, we need specific actions in education, media policy, and community engagement to create a more inclusive environment.

## 5. LIMITATIONS

Several limitations should be noted. First, the sample size was relatively small and not statistically representative, limiting generalizability. Second, the inclusion of adults reflecting retrospectively on adolescence may introduce recall bias. Third, focus group dynamics may have influenced participants' willingness to disclose sensitive experiences. Finally, cultural groups were unevenly represented, which may have shaped the prominence of specific themes.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Ethnic stereotypes continue to profoundly impact adolescent values and identities, influencing their self-perception, social interactions, and worldview. While some youth successfully navigate cultural duality, leveraging it as an incentive for personal growth and resilience, others encounter significant barriers rooted in systemic bias and discrimination. These obstacles can hinder their ability to form authentic identities and fully participate in diverse social contexts.

To foster a generation that not only embraces diversity but also remains true to themselves, it is essential to promote:

- Representation: Ensure diverse representation in media, education, and leadership positions, providing adolescents with positive role models and a sense of belonging.
- Dialogue: Encourage open and respectful dialogue about ethnic stereotypes, cultural differences, and social justice, helping adolescents develop empathy and critical thinking skills.
- Inclusive Education: Implement inclusive educational practices that value diverse perspectives, histories, and experiences, preparing adolescents to thrive in a multicultural society.

By prioritizing these strategies, we can empower adolescents to navigate the complexities of identity, culture, and social difference, ultimately cultivating a more compassionate, inclusive, and equitable society.

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## BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES AND SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL ADAPTATION OF SOCIAL DARWINISTS AND HUMAN-RIGHTS ADVOCATES

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### ABSTRACT

*The article presents the characteristics and specific features of supporters of two ideological currents: social Darwinism and the human-rights-based model. The aim of the study is to examine the socio-psychological adaptation of students with different ideological orientations and the behavioral strategies they display in conflict situations, as well as to identify the behavioral differences between them. The study was conducted with 91 undergraduate students, from first to fourth year, enrolled in the academic programs of Khachatur Abovyan Armenian State Pedagogical University. In the course of the research, testing and survey methods were applied, including the Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, the C. Rogers and R. Diamond method for diagnosing socio-psychological adaptation, and an author-developed questionnaire designed to determine the ideological orientation of the participants and reveal whether their views align more closely with social Darwinism or with the fundamental values of human rights. The results of the study indicate that behavioral strategies in conflict situations differ depending on the students' ideological orientation. Supporters of social Darwinism predominantly employ a competitive strategy, while adherents of the human-rights-based model tend to rely on accommodation, collaboration, and compromise. Differences in socio-psychological adaptation were also identified: proponents of human rights demonstrate a higher level of adaptability, show empathy toward others, and place importance on their emotional comfort. For supporters of social Darwinism, the primary focus is achieving superiority over others. Social Darwinists and supporters of human rights are equally characterized by self-empathy and an internal locus of control.*

**Keywords:** social Darwinism, human-rights-based model, behavioral strategy, conflict situation, collaboration, compromise, dominance, socio-psychological adaptation, locus of control.

### INTRODUCTION

People's perceptions of social relations and forms of communication are shaped by different

ideological systems, in particular by approaches based on social Darwinism and the protection of human rights.

Social Darwinism is an ideological current based on the social application of Charles Darwin's principle of "natural selection." According to this concept, society should be governed by competition, where the strongest and most capable achieve success, while the "weak" are pushed aside (Darwin, 1859). This approach emphasizes individual superiority, power, and efficiency, yet it is often criticized as an ideology that justifies social inequality (Hawkins, 1997).

Herbert Spencer, one of the main theorists of social Darwinism, argued that societies evolve in the same way as organisms—through continuous competition and adaptation. According to Spencer, any intervention in the natural course of social development, particularly mechanisms of social assistance, hinders the process of "natural selection" (Spencer, 1864).

Richard Hofstadter and Michael Hawkins, in their works, examined the historical application of social Darwinism, noting that it was widely used to justify social, economic, and racial inequalities, especially at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (Hawkins, 1997).

Paul Crook emphasized the influence of social Darwinism on the formation of war-related ideologies (Crook, 1994).

The protection of human rights represents a fundamentally different ideology, centered on the respect for the inherent rights of every individual (Donnelly, 1989). This model was formed on the basis of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) and aims to ensure individual freedoms, equal opportunities, and social justice. It rejects the organization of public life according to principles of force or domination and promotes peaceful coexistence.

This theory developed during the Enlightenment period—particularly through the works of John Locke (Locke, 1689) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Rousseau, 1762), and later through modern thinkers such as Amartya Sen (Sen, 1999) and Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum, 2011). John Locke emphasized the inviolability of natural rights to life, liberty, and property (Locke, 1689), while Rousseau advanced the idea of the social contract as the basis of political legitimacy (Rousseau, 1762).

From the second half of the 20th century onward, the human rights ideology became a cornerstone of global legal and moral systems, reflected not only in legal documents but also in social consciousness as a foundational set of values (Hofstadter, 1944).

Behavioral strategy in social or conflict situations is a system of conscious or spontaneous responses used by an individual (Thomas & Kilmann, 1976). In psychology, several behavioral strategies are distinguished: collaboration, avoidance, accommodation, competition, and compromise. The choice among them is determined by a person's value system, worldview, and ideological orientation.

K. Thomas and R. Kilmann classify these strategies according to two dimensions: the degree to which individuals pursue their own goals and their willingness to cooperate (Thomas & Kilmann, 1976).

Behavioral strategies manifested in conflict situations vary, ranging from power-based solutions to mutual agreement. Albert Bandura presents the social learning model, according to which an individual's behavior is shaped through observing external models and through internal beliefs (Bandura & National Inst. of Mental Health, 1986).



Julian Rotter demonstrated that behavioral choices are often determined by whether a person perceives the control over their own behavior as internal or external (Rotter, 1966).

Walter Mischel emphasizes the key role of an individual's cognitive factors in shaping behavioral strategies (Mischel, 1973).

M. Rahim highlights the importance of conflict management strategies within organizational settings (Rahim, 2011).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The study was conducted among students of Khachatur Abovyan Armenian State Pedagogical University. The sample consisted of 91 undergraduate students from the first to the fourth year of study.

The aim of the research is to determine how ideological orientation (social Darwinism and the human-rights-based approach) influences an individual's choice of behavioral strategies in conflict situations.

Testing and survey methods were used in the course of the research. The following instruments were administered:

1. **Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI).** Developed by American social psychologists K. Thomas and R. Kilmann in the 1970s, this instrument is widely used for diagnosing interpersonal conflict behavior. It identifies which behavioral strategy participants predominantly employ in conflict situations, based on their internal preferences and individual orientations.
2. **C. Rogers and R. Diamond's Method for Diagnosing Socio-Psychological Adaptation.** This method is designed to assess the individual's level of adaptation to the social environment, as well as to evaluate internal states and self-esteem. In this study, it was used to measure the degree of socio-psychological adjustment among individuals with different ideological orientations.
3. **Author-Developed Questionnaire for Determining Students' Ideological Orientation (10 items).** The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify students' orientation toward the ideas of social Darwinism or the fundamental values of human rights (e.g., *“What is more important to you: individual success or social well-being?”*). The questions are derived from the core principles of the two ideologies, and based on this logic, students who provided positive responses and corresponding explanations were placed into the respective groups. Examples of questions reflecting the human-rights-based ideology include: *“How do you view the concept of universal human rights?”*; *“Should human rights be protected even in cases where doing so might conflict with the interests of society?”*; *“What is your attitude toward the idea of equal opportunities and inclusion for all members of society?”*. Examples of questions reflecting the ideology of social Darwinism include: *“Should society intervene in people's economic activities to promote equality?”*; *“Do you consider competition to be important in society?”*

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

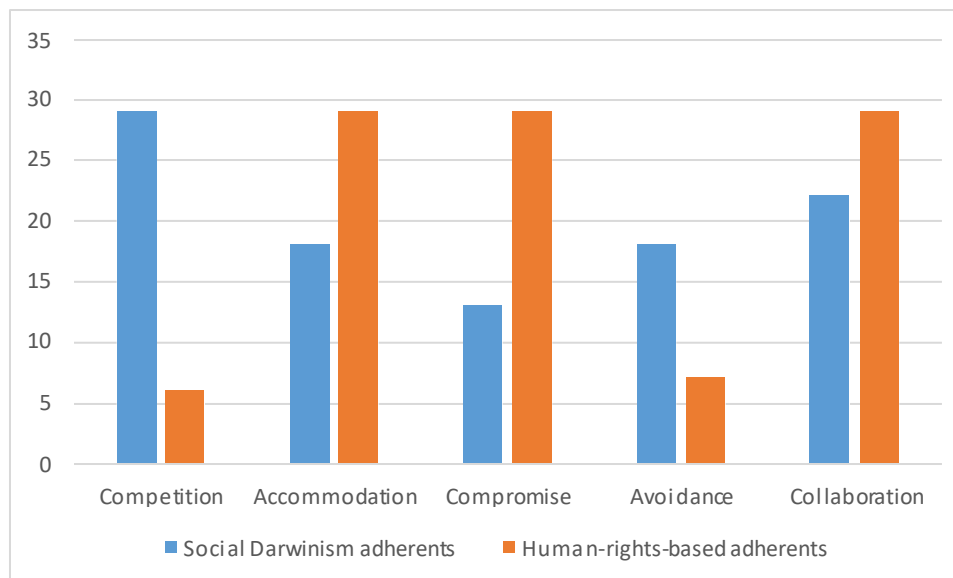
In the first phase of the study, the author-developed questionnaire assessing students' ideological orientation was administered. According to the results, **75.8%** of the students support active societal intervention in individuals' economic activities in order to promote equality. In their view, people, based on their rights, may regulate or balance economic processes. In contrast, **24.2%** believe that market forces themselves should determine the rules of the game and define the model of resource distribution.

Additionally, **93.4%** of respondents expressed a positive attitude toward the idea of equality for all members of society, while **7.6%** expressed a negative attitude.

By grouping the data obtained from the questionnaire, the participants were divided into two groups: 40 supporters of social Darwinism and 40 supporters of the human-rights-based ideology. The responses of 11 students did not allow for a clear determination of their ideological orientation; therefore, they were not included in the next phase of the study.

In the second phase of the research, the socio-psychological adaptation and behavioral strategies in conflict situations of supporters of social Darwinism and the human-rights-based ideology were examined.

The data from the Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument are presented in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1. Behavioral strategies in conflict situations among supporters of social Darwinism and the human-rights-based ideology**

The results indicate that among supporters of social Darwinism, competition is the most prominent behavioral strategy (29%), while accommodation (18%) and avoidance (18%) show moderate levels, and compromise is the least expressed strategy (13%).

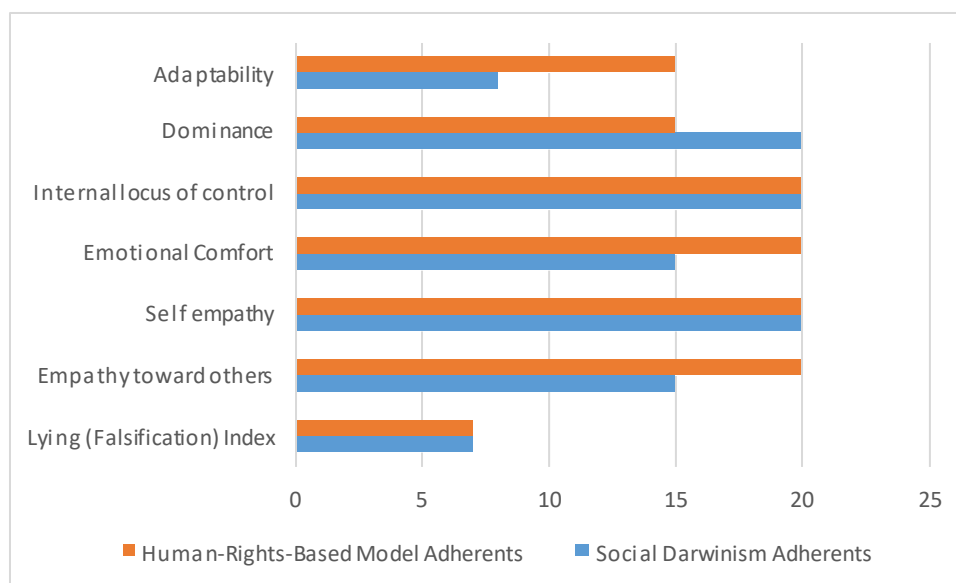
Among supporters of the human-rights-based ideology, accommodation (29%), collaboration (29%), and compromise (29%) clearly dominate, whereas competition (6%) and avoidance (7%) are weakly expressed.

It is evident that in conflict situations, the behavioral strategies of supporters of social Darwinism and advocates of human rights show no similarities. Unlike social Darwinists, human-rights advocates predominantly exhibit accommodating, collaborating, and compromising strategies. In contrast, social Darwinists show a predominance of competing and avoiding strategies compared to human-rights



supporters.

Using the Rogers–Diamond method, the socio-psychological adaptation characteristics of the participants were identified (see **Figure 2**).



**Figure 2. Socio-psychological adaptation of supporters of social Darwinism and the human-rights-based ideology**

According to the data from the method, among social Darwinists, dominance (20%), self-empathy (20%), and internal locus of control (20%) are strongly expressed, while emotional comfort (15%) and empathy toward others (15%) show moderate levels, and adaptability is the least expressed characteristic (8%).

Among supporters of the human-rights-based ideology, internal locus of control (20%), emotional comfort (20%), self-empathy (20%), and empathy toward others (20%) are equally strongly expressed. Adaptability (15%) and dominance (15%) are moderately expressed.

A comparison of the data from the two groups shows that human-rights advocates exhibit higher levels of adaptability, emotional comfort, and empathy toward others than social Darwinists. In contrast, social Darwinists demonstrate higher levels of dominant behavior than human-rights supporters. The levels of internal locus of control and self-empathy are equal in both groups.

The falsification index obtained through the method is also identical for both groups at 7%, while the acceptable range is 18–36%. Therefore, the results obtained using this method are considered reliable and valid.

## CONCLUSIONS

The behavioral strategies exhibited by students in conflict situations differ depending on their ideological orientation. Among supporters of the human-rights-based model, **collaborating**, accommodating and **compromising** strategies prevail. Among social Darwinists, **competitive** strategies are prominent, and in the absence of such opportunities, **avoiding** strategies are employed. **Compromising** is the least expressed strategy in this group.

Students' ideological orientation significantly affects their level of socio-psychological adaptation.

Human-rights advocates exhibit higher levels of **adaptability**, placing importance on **emotional comfort** and **empathy toward others**. Social Darwinists, being less adaptable, display **dominant behavior**, guided by the values of **power** and **individual dominance**. **Locus of control** and **self-empathy** show similar levels in both social Darwinists and human-rights supporters.

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## ON THE ISSUE OF THE PERCEPTION OF THE OTHER

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Perceptions of the other have been known since ancient times. References to these perceptions can be found in mythological tales of different peoples, historical sources, and anthropological studies. In the psychological discipline, the perception of the other is also in the spotlight, both among social and clinical psychologists. Of particular importance are the processes of interaction, communication, and socialization of individuals in society between different cultural and social groups, during which perceptions of the other become relevant. Perceptions of the other are characteristic of all societies. However, in different historical periods, perceptions and attitudes towards both one's own, native environment, and foreign, alien societies have undergone certain changes. Perceptions of the other have undergone certain transformations. The other was perceived as a non-local person, standing outside the native social and cultural environment; the other was accepted as a person who opposed the native environment and did not follow social norms; he could also be perceived as unfamiliar and inaccessible to cognition; in some cases also as someone with incomprehensible and inexplicable power. However, negative assessments prevail in the perceptions of the other: the other is mainly perceived as a person who poses a threat to the self environment and is hostile. Such perceptions of the other are often explained by the activation of the person's defense mechanisms against any unknown and unfamiliar phenomenon. However, from the standpoint of social psychology, the discovery and analysis of modern perceptions of the other, the identification of psychological tools and mechanisms for distinguishing one's environment from others, will make it possible to study the current manifestations and tendencies of the formation of a person's socio-psychological identity. This article discusses theoretical approaches to the issue of the perception of the other, as well as presents a new author's method: "The Other's Value Assessment Scale", which aims to identify the specifics of the other's situational and descriptive perceptions.*

**Keywords:** *perception of the other, situational scale of the other assessment, descriptive scale of the other assessment, culture, values*

## INTRODUCTION

The perception of the other is related to the problems of cross-cultural psychology, as well as to the process of acculturation and the tendencies of stereotype formation. The cross-cultural perspective of the perception of the other has been developed by many authors who have emphasized cultural conditions to understand their influence on modern perceptions of self and the other. Cultural and psychological backgrounds of these perceptions refer to the field of interactions and rules of behavior between different social groups. The article discusses scientific interpretations of the perception of the other and their developmental tendencies.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A cultural and social context of the perception of the stranger was presented by Kliver (1925). A certain limitation of his approach was that the grounds for rejecting or opposing the other were considered to be the same cultural conditions. The thesis was put forward according to which cultural differences are decisive in the process of interpersonal communication. Of course, such a distanced view of the perception of the other is explained by the nationalist tendencies characteristic of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the still weak influence of globalization. We should also note the strictly empirical nature of the research conducted in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as a result of which the emphasis was not on revealing the reasons for the perception of the other, but on the correlational analysis of the relationships between locals and migrants in a given society (Berline, 1960; McGraw-Hill et al., 2011).

A great contribution to the perception of the other was made by Schwartz (2012), who not only addressed the ideas and stereotypes of the stranger or alien but also discussed the peculiarities of adaptation and socio-psychological integration of the other. The idea of the interrelationship of the psychological phenomena of the perception of the other and the identification of the person was put forward. It became clear that the ideas about the others are formed based on the ideas about one's cultural identification. The unknown person, the stranger, or alien is defined and understood to the extent that they are not perceived as phenomena belonging to the native culture. Therefore, the nature of communication, duration, and communicative distance play a major role in the process of perceiving the other. The more common views and ideas there are between the communicating subjects, the more the communicators are perceived as carriers of the same culture. From this perspective, Kluckhohn's (1951) concept of value characterization is important, according to which values, secretly or openly, characterize the individual and the social group, as well as determine behavior and social norms.

From the perspective of the perception of the other, an important methodological concept has been formed in connection with the study of specific situations. Many authors believe that the perception of the other, based on certain values, appears in specific situations (McAdams, 1994; Diken, 1998; Schutz, 1944; Sandstrom, 2022; Kononov and Ein-Gar, 2023). The basis of this theoretical approach was the

methodology of operationalization, according to which perceptions are formed as a result of observations, which, in turn, means that perceptions can be created during the observation of specific cases. Such an opinion was expressed in the works of Kluckhohn (1951), McAdams (1994). However, this point of view was subjected to some criticism by Rokeach (1973), Maio and Olson (2000), who confirmed the idea that values are not only created in specific situations, but also perceptions, when a person forms a framework of desired values and strives to achieve or correspond to them.

The perception of the other also developed similarly: the other was no longer just a new person in some environment, whom no one did not know, but also any stranger who differs from one's concept of identification, whom one could imagine and oppose. In other words, the other "participates" in the process of identification of a person - the greater the contrast between one's own and foreign or alien cultures, the more definite the framework of identification of one's environment becomes, the more understandable it becomes who are "us" and who are "them." The other today is perceived not only as a real stranger, but also as a descriptive concept that is not only abstract, but also part of the value system of a person.

## **METHODS**

Within the framework of the socio-psychological research on the problem of the other perception, we have chosen assessment and rating methods, the purpose of which was to identify the situational and conceptual levels of the other perception. The diagnosis of these two levels of assessment is important not only for the study of specific social interactions but also for characterizing and understanding the deeper conceptual domains of the identification of individuals and social groups (Simoneli & Parolin, 2016). Therefore, we have developed The Other Value Assessment Scale.

For its approval, an experimental study was organized among people aged 20-40 (female respondents, N=60, male respondents, N=60). The scale consists of two groups of questions: the Other's Situational Assessment Scale and the Other's Descriptive Assessment Scale. The results of the study are presented below. The methodological basis for developing the scale is our theoretical position that the attitude towards and assessment of the others is carried out both at the conceptual, stereotypical level and in specific situations. Although these two levels of assessment may be mutually dependent, the diagnostic tool for the situational and descriptive levels of other perception will allow us to clarify the psychological mechanisms of the formation of stereotypes towards the others, the separation of one's own environment from them, and the formation of attitudes and behavioral models towards the others. The internal consistency of the statements was verified statistically: the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the situational scale was 0.798, and for the descriptive scale - 0.821. Respondents were asked to rate the statements for each of the scales on a 10-point scale, in which

scores from 1 to 3 points meant a low level of assessment or agreement of the respondent with the statements. Scores from 4 to 6 points, respectively, were interpreted as average, and scores from 7 to 10 points meant a high level of assessment or agreement with the statements. For a qualitative interpretation of the obtained scores, we applied the method of analysis of key assessment indicators, within the framework of which we calculated the percentage of respondents' answers expressing a high degree of agreement with these statements. Thus, the following research results are based on the analysis of the percentage of high scores, as key indicators, for each of the statements. Statistical analysis was performed using software JASP 0.17.3.0.

## RESULTS

Based on the results of the experimental study, we present the situational assessment scale of the other and the obtained percentage indicators (Table 1):

Table 1. Situational scale of the perception of the other, percentage variables

Statements	Men	Women
I consider the other to the person who betrayed me.	84	70
I consider the other to the person who disagrees with my opinion.	43	87
At work, I am surrounded by the others.	67	32
The people at the concert are not strangers; I just don't know them.	79	78
The people on public transport are not others; I just don't know them.	75	79
If I don't talk to someone for a long time, they become strangers to me.	55	89
During an argument, the other tends to ignore me rather than argue.	76	71

As we can see from the percentage data presented in Table 1, the perception of the other in the situational assessment scale is closely tied with a person's communication skills. This tendency is more pronounced among female respondents, who, compared to men, rated the statements that refer to the low level of communication with a stranger higher.

Now, let us present the percentages of the descriptive block of the other assessment scale (Table 2).

**Table 2. Descriptive scale of the other perception, percentage variables**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
The other is not like me.	72	85
The other can never understand me.	70	90
The other does not understand my culture and norms.	88	85
If I do not exist, there will be no others.	92	88
The others always strive to assimilate our culture and customs.	84	87
I understand the other better than he understands me.	83	79
The other is my enemy.	77	79

The descriptive scale of the other perception presented in Table 2 differed slightly from the situational assessment scale. First, it should be noted that the results of the descriptive assessment were higher than the percentage variables of the situational assessment. It should also be noted that in the case of the descriptive assessment, the responses of women and men were almost indistinguishable from each other, while the situational assessment showed a higher level of responses of women compared to men. The responses of women differed, especially in those statements that related to the communicative sphere of the person.

## **DISCUSSION**

Research on the perception of the other shows that, although the ideas about the others are characterized by great diversity, the need to study the phenomenon of the other, to develop

methodologies aimed at identifying and assessing perceptions of the others is increasing in modern psychological science (Xu, Yunhong, 2023; Ho, 2011; Kearney, Semonovitch, 2011). This trend is certainly due to modern globalization and civilizational processes, as a result of which people in their everyday life more often communicate with the others. The image of the other, as noted by Schwartz (2012), has become an integral part of a person's worldview and perceptions. However, it should be noted that, as Sandstrom, Boothby and Cooney (2022) emphasized, the frequency and intensity of contacts with the others do not lead to the adaptation of strangers within a given society. Complex, socio-psychological processes are necessary for the activation of adaptation processes, which imply not only certain commonalities in communication, but also in the value system, attitudes, historical memory and thinking. Therefore, attitudes and perceptions about the others can be different, depending on whether we are talking about abstract, descriptive perceptions of strangers or perceptions formed in the real communicative field. As our research showed, perceptions about the others also differ by gender. As can be seen in the table below (Table 3), according to the descriptive statistical method, the average indicators of descriptive assessment almost do not differ between women and men. In situational assessments, women's responses are more emphasized compared to men. However, the relatively lower level of situational assessments is also evidence that before live contact, strangers are perceived from a more positive perspective, and vice versa, during communication, tendencies to protect and distance themselves from the others appear, which significantly affect situational assessments.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Data				
	Descriptive assessment scale, women	Descriptive assessment scale, men	Situational assessment scale, women	Situational assessment scale, men
Valid	120	120	120	120
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	7.433	6.942	6.050	4.450
Std. Deviation	1.364	1.463	1.136	1.194
Minimum	4.000	5.000	4.000	2.000
Maximum	9.000	9.000	8.000	7.000



Let us also discuss the correlations between women's and men's perceptions (Table 4).

**Table 4. Correlation of The Other Assessment Scale Variables**

**Pearson's Correlations**

		Pearson's r	p
Descriptive assessment scale, women	- Descriptive assessment scale, men	0.143	0.118
Descriptive assessment scale, women	- Situational assessment scale, women	0.338 ***	< .001
Descriptive assessment scale, women	- Situational assessment scale, men	0.122	0.185
Descriptive assessment scale, men	- Situational assessment scale, women	0.032	0.728
Descriptive assessment scale, men	- Situational assessment scale, men	0.015	0.870
Situational assessment scale, women	- Situational assessment scale, men	0.299 ***	< .001

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Correlation analysis using the Pearson method showed that a positive correlation was established between women's descriptive and situational assessments. This means that women's general, abstract perceptions are in some way conditioned by the experience of communicating with the others in specific situations. Among men, the opposite, similar correlation was not found, which means that men, regardless of the formed perceptions about strangers, tend to evaluate the others in the communicative field based on the given situation. It is also noteworthy that in situational assessments, the perceptions of women and men showed a positive correlation, which indicates that during communication with strangers, society in general (both women and men) displays a stereotypical attitude towards the others (Chandran, Narayana, 2023; Breiau, 2018).

## CONCLUSION

Theoretical and experimental studies of the perception of the others have shown that among people aged 20-40, the descriptive nature of perception is emphasized. The results obtained by us were confirmed by the opinions of those authors who emphasized the value aspect of the perception of the others and considered, first of all, as a value component of the person's identification. A person perceives the other through value orientations that differ from or contradict the self-concept, as a result of which the person's identification with his own culture, values, and norms of behavior is formed.

Modern socio-psychological studies of the other perceptions have undergone a certain transformation. Along with the development of societies, the idea of the other has also changed. Today, we can say that perceptions of the other are predominantly formed and maintained at the descriptive, value level, when a person forms an idea of what the other is like. At the same time, these ideas also contribute to the identification of the other with his environment and behavioral rules. This means that the perceptions of the other create ideas not only about people and environments that are different from us, but also form a value system about our identity and the Self.

The limitation of the conducted research is that the presented methodological tools have passed the pilot research stage, which is planned to be expanded to include different age groups in the future.

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## SOCIAL NEUROTICISM AND DEFERRED LIFE SYNDROME

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### ABSTRACT

*The article examines the concept of social neuroticism in the context of the deferred life syndrome. The phenomenon of social neuroticism is presented through socio-psychological characteristics that describe the individual's attitude to reality, as well as the degree of idealization of the future. It is noted that a characteristic feature of the phenomenon of social neuroticism is the deferred life syndrome and a low level of life satisfaction. An analysis of theoretical approaches that reveal the essence of social neuroticism is carried out. The severity of personality neuroticism and its correlation with the deferred life syndrome are analyzed empirically. The results of the study are presented for different age and gender groups of respondents. The study emphasizes the relevance of studying the phenomenon of social neuroticism and focuses the attention of psychologists on the social side of the phenomenon under study.*

**Keywords:** social neuroticism, deferred life syndrome, life expectations, life satisfaction, psychological health.

### INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of "social neuroticism" in modern psychological science is becoming increasingly important and meaningful. The relevance of the study of this phenomenon is expressed in modern transformational socio-psychological processes, covering the most diverse aspects of social life. In the era of globalization changes, it is difficult for a person to adapt and cope with changing social processes in society, identify themselves in a social group and develop certain scenarios of life strategy. In scientific publications, studies of neuroticism are increasingly common, which acquire not only psychological significance, but also social weight and importance. It is no secret that at present, psychological research in the field of studying personality neuroticism has begun to pay increasing attention to the social component of this phenomenon. The relevance of the study of this phenomenon is expressed in modern transformational socio-psychological processes covering various aspects of social life. In this article, the phenomenon of neuroticism is presented in the socio-psychological aspect, such factors of this phenomenon as the syndrome of deferred life and low level of life satisfaction are revealed. The results of the study open up new opportunities for further study of the phenomenon of neuroticism and identification of socially induced factors of its manifestation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Various theorists and practitioners of psychological discipline have addressed the issues of socially induced neurotic phenomena. Freud made a great contribution to the study of the problems of social neuroticism, who studied socially conditioned manifestations of neuroticism from the point of view of psychoanalytic theory. Gradually, the concept of social neuroticism was supplemented by phenomenological characteristics that consider neurotic manifestations in the behavior of an individual from the standpoint of frustration in the search for the meaning of life and destructive social influences on a person's psychological health (Turiano et al., 2020; Widiger, Oltmanns, 2017; Wiebe et al., 2018). Some authors (Weiss, Deary, 2019; Quan et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2021) noted the relationship between social phenomena and disorders of the body's autonomic regulation, and the concept of neurosis or neuroticism itself was explained by a psychogenic reaction of the individual to social conflicts. The social component of neuroticism is closely related to unjustified social expectations and unrealized life goals. The psychosocial structure of neuroticism has been studied by psychologists, sociologists, and cultural scientists (Devereux, 1939; Lazarus, Folkman, 1984; Kostromina, et al, 2018; Skleinis, 2021). Horney's theoretical views were of particular importance for the development of the psychology of social neuroticism. Karen Horney understood neuroticism in the context of socially induced psychological processes. Therefore, Horney defined the neurotic personality in socio-cultural terms as changes in the personality structure under the influence of destructive social changes, such as wars, economic crises, and value transformations. As Horney notes, the state of social neuroticism occurs not because of the socio-economic and other transformations themselves, but because certain contradictions in society are exacerbated during these periods. Horney sees the main reason for the inconsistency in the preservation of previous social foundations and the parallel formation of new, often qualitatively different social norms and behavior patterns. An example of such contradiction is given, on the one hand, the Christian ideal of sacrifice and patience, and on the other, social expectations, consisting of the formation of a competitive personality striving for achievements and success. In essence, at the root of social neuroticism lies the discrepancy between the ideals and norms of behavior declared by society and reality, as well as with the needs of the individual and expectations of the future (Horney, 1937).

The problem of unfulfilled needs and unachieved goals leads researchers to the question of the subjective distinction between reality and life “postponed” for the future, projecting reality into the area of expectation of the future (Lapshov, 2014). In other words, the present and the future “change places” - the present is perceived as an indefinite series of expectations of the future, and the future takes on the meaning of reality, only not yet arrived (Cole, Berntsen, 2016). The present is perceived rather vaguely and indefinitely, and the future, on the contrary, is more clearly planned, presented in detail and emotionally colored. From this point of view, it becomes relevant to study the phenomenon of social neuroticism in the context of the syndrome of deferred life. The syndrome of deferred life is a poorly studied phenomenon. It is associated not only with the self-esteem of the individual, but also with the

assessment of the quality of life, both one's own and the lives of others (Volchenkova, Molchanova, 2019; Sharapova, Kutbiddinova, 2018; Alekhina, Kashirenkova, 2017; Windecker et al., 2016). Subjective comparison of the level of well-being and life comfort, as a rule, leads to an underestimation of the individual's self-esteem and dissatisfaction with the quality of life. Social ideals and standards of a prosperous life seem unattainable in the present, and a high level of life comfort is perceived as something that people around you have already achieved, but the person himself is not able to achieve at this period of life. Possible ways to achieve the desired social ideals are “postponed” for the future, while the current period of life becomes something secondary and less significant in relation to upcoming future events. It should be noted that the phenomenon of the “deferred” life syndrome is currently poorly studied both in the field of social psychology and in clinical psychology and psychotherapy (Ma et al., 2018; Khodayarifard, Fatemi, 2013; Sarkisyan, Vlasov, 2020). An important contribution to the study of the problem of deferred life was made by Serkin, who studied the above-mentioned psychological state of the individual and defined it as “deferred life neurosis”. The author studied the behavior of residents of northern regions who perceived time and place of residence as something uncertain and less important than a planned move to warmer climes in the future. All needs and requirements of people were associated with a desired goal planned for the future. And vice versa, the course of life in the present tense was characterized by a lack of desire to achieve short-term goals, a weak expression of responsibility for actions that matter “here and now” (Serkin, 2001; Serkin, 2012). Any thoughts or actions that pointed to current responsibilities led to irritability and unwillingness to follow the rules of everyday life. Life in the present tense was imagined in a certain “frozen” state, the only purpose of which was to prepare the individual for a move in the future, with which the beginning of a new, “real” life was identified. It should be emphasized that Serkin (1997), using the example of deferred life scenarios of northerners, characterized this psychological state as neurosis. The neurotic nature of the deferred life syndrome was also noted by Sharapova and Kutbiddinova (2018), who studied neurotic tendencies in primary school children in the process of forming deferred life scenarios. Ma, Siu and Shing Tse (2018) especially noted the manifestations of depression and neuroticism against the background of pronounced parental expectations of the future. Rohmalimna, Yeau and Sie (2022), in turn, identified the factor of destructive change in the self-concept due to excessive accentuation of the “real” life expected in the future and, accordingly, an inadequate assessment of reality.

## **METHODS AND METHODOLOGY**

The empirical study of the phenomenon of social neuroticism involved respondents (N=500) aged 18-50. The empirical study was conducted at the Psychological Observatory of the International Scientific-Educational Center of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia. All

respondents participated in the study in accordance with the verbal consent. All participants were divided into the following age groups:

- Group 1 (N=100) aged 18-20 years,
- Group 2 (N=100) aged 21-30 years,
- Group 3 (N=100) aged 31-40 years,
- Group 4 (N=100) aged 41-50 years,
- Group 5 (N=100) aged 51-60 years.

The empirical study was aimed at confirming the hypotheses that the syndrome of deferred life is one of the characteristics of social neuroticism and positively correlates with the level of neuroticism. The severity of the syndrome of deferred life as a characteristic of social neuroticism is most pronounced in the age group of 21-40 years.

The following methods were used to measure the phenomenon under study:

- "The big five factors and personality traits" questionnaire (Zhou, 2018), presented by low (scores: 0-12), medium (scores: 13-25), and high (scores: 26-48) levels of neuroticism,
- "The satisfaction with life" scale (Diener et al., 1985), presented by slightly satisfied (21-25), satisfied (26-30), and extreme satisfied (31-35) scores,
- "Diagnostics of deferred life syndrome" author's questionnaire, presented by low (scores: 0-10), medium (scores: 11-20), and high (scores: 21-30) levels of syndrome.

The author's questionnaire was composed of questions theoretically based on the research of Serkin, , . The questionnaire consists of 30 questions. The degree of internal consistency of the questions was determined using the Cronbach's coefficient ( $\alpha=0.811$ ). The highest Cronbach's alpha values were recorded for the following questions:

- "Please name the 5 most important goals in your life. In what period of time do you intend to achieve them?",
- "Can you call your life fulfilling at the moment?",
- "Please name the most important event in life on which your happiness depends",
- "Evaluate, please, your past, present and future".

The empirical study was conducted from January to June 2025. The obtained data were analyzed and correlated with the data using two other methods. Statistical analysis was performed using JASP 0.17.03.0 software using the Spearman method. Normal distribution analysis using the Shapiro-Wilk method ( $p<0.05$ ) showed abnormal distribution of variables. The results of the empirical study are presented below.

RESULT

Let us present the results of the empirical study (Diagrams 1-3).

Diagram 1. Distrubution of neuroticism variables among 5 groups, (%)

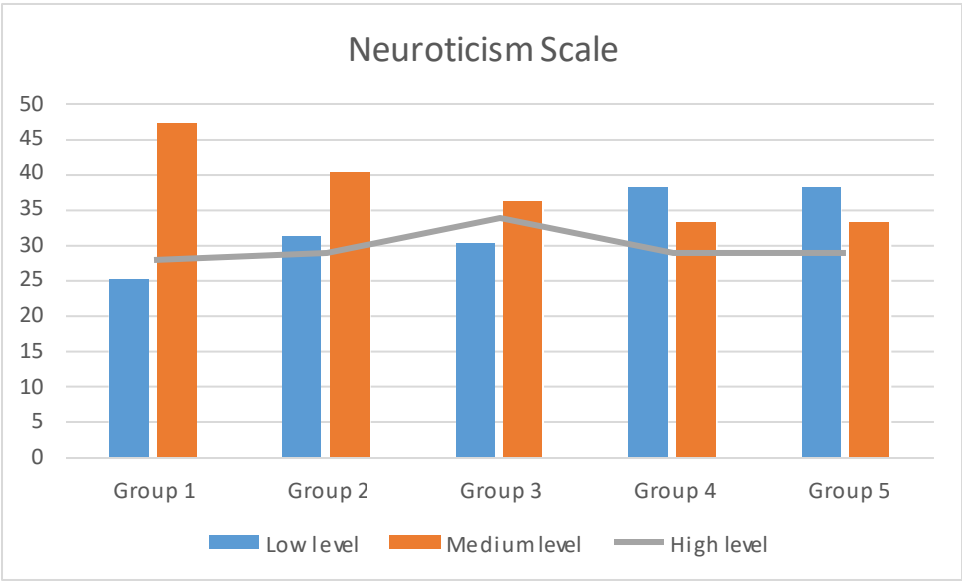
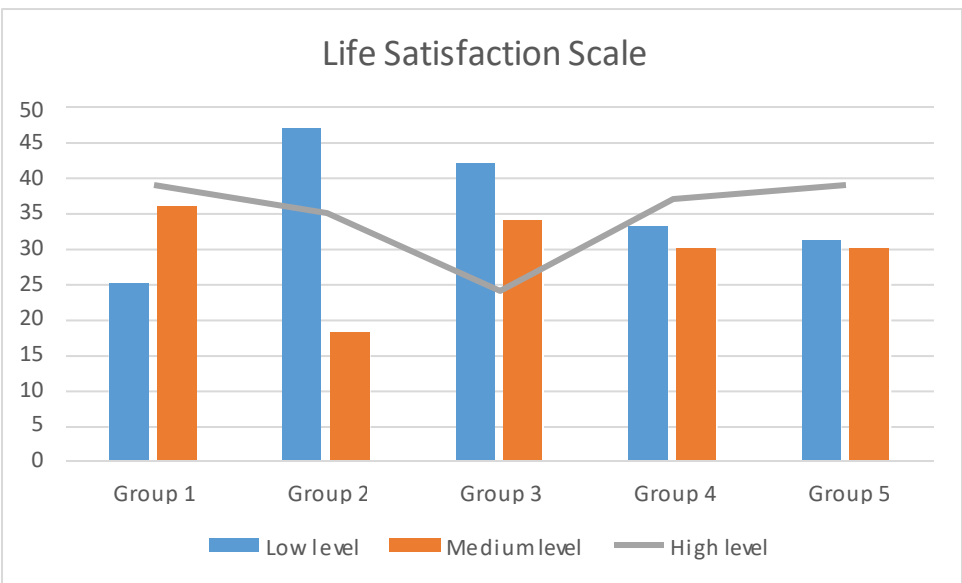
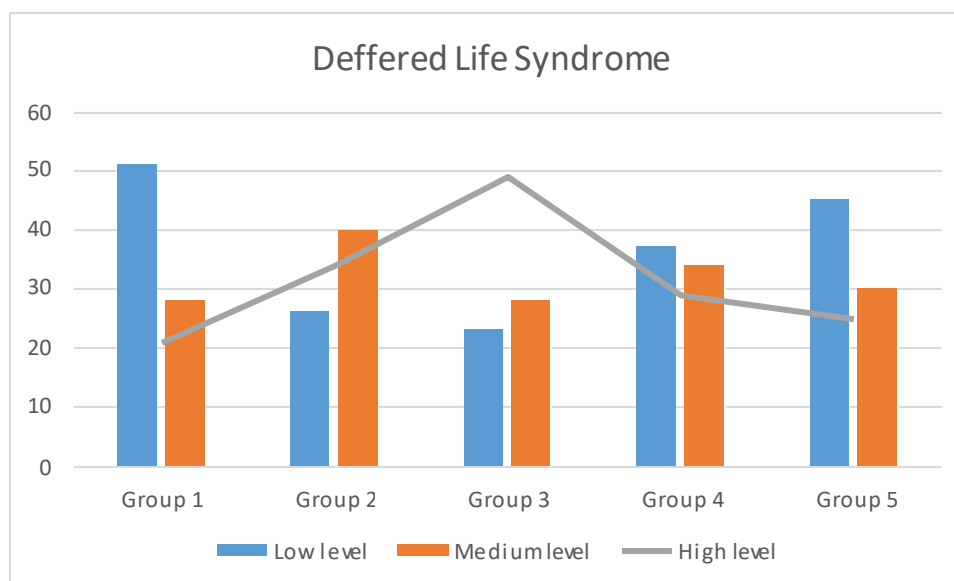


Diagram 2. Distrubution of life satisfaction variables among 5 groups, (%)





**Diagram 3. Distrubution of deffered life syndrome variables among 5 groups, (%)**



The results of the application of methods for diagnosing one of the personality traits - neuroticism, as well as life satisfaction and the syndrome of deferred life, showed certain trends. In particular, the highest percentage indicators were recorded in the answers of respondents of Group 3 according to the method of diagnosing neuroticism and the syndrome of deferred life. The results of assessing the general level of life satisfaction in age group e3, on the contrary, turned out to be the lowest of the answers of all groups.

After receiving the percentage indicators of all methods, a correlation analysis of the data was carried out for the three methods used.

Table 1. Correlation interconnections of the variables of neuroticism and deffered life

### Spearman's Correlations

		Spearman's rho	p
Neuroticism, Group 1	- Deffered Life, Group 1	0.223	0.125
Neuroticism, Group 2	- Deffered Life, Group 2	0.538 ***	< .001
Neuroticism, Group 3	- Deffered Life, Group 3	0.702 ***	< .001
Neuroticism, Group 4	- Deffered Life, Group 4	0.144 *	< .05
Neuroticism, Group 5	- Deffered Life, Group 5	0.153 *	< .05

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 2. Correlation interconnections of the variables of life satisfaction and deferred life

### Spearman's Correlations

	Spearman's rho	p
Life Satisfaction, Group 1 - Deferred Life, Group 1	-0.342 *	< .05
Life Satisfaction, Group 2 - Deferred Life, Group 2	0.461 ***	< .01
Life Satisfaction, Group 3 - Deferred Life, Group 3	-0.522 ***	< .001
Life Satisfaction, Group 4 - Deferred Life, Group 4	-0.364 **	< .01
Life Satisfaction, Group 5 - Deferred Life, Group 5	-0.147 *	< .05

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

## DISCUSSION

The results of the empirical study provided interesting data on the factors of manifestation of the phenomenon of social neuroticism. In particular, the hypothesis was proven that the phenomenon of social neuroticism is most strongly expressed in the age groups of 21-40 years. According to the correlation analysis, negative relationships were also revealed between the variables of life satisfaction and the deferred life syndrome. Within the framework of the empirical study of this sample, it can be concluded that the higher the degree of life satisfaction, the weaker the deferred life syndrome is expressed, and, accordingly, the phenomenon of social neuroticism.

On the other hand, positive correlations were observed between the variables of neuroticism and the syndrome of deferred life. The results of the study can be further compared with a sample of respondents by gender, social status and education.

The results of the empirical study lead us to the idea that those who are prone to the syndrome of deferred life are characterized by:

- overestimation of the future,
- creation of a "starting point" in the future from which a happy life should begin,
- procrastination,
- low self-esteem,
- emphasis on the achievements of others as opposed to one's own failures,
- severity of neurotic tendencies,
- subjective installation of a certain condition before the onset of "real" life in the future,
- subjective installation of a certain condition that limits everyday life scenarios (Naidenova, 2022; Kostyleva, Serkin, 2022; Goroshko, Shubina, 2017; Li et al., 2023).

## CONCLUSION

As we can conclude, studying the signs of the syndrome or neurosis of deferred life can shed light on the characteristics of the phenomenon of social neuroticism. Consideration of this problem in the

context of the individual's attitude to social realities and expectations of the future contains great theoretical and practical potential for studying the phenomenon of social neuroticism, as well as psychological counseling. Further research in this area will allow psychologists to conduct not only a socio-psychological assessment of social neuroticism, but also to develop a competent strategy for preventing the psychological state of deferred life.

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## GOLDEN PAGES: ALBERT BANDURA

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On December 4, the psychological and educational community marks the birthday of **Albert Bandura**, one of the most influential psychologists of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Few scholars have reshaped our understanding of human learning, behavior, and agency as profoundly as Bandura did. His ideas continue to guide research, educational practice, mental health interventions, and social policy across the world.

Albert Bandura is best known as the founder of **Social Learning Theory**, later developed into **Social Cognitive Theory**. At a time when psychology was dominated by behaviorism, Bandura challenged the assumption that learning occurs only through direct reinforcement. Instead, he demonstrated that people learn powerfully through **observation**, **modeling**, and **imitation**. His famous *Bobo doll experiments* showed that children do not need to be rewarded or punished to acquire new behaviors; simply observing others is often enough. This insight changed not only psychology, but also education, parenting, media studies, and public health.

Perhaps Bandura's most enduring contribution is the concept of **self-efficacy**—the belief in one's own ability to organize and execute actions required to manage prospective situations. Unlike general self-confidence, self-efficacy is task- and context-specific. Bandura showed that what people believe about their capabilities often predicts their success better than their actual skills. This idea has had far-reaching implications: from student motivation and teacher effectiveness to psychotherapy, leadership, and behavior change programs.

For education, Bandura's work carries particular significance. He reframed the learner not as a passive recipient of instruction, but as an **active agent** who observes, evaluates, reflects, and regulates behavior. Learning, in Bandura's view, is a reciprocal process involving personal factors, behavior, and environment—a principle known as **reciprocal determinism**. This framework aligns closely with contemporary approaches such as social-emotional learning (SEL), formative feedback, mentoring, and learner-centered pedagogy.

Bandura also emphasized the **moral and social dimensions of learning**. His research on moral disengagement helped explain how individuals and groups justify harmful behavior while preserving a positive self-image. These insights remain critically relevant today, especially in contexts of conflict, violence, misinformation, and digital environments. For educators and psychologists, Bandura's work provides tools not only to promote positive behavior, but also to understand how destructive patterns are learned and sustained.

Beyond theory, Bandura was a model of scientific clarity and intellectual integrity. His writing combined conceptual rigor with accessibility, making complex ideas understandable without oversimplification. As a professor at Stanford University for more than five decades, he influenced generations of researchers, teachers, and practitioners. His publications are among the most cited in the history of psychology—a testament not to popularity alone, but to lasting scientific value.

What makes Bandura especially relevant for today's educational and psychosocial challenges is his balanced view of human nature. He rejected both extreme determinism and naïve optimism. Humans, he argued, are shaped by their environments—but they are also capable of shaping those environments through intentional action. This vision of **human agency** resonates strongly in contemporary discussions about resilience, empowerment, inclusion, and lifelong learning.

As we honor Albert Bandura in our *Golden Pages*, we are reminded that great psychological theories do more than explain behavior—they **expand responsibility**. They invite educators, psychologists, parents, and policymakers to reflect on the models they provide, the expectations they communicate, and the environments they create. Bandura's legacy challenges us to ask not only *how people learn*, but also *what kind of learners—and citizens—we help shape*.

In celebrating his December birthday, we reaffirm the relevance of his ideas for modern education and psychology. Albert Bandura's work remains a guiding light for those who believe that learning is social, agency is real, and change—personal and collective—is possible.