

Relationship Between Value Orientations and Emotion Understanding in Preschoolers[‡]

Ulyana D. Guseva^{a*}, Daria A. Bukhalenkova^a, Olga V. Morozova^b

^a Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Interdisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russia

^b Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia

* Corresponding author. E-mail: u.d.guseva@mail.ru

ABSTRACT

Background. Despite the amount of research on emotion understanding, the relationship between value orientations of domains and the development of emotion understanding abilities in young preschoolers remains unexplored. Understanding these connections is important for developing effective programmes to support emotional development and create conditions for the harmonious formation of values in preschoolers.

Objective. A study of the correlation of value orientations and the level of emotion comprehension in children of preschool age.

Design. To study the child's value orientations, the "Three Wishes" technique was used. The "Test of Emotion Comprehension" method was used to assess the ability to understand emotions in preschoolers. The sample consisted of 321 children aged 40 to 67 months ($M = 54.61$; $SD = 4.42$) who attended secondary kindergarten groups in the following Russian cities: Moscow (24.3% of the sample), Sochi (4.4% of the sample), Tatarstan (47% of the sample), and Barnaul (24.3% of the sample). The sample included 46.7% of boys.

Results. It was found that egocentricity of desires in young preschool children is one of the key features of their mental development. Value orientations of preschool children are largely associated with material goods. Children's inability to invent desires and social desirability are associated with a low level of understanding of emotions. Communicative values positively correlate with children's understanding of mental causes of emotions, while status values are associated with understanding of external causes of emotions and the general level of understanding of emotions.

Conclusion. The results of the study show a relationship between the ability to understand emotions and value orientations in young preschoolers: in children with a more

[‡] This article is a modified version of a previous paper by Guseva, U.D., Bukhalenkova, D.A., Kartashova, E.V., & Morozova, O.V. (2025). The relationship between value orientations and emotion understanding in early preschoolers. *Sovremennoe Doshkol'noe Obrazovanie* [Modern Preschool Education], 19(1), 4–15. <https://doi.org/10.24412/2782-4519-2025-1127-4-15>

developed understanding of emotions, material, communicative and status values predominate, while children with a less developed understanding of emotions demonstrate social desirability in their desires or are unable to formulate them at all.

Keywords: Preschool age; emotion comprehension; value orientations; values; emotional development

Highlights:

- Most of the desires of young preschoolers are egocentric and related to material values, which is consistent with the peculiarities of their emotional and personal development at this age.
- For the first time in the Russian sample, a significant relationship between the level of understanding of emotions and value orientations in young preschool children was revealed. Children with a higher level of development of the ability to understand emotions were significantly more likely to talk about desires reflecting their communicative and status values. Children with a low level of emotion understanding were significantly more likely to demonstrate social desirability or inability to articulate their desires.
- The findings emphasise the need to develop emotional competence already in the young preschool age to expand the sphere of children's value orientations.

АННОТАЦИЯ

ВЗАИМОСВЯЗЬ МЕЖДУ ЦЕННОСТНЫМИ ОРИЕНТАЦИЯМИ И ПОНИМАНИЕМ ЭМОЦИЙ У МЛАДШИХ ДОШКОЛЬНИКОВ

Актуальность. Несмотря на значительное количество исследований в области понимания эмоций, взаимосвязь между ценностными ориентациями и развитием способности к пониманию эмоций у младших дошкольников остается неизученной. Понимание этих связей важно для разработки эффективных программ поддержки эмоционального развития и создания условий для гармоничного формирования ценностей у младших дошкольников.

Цель. Изучение взаимосвязей ценностных ориентаций и уровня развития способности к пониманию эмоций у детей младшего дошкольного возраста.

Методы. Для изучения ценностных ориентаций ребенка была использована методика «Три желания». Для оценки способности к пониманию эмоций у дошкольников была использована методика «Тест на понимание эмоций». Выборку исследования составили 321 ребенок в возрасте от 40 до 67 месяцев ($M = 54,61$; $SD = 4,42$), посещавшие средние группы детских садов в следующих городах России: Москва (24,3%), Сочи (4,4%), Татарстан (47%), Барнаул (24,3%). В состав выборки вошло 46,7% мальчиков.

Результаты. Было установлено, что эгоцентричность желаний у детей младшего дошкольного возраста является одной из ключевых особенностей их психического развития. Ценностные ориентации детей дошкольного возраста в большей степени связаны с материальными благами. Неспособность детей придумывать желания и социальная желательность связаны с низким уровнем понимания эмоций. Коммуникативные ценности положительно коррелируют с пониманием детьми ментальных причин эмоций, тогда как статусные ценности связаны с пониманием внешних причин эмоций и общим уровнем понимания эмоций.

Выводы. Результаты исследования показывают взаимосвязь способности к пониманию эмоций и ценностных ориентаций у младших дошкольников: у детей с более развитым пониманием эмоций среди ценностей преобладают материальные, коммуникативные и статусные, а дети с менее развитым пониманием эмоций

демонстрируют социальную желательность в своих желаниях или же оказываются неспособны сформулировать их вовсе.

Ключевые слова: Дошкольный возраст, понимание эмоций, ценностные ориентации, эмоциональное развитие

Ключевые положения:

- Большая часть желаний младших дошкольников носит эгоцентрический характер и связана с материальными ценностями, что согласуется с особенностями их эмоционально-личностного развития в данном возрасте.
- Впервые на российской выборке выявлена значимая связь между уровнем понимания эмоций и ценностными ориентациями у детей младшего дошкольного возраста. Дети с более высоким уровнем развития способности к пониманию эмоций значимо чаще говорили о желаниях, отражающих их коммуникативные и статусные ценности. Дети с низким уровнем понимания эмоций значимо чаще демонстрировали социальную желательность или неспособность сформулировать свои желания.
- Полученные данные подчеркивают необходимость развития эмоциональной компетентности уже в младшем дошкольном возрасте для расширения сферы ценностных ориентаций у детей.

RESUMEN

RELACIÓN ENTRE LAS ORIENTACIONES DE VALORES Y LA COMPRENSIÓN DE LAS EMOCIONES EN NIÑOS DE PREESCOLAR TEMPRANO

Antecedentes. A pesar de la cantidad de investigaciones sobre la comprensión de las emociones, la relación entre las orientaciones de valores de los dominios y el desarrollo de la capacidad de comprensión de las emociones en niños preescolares pequeños sigue sin explorarse. Comprender estas conexiones es importante para desarrollar programas eficaces para apoyar el desarrollo emocional y crear condiciones para la formación armoniosa de los valores en los niños preescolares más pequeños.

Objetivo. Estudio de la correlación de las orientaciones de valores y el nivel de comprensión de las emociones en niños de preescolar primaria.

Diseño. Para estudiar las orientaciones de valores del niño, se utilizó la técnica de los «Tres Deseos». Se utilizó el método de la «Prueba de Comprensión de las Emociones» para evaluar la capacidad de comprender las emociones en preescolares. La muestra consistió en 321 niños de entre 40 y 67 meses ($M = 54,61$; $SD = 4,42$) que asistían a grupos de jardín de infancia de nivel intermedio en las siguientes ciudades rusas: Moscú (24,3% de la muestra), Sochi (4,4% de la muestra), Tartaristán (47% de la muestra), Barnaul (24,3% de la muestra). La muestra incluyó el 46,7% de niños varones.

Resultados. Se descubrió que el egocentrismo de los deseos en los niños preescolares es una de las características clave de su desarrollo mental. Las orientaciones de valores de los niños en edad preescolar están asociadas en gran medida con los bienes materiales. La incapacidad de los niños para inventar deseos y la deseabilidad social están asociadas con un bajo nivel de comprensión de las emociones. Los valores comunicativos se correlacionan positivamente con la comprensión de los niños de las causas mentales de las emociones, mientras que los valores de estatus están asociados con la comprensión de las causas externas de las emociones y el nivel general de comprensión de las emociones.

Conclusión. Los resultados del estudio muestran una relación entre la capacidad de comprender las emociones y las orientaciones de valores en los niños preescolares pequeños: en los niños con una comprensión más desarrollada de las emociones, predominan los valores materiales, comunicativos y de estatus, mientras que los niños con una

comprensión menos desarrollada de las emociones demuestran deseabilidad social en sus deseos o son incapaces de formularlos.

Palabras clave: Edad preescolar; comprensión de las emociones; orientaciones de valores; valores; desarrollo emocional

Disposiciones clave:

- La mayoría de los deseos de los niños pequeños de preescolar son de naturaleza egocéntrica y están relacionados con valores materiales, lo que concuerda con las características de su desarrollo emocional y personal a esta edad.
- Por primera vez en una muestra rusa, se ha identificado una conexión significativa entre el nivel de comprensión de las emociones y las orientaciones de valores en niños pequeños de preescolar. Los niños con un nivel más alto de desarrollo de la capacidad de comprender las emociones expresaron con mucha más frecuencia deseos que reflejan sus valores comunicativos y de estatus. Los niños con un bajo nivel de comprensión de las emociones demostraron con mucha más frecuencia deseabilidad social o incapacidad para formular sus deseos.
- Los datos obtenidos resaltan la necesidad de desarrollar la competencia emocional ya en la primera infancia para ampliar el ámbito de las orientaciones de valores en los niños.

RESUME

LIEN ENTRE LES ORIENTATIONS AXIOLOGIQUES ET LA COMPRÉHENSION DES ÉMOTIONS CHEZ LES JEUNES ENFANTS D'ÂGE PRÉSCOLAIRE

Origines. Malgré de nombreuses recherches sur la compréhension des émotions, la relation entre les orientations axiologiques et le développement des capacités de compréhension émotionnelle chez les jeunes enfants d'âge préscolaire reste peu explorée. Comprendre ces liens est essentiel pour élaborer des programmes efficaces de soutien au développement émotionnel et créer des conditions propices à la formation harmonieuse des valeurs chez les jeunes enfants.

Objectif. Étudier la corrélation entre les orientations axiologiques et le niveau de compréhension des émotions chez les enfants d'âge préscolaire primaire.

Méthode. Pour étudier les orientations axiologiques de l'enfant, la méthode des « Trois souhaits » a été utilisée. La compréhension des émotions chez les enfants a été évaluée à l'aide du « Test de compréhension des émotions ». L'échantillon comprenait 321 enfants âgés de 40 à 67 mois ($M = 54,61$; $SD = 4,42$), fréquentant des groupes moyens d'écoles maternelles dans les villes russes suivantes : Moscou (24,3 % de l'échantillon), Sotchi (4,4 %), Tatarstan (47 %) et Barnaoul (24,3 %). L'échantillon comportait 46,7 % de garçons.

Résultats. Il a été constaté que l'égoïsme des désirs chez les jeunes enfants est l'une des caractéristiques clés de leur développement psychique. Les orientations axiologiques des enfants d'âge préscolaire sont en grande partie liées aux biens matériels. L'incapacité à formuler des souhaits ainsi que la tendance à donner des réponses socialement désirables sont associées à un faible niveau de compréhension des émotions. Les valeurs communicatives sont positivement corrélées à la compréhension des causes mentales des émotions, tandis que les valeurs de statut sont liées à la compréhension des causes externes des émotions et au niveau général de compréhension des émotions.

Conclusion. Les résultats de l'étude montrent une relation entre la capacité à comprendre les émotions et les orientations axiologiques chez les jeunes enfants d'âge préscolaire : chez les enfants ayant une meilleure compréhension des émotions, les valeurs matérielles, communicatives et de statut prédominent, tandis que ceux avec une compréhension émotionnelle moins développée manifestent une tendance à formuler des désirs socialement souhaitables ou ne parviennent pas à les exprimer.

Mots-clés: Age préscolaire; compréhension des émotions; orientations axiologiques; valeurs; développement émotionnel

Points principaux:

- La majorité des souhaits exprimés par les jeunes enfants d'âge préscolaire sont égocentriques et liés à des valeurs matérielles, ce qui correspond aux particularités de leur développement émotionnel et personnel à cet âge.
- Pour la première fois dans un échantillon russe, une relation significative a été établie entre le niveau de compréhension des émotions et les orientations axiologiques chez les jeunes enfants d'âge préscolaire. Les enfants ayant une meilleure compréhension émotionnelle évoquaient significativement plus souvent des désirs reflétant des valeurs communicatives et de statut. Ceux ayant une compréhension plus faible manifestaient davantage une tendance à la désirabilité sociale ou une incapacité à formuler des désirs.
- Les données obtenues soulignent l'importance de développer les compétences émotionnelles dès le jeune âge préscolaire afin d'élargir le champ des orientations axiologiques chez les enfants.

Introduction

Preschool age is characterised by the intensive development of the child's emotional and personal sphere due to active entry into society. There is increasing mastering of social relations and roles, and accumulation of social experience — primarily through role-play which is the main form of socialisation and the leading activity at this age (Vygotsky, 1966; Elkonin, 1999). In it, initiative is developed, and the formation of all the basic neo-formations, including emotional competence, takes place (Veraksa et al., 2023).

The study of personal development of young preschoolers is important for understanding the features of their adaptation in society — both directly at this age, and later in terms of predictors of certain socialisation scenarios. Some aspects of this problem are already well developed — for example, it is known that a high level of understanding of emotions at preschool age is a predictor of school performance and successful adaptation to school (Veraksa et al., 2021).

All studies of preschool age today require taking into account the special specifics of the social situation of children's development – notably the influence of the digital age on the development of motivational-emotional, cognitive and other spheres of preschoolers' psyche (Project et al., 2024). It is known that preschoolers on average use digital devices quite actively — every day or almost every day (Kornienko et al., 2022). Their prolonged use during the day (3-4 hours and more) as well as the consumption of age-inappropriate content negatively affects the personal development of preschoolers (Veraksa et al., 2024). It is noted that a large amount of 'screen time' can increase the level of aggressive behaviour and decrease, on the contrary, the level of prosocial behaviour (Veraksa et al., 2021). In addition, the development of emotion understanding, emotional regulation, curiosity, psychological well-being, and executive functions suffer (Veraksa et al., 2024). In addition, the psychological community is concerned about the abundance of advertising promoting high consumption norms (Rani, 2023). In modern Russian reality, this problem becomes especially

relevant due to the processes of value transformation of society and weakening of the socialising function of the family (Gurieva et al., 2024).

In connection with the above, the aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between the understanding of emotions and value orientations in order to more fully reveal the peculiarities of personal development of modern preschool children.

Emotion Understanding in Preschool Children

In this study, we relied on the definition of emotion understanding as the ability to understand the nature, causes and consequences of one's own emotions and the emotions of others, which includes such cognitive aspects as explaining the nature and causes of emotions, predicting emotions and knowing strategies to manage them in everyday life (Pons et al., 2004; Bukhalenkova et al., 2024).

Based on the extensive literature on the development of children's emotion understanding, Pons and colleagues identified three key stages in the development of children's emotion understanding: understanding external causes of emotion, understanding mental causes, and developing reflective emotion (Pons et al., 2004). In the early preschool years, a component of emotion understanding such as understanding external causes develops, which includes the ability to recognise emotions, to understand that emotions can be caused by external situations and that different people may express different emotions in the same situation because of their different desires (Veraksa et al, 2021; Pons et al, 2004). According to the model of Harris as shown by Pons this is the first stage of the development of emotion understanding that children go through between the ages of 3-4 and 5-6 years (Pons et al., 2004). At the second stage, from 5-6 to 7-8 years of age, children learn to understand the mental causes of emotions, namely understanding the possibility of hiding emotions and the influence of people's beliefs on their emotional experiences, as well as experiencing emotions from the actualisation of memories. The reflection component usually emerges between the ages of 7-8 and 10-11. At this time, children develop the ability to master the reflexive processes underlying emotion regulation, and understanding of mixed and moral emotions. According to this model, the three components of development are hierarchically related to each other. That is, mastering the external aspects of emotion understanding is a prerequisite for understanding the internal, psychic causes of emotions and, in turn, both of these levels of understanding are necessary for the transition to the stage of reflexion (Pons et al., 2004).

Thus, a certain degree of understanding of emotions caused by external and internal causes can be expected in young preschool age, but not yet to the same extent as in senior preschool or early school age (Pons et al, 2004).

Value Orientations in Preschool Children

Values are social formations that, on passing through the process of appropriation and becoming elements of the internal structure of personality, perform the function of managing human behaviour and activity (Leontiev, 1996). A value is not necessarily associated with a particular idea, but serves as an individual life orientation (Luzina, 2000). In this regard, individual values can be considered as personal reference

points that allow each person, based on his/her experience, abilities and upbringing, to distinguish between important and unimportant aspects of the world of things and phenomena.

Value orientations are a set of priorities that determine a child's behaviour and his/her attitude to the world around him/her (Prikhozhan & Tolstykh, 2005). Value orientations in the understanding, close to the one in which they are studied in adults, are mainly studied at the ages starting from primary school. However, for preschool children, the method of diagnosing value orientations namely 'Three Wishes' (Veraksa, 2012; Prikhozhan & Tolstykh, 2005), which is widely known both in domestic psychology (Oparnikova & Danilova, 2018) and foreign psychology (O'Donnell, 2020) allows us to identify in a general way a number of parameters that can be considered as value orientations for this age group. These parameters are as follows:

1. Material values — the desire to possess things that provide comfort and fulfilment of needs.
2. Cognitive values — interest in knowledge, desire to learn and explore new things.
3. Communicative values — the importance of communication, establishing contacts and interacting with others.
4. Family values — the importance of family, attachment to relatives and respect for family traditions.
5. Status values — orientation to achieve a high social position, recognition and success among peers.
6. Value of gaining new experience — readiness to experiment, openness to new impressions and events.
7. Human values — awareness of the importance of such concepts as goodness, justice, mercy and tolerance.
8. Learning values — motivation to study, aspiration to acquire knowledge and develop intellectual abilities.

More general value orientations include orientation towards oneself and others as a conventional dichotomy between egoistic and altruistic orientations. The latter means readiness to act in other people's interests without obvious benefit for oneself, whilst egoistic orientation implies the subject's predominant absence of such motivations (Kashirskaya, 2023; Prikhozhan & Tolstykh, 2005). Altruism as a readiness for selfless help develops in preschool age, and closer to the senior preschool age (Evans et al., 2013).

A study using the Three Wishes methodology, conducted in the early 2000s, showed that 53 per cent of primary school pupils expressed humanistic aspirations, such as the desire for world peace or universal happiness (Prikhozhan & Tolstykh, 2005). Although these motives remained rather declarative, not supported by real ways of achieving goals and borrowed from adults, it is believed that such values contribute to the development of positive social motivation and form a harmonious worldview (Burlakova, 2022; Kovalyova, 2016).

Recent studies on primary school children show different picture. For this age group, the consumer sphere comes to the forefron. (Martsinkovskaya & Poleva,

2017). There are studies that can be referred to that are directly comparable in terms of giving results from the same age group. One study by Klopotova examined the value orientations of modern preschoolers, comparing this with the results of an earlier study by Repina carried out in the 1970s-1980s (Klopotova 2017). The modern study involved 200 senior preschool children attending kindergartens in the city of Moscow. It was found that 83 per cent of the children's expressed desires were addressed directly to themselves, with 84 per cent of these desires relating to obtaining material values (Klopotova 2017). Unlike the children who participated in Repina's study, modern preschoolers were less likely to seek a variety of toys, preferring one-type items, emphasising quantity ('a lot') and novelty ('new'). Tablets, touchscreen phones and computer games were among the most frequent desires.

In addition, unlike their peers of the last century, many of today's children expressed a desire to have money, not for family needs, but solely for personal use. This is consistent with other studies that show the dominance of material values related to entertainment and consumption at preschool age (Golovnya, 2018; Avdulova & Khuzeyeva, 2013). This trend was traced in the Golovnya's study where among the desires of senior preschoolers, the most expressed were material values (44%). Next in the degree of expression were altruistic (23.8%), status (11.4%), communicative (10.9%) and cognitive values (9.9%).

Thus, domestic studies demonstrate that the key changes in the personal structure of modern preschoolers are expressed in the strengthening of egocentric orientation, manifested in the desire to satisfy their own needs. In addition, there is a shift in the focus of interests of preschoolers towards material values. Prospective directions for further research are the study of interrelations between values and emotional sphere within the framework of the identified trends.

The Relationship Between Emotion Understanding and Value Orientations Preschoolers

Children's understanding of emotions is usually analysed through the lens of beliefs and desires (Pons et al, 2004). Research shows that children first learn to explain and predict the behaviour of others based on their desires (Wellman, 1990). By the age of three, they are able to realise that a person can feel joy or sadness depending on whether their wishes have been fulfilled. shown that preschoolers understand and experience joy when they perform actions that are useful to others, be it helping others, successfully fulfilling duties, or acting justly (Zaporozhets et al., 1985).

In children aged 3-4 years, the cognitive ability to understand their own mental states and mental states of others, including emotions, thoughts, desires, and beliefs, begins to develop. This ability is called 'theory of mind', 'theory of consciousness' or 'mental model' (Almazova et al., 2018; Sergienko et al., 2009). It continues to be formed throughout the preschool period (Sergienko et al., 2009). Studies that focus on the theory of consciousness focus on children's initial knowledge of basic mental states such as desires, beliefs, knowing or not knowing about something, thinking, intentions, and others (Rivera Valdez & López Cortés, 2024). When preschoolers are asked to explain simple human actions, they, similar to adults, usually provide expla-

nations based on the character's knowledge, desires, and beliefs. Children even apply similar psychological explanations to cases involving emotional reactions to explain why people feel happy, sad, or surprised. By the age of 4-5, children continue to improve their understanding of the mental world of others, mastering more complex internal states such as thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and knowledge, enabling them to draw deeper conclusions about human actions. This means that it is the preschool period, when significant transformations in the development of the theory of consciousness are observed, that is of greatest interest for the study of value orientations and the understanding of emotions. It is important to emphasise the view that different aspects of the theory of consciousness develop not linearly, but in parallel (Sergienko et al., 2009). Thus, the development of value orientations and understanding of emotions occurs simultaneously.

The analysis of the literature suggests that behind the connection between emotion understanding and value orientations lies the influence of the level of development of the ability to understand emotions on the nature of desires. It can be assumed that the primary role at this stage is played by the understanding of emotions caused by external components, and accordingly, children are presumably most inclined to focus on external components for positive emotions when formulating desires.

The choice of the purpose of this study is conditioned by the fact that the issue of studying the peculiarities of understanding emotions in young preschoolers and their connection with value orientations remains insufficiently studied (O'Donnell, 2020). This issue is of great importance, as the development of understanding of emotions and the formation of a system of values are significant elements of the formation of a child's personality (O'Donnell, 2020). Studying these processes will provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of interaction between children's emotional experiences and internal attitudes, which may contribute to the development of effective methods of early education and support for psycho-emotional health.

Based on the existing ideas about value orientations and understanding of emotions by young preschool children, the following tasks were formulated:

1. To study the value orientations of preschool children.
2. To study the relationship between value orientations and the ability to understand emotions in children aged 4 years.

Methods

Participants

The study sample consisted of 321 children aged 40 to 67 months ($M = 54.61$; $SD = 4.42$) who attended the middle groups of kindergartens in the following Russian cities: Moscow (24.3% of the sample), Sochi (4.4% of the sample), Kazan (47% of the sample), and Barnaul (24.3% of the sample). The sample included 46.7% of boys. The participation of children from different regions of Russia makes the sample more representative, besides minimising the influence of socio-cultural peculiarities.

Procedure

Measures

The method 'Three Wishes' (Veraksa, 2012; Prikhozhan & Tolstykh, 2005) was used to study the child's value orientations. The child was presented with a drawing of a flower with three petals and was instructed that the flower was magical and each petal had a wish. The child was then asked what they would wish for and why.

When interpreting the child's answers, the directionality of the child's wishes and value orientations were taken into account (Veraksa, 2012; Prikhozhan & Tolstykh, 2005).

When assessing the directionality of desires, three types were distinguished: 1) egocentric ('I want a slime because it is fun to play with'), 2) altruistic ('I want my mother to be all right'), 3) socially desirable ('I want to be obedient because my mother tells me off'). A refusal or inability to come up with a desire was also recorded.

Value orientations were categorised into the following: 1) material ('I want two toys to play with'), 2) cognitive ('I want to learn to play chess because I don't know how to play it yet'), 3) communicative ('I want to play with friends'), 4) family ('I want my dad to come home early from work, because I am bored without him'), 5) status ('I want a fast car to overtake everyone'), universal ('I want everyone not to get sick'), 6) educational ('I would like to study well') or 7) related to gaining new experience ('I want to fly away in a balloon'). (Veraksa, 2012; Prikhozhan & Tolstykh, 2005)

If a child's wish was assigned to one of the selected types (wish orientation or value orientation), 1 point was awarded. Thus, each category had a range of values from 0 to 3 points.

The Test of Emotional Comprehension (TEC) (Pons & Harris, 2000), adapted for a Russian-speaking sample (Veraksa et al., 2021), was used to assess emotion understanding ability. The methodology was conducted in an electronic format on tablets. The tasks were illustrated stories accompanied by a narrative. After the story, the child was asked how the main character in the story felt and was asked to choose one of four pictures at the bottom of the screen that represented the main character's facial expression. The methodology includes three components, each with a score range from 0 to 3: 1) External, 2) Mental, and 3) Reflection. The total emotion comprehension score is also calculated as the sum of the child's scores on the three components (range of values from 0 to 9 points).

Children performed the tasks individually with the tester in a quiet room in the kindergarten where they were studying. One meeting of 15-25 minutes was organised with each child. All techniques were presented to the children in the same established order: the Test of Emotional Comprehension was administered first, followed by the Three Wishes. The assessment was carried out by undergraduate and postgraduate students of the Faculty of Psychology at Lomonosov Moscow State University, each of whom received special training and instruction prior to conducting the tests. Children were diagnosed only if their parents or their legal representatives signed a signed consent. All children received a small gift (sticker) for their participation.

Statistical Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics 26 and Microsoft Excel 2016 software packages were used to analyse the data. The sample distribution has a character different from normal (Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion, p -value <0.001). Mean values, standard deviations and frequency distribution were given as descriptive statistics. Conjugacy tables (Pearson Chi-square test) were used to analyse the joint frequency distribution of value orientations in children of different genders and to assess its statistical validity, Mann-Whitney U-test to assess the differences between children of different genders in the expression of the ability to understand emotions, correlation analysis using the τ -Kendall coefficient was used to assess the relationship between the components of understanding emotions and value orientations due to the small variation in the values of the variables.

Results

Characteristics of the Sample by the Studied Indicators

According to the obtained results (Table 1), children's value orientation was most often egocentric (98.1%) and least often socially desirable (1.9%). In terms of value orientations, children's answers were most often related to material values (96.9%) and most rarely to universal values (0.3%); no orientation towards educational values was found in children's answers.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for the "Three Wishes" method

	Mean	Standard deviation	Frequency distribution
<i>Direction of desires</i>			
Egocentrism	2.7	0.645	98.1%
Altruism	0.08	0.291	7.2%
Social desirability	0.02	0.208	1.9%
Refusal/inability to come up with a wish	0.19	0.542	13.7%
<i>Value orientations</i>			
Material values	2.43	0.811	96.9%
Cognitive values	0.01	0.097	0.9%
Communicative values	0.06	0.286	5%
Family values	0.22	0.571	15.6%
Status values	0.03	0.157	2.5%
The value of gaining new experiences	0.08	0.327	6.5%
Universal human values	0.00	0.056	0.3%
Educational values	0.00	0.000	0%

It was found that girls in the sample were more likely to have desires related to family values relative to boys (Chi-square = 5.145, $p = 0.023$). When analysing sex differences on the emotion understanding technique, it was found that girls had higher values on the External component ($U = 10439.5$, $p = 0.002$) and on the total score on the technique ($U = 10974$, $p = 0.023$) compared to boys.

Analysis of Relationships Between Value Orientations and Components of Emotion Understanding

The analysis of correlations between the components of emotion understanding and the directionality of children's desires (τ -Kendall coefficient) showed that refusal or inability to come up with a desire correlated negatively with the general level of emotion understanding ($\tau = -0.099$, $p = 0.041$); social desirability correlated negatively with the reflexive component of emotion understanding ($\tau = -0.110$, $p = 0.038$) and the general level of emotion understanding ($\tau = -0.100$, $p = 0.041$). No significant correlations were found for the indicators of egocentrism and altruism.

Analyses of the relationships between the components of emotion understanding and children's value orientations revealed that communicative values were positively correlated with the component Mental for emotion understanding ($\tau = 0.168$, $p = 0.001$), and status values were positively correlated with the component External ($\tau = 0.130$, $p = 0.013$) and the general level of emotion understanding ($\tau = 0.115$, $p = 0.020$). No significant correlations were found for the indicators of the other groups of values.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine the specificity of the relationships between value orientations and the level of understanding of emotions in 4-year-old children.

The data obtained show that children's desires were predominantly egocentric in nature (98.1%) and less often socially desirable (1.9%). These results confirm that egocentricity is one of the main characteristics of the emotional and personal sphere of preschoolers. Modern research indicates an increased desire of modern preschoolers to satisfy their own needs, which is consistent with the findings of Klopotova (2017). Altruistic attitudes were manifested much less frequently, since the tendency to unselfishly help others begins to form only in the process of growing up, especially closer to the senior preschool age (Evans et al., 2013; Zaporozhets et al., 1985).

Analysis of children's answers regarding value orientations has shown that most of them were related to material values (96.9%) and most rarely to universal values (0.3%), while educational values were not revealed in children's answers. These results demonstrate that preschoolers' value priorities are largely focused on material goods. This conclusion is consistent with the results of modern research, which has noted an increase in the number of desires related to money, wealth, and success among young preschoolers (Klopotova, 2017). Similar observations are confirmed in other scientific works (Golovnya, 2018; Martsinkovskaya & Poleva, 2017; Avdulova &

Khuzeyeva, 2013), where the prevalence of material values related to entertainment and consumption is also recorded.

According to the results of this study, children's inability to fantasise and make up wishes is associated with a low level of understanding of emotions. This is consistent with the data of studies devoted to the development of the theory of consciousness in preschool children, which emphasise the synchronous development of its various aspects, including value orientations and understanding of emotions (Sergienko et al., 2009). The obtained result confirms the close relationship between the child's ability to formulate his/her own desires and the state of his/her emotional sphere. Thus, four-year-old children have not yet sufficiently developed the theory of consciousness, and therefore they are unable to realise their desires and understand emotions (Sergienko et al., 2009).

The number of children's desires associated with social desirability is negatively correlated with the general level of emotion understanding and the most complex reflexive component of emotion understanding in particular. This correlation can be explained by the fact that social desirability shows a child's inability to recognise and express their true desires, substituting them with socially approved reactions. As a result, children may experience difficulties in understanding and interpreting their inner experiences, which reduces their overall emotional competence, which is also consistent with research on the development of theory of consciousness in children, which has shown that four-year-old children have a theory of consciousness in the formative stage, so they are not yet able to fully realise their desires and understand emotions (Sergienko et al., 2009).

The results of our study indicate a positive correlation between communicative values and children's understanding of the mental (internal) causes of emotions. This result can be explained by the fact that children's orientation towards communication and establishing friendships with peers can contribute to the development of understanding of emotions, as such 'horizontal' social interactions help to better understand the inner world of both the child himself and the people around him (for example, when children need to agree with each other on what they will play based on the desires of each of them). Status values, in contrast, are related to understanding external causes of emotion and general levels of emotion understanding, as children who demonstrate a desire for high social status derive positive emotions from external causes — achievement, recognition and approval from others. These findings are consistent with previous research that emphasises that emotion understanding plays a key role in managing one's own feelings, building peer relationships, adapting to social environments and resolving interpersonal conflicts (Liew & Zhou, 2022).

Conclusion

The results of the conducted study allowed us to establish that the desires of young preschool children are mainly focused on material goods, while universal values are still weakly expressed. At the same time, children's value orientations were significantly related to the development of the ability to understand emotions.

This study shows the need to develop effective strategies for interacting with children to create favourable conditions for their personal growth, successful social adaptation and integration into the system of values of Russian society, which meets the requirements of the Federal Educational Standard of Preschool Education (FESPE) (Buyanov et al., 2023). In order to achieve these goals, it is important to discuss emotions with children in a playful way, as well as to pay attention to the formation of values beyond material values, using, for example, fairy tales and stories.

Limitations

This study did not take into account cultural differences between children from different regions, nor did it take into account socio-demographic characteristics of families, such as parents' education and financial status, and the preschooler's family composition, which can have a significant impact on values and emotional development (Kårstad et al., 2016). In addition, the results regarding wishful thinking may not reflect children's inability to express their true desires openly, but rather their imaginative development and difficulties in formulating a wish within the strictly regulated testing conditions. In such situations, children may prefer to choose familiar answer options, avoiding the need to create new ones. Thus, a comprehensive consideration of all the above factors can significantly enrich our knowledge about the development of value orientations and emotional sphere in preschool children.

In the future, it is planned to conduct a longitudinal study that will allow us to track changes in the interrelations of value orientations and understanding of emotions throughout the preschool age.

Ethics Statement

The study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Lomonosov Moscow State University (report no 2024/01/31).

Informed Consent from the Participants' Legal Guardians (if the participants were minors)

Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

Author Contributions

D.B. designed and directed the project; U.G. and O.M. developed the theoretical framework and drafted the manuscript, performed the analysis of children's answers and statistical data and designed the figures; D.B. aided in interpreting the results and worked on the manuscript. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Almazova, O.V., Bukhalenkova, D.A., Veraksa, A.N., & Yakupova, V.A. (2018). Sviaz' teorii soznaniia i ispolnitel'nykh funktsii v starshem doshkol'nom vozraste [The connection between theory of mind and executive functions in the senior preschool age]. *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta. Psikhologiya i pedagogika* [Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Psychology and Education], 8(3), 293–311.
- Avdulova, T.P., & Khuzeeva, G.R. (2013). *Lichnostnye i kommunikativnye kompetentsii sovremennogo doshkol'nika: Uchebnoe posobie* [Personal and communicative competencies of a modern preschooler: Textbook]. Prometei Publ.
- Bukhalenkova, D.A., Veraksa, A.N., Guseva, U.D., & Oshchepkova, E.S. (2024). Vzaimosviaz' ob'ema slovarnogo zapasa i ponimaniia emotsii u detei 5–7 let [The relationship between vocabulary size and emotion understanding in children aged 5–7 years]. *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Seriya 14. Psikhologiya* [Lomonosov Psychology Journal], 47(4), 150–176. <https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-44>
- Burlakova, I.A. (2022). E.O. Smirnova o npravstvennom vospitanii detei [E.O. Smirnova on moral education of children]. *Natsional'nyi psikhologicheskii zhurnal* [National Psychological Journal], 3(47), 69–76. <https://doi.org/10.11621/npj.2022.0309>
- Buyanov, A.A., Lykova, I.A., & Mayer, A.A. (2023). Aktualizatsiia programmy doshkol'nogo obrazovaniia: orientir na traditsionnye tsennosti [Updating the preschool education program: a guide to traditional values]. *Doshkol'noe obrazovanie segodnia* [Preschool Education Today], 4(17), 75–88. <https://doi.org/10.24412/2782-4519-2023-4118-75-88>
- Elkonin, D.B. (1999). *Psikhologiya igry* [Psychology of play]. VLADOS.
- Evans, A., Athenstaedt, U., & Krueger, J. (2013). The development of trust and altruism during childhood. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 36, 82–95. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joep.2013.02.010>
- Gurieva, S.D., Yumkina, E.A., Vasina, E.A., & Kuznetsova, I.V. (2024). Tsennostnye orientatsii v sem'e: sotsial'no-psikhologicheskii analiz [Value orientations in a family: a socio-psychological analysis]. *Sotsial'naia psikhologiya i obshchestvo* [Social Psychology and Society], 15(3), 38–59. <https://doi.org/10.17759/sps.2024150303>
- Kårstad, S., Vikan, A., Berg-Nielsen, T., Moreira, P., Abreu, E., & Rique Neto, J. (2016). Young Brazilian children's emotion understanding: A comparison within and across cultures. *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*, 6(2), 113–126. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jedp.v6n2p113>
- Kashirskaya, I.K. (2023). Otnoshenie k al'truizmu ili egoizmu u mal'chikov i devochek v zavisimosti ot predpochteniia virtual'nogo ili real'nogo obshcheniia [Attitudes toward altruism or selfishness among boys and girls depending upon virtual or real communication preferences]. *Novye idei v detskoi i pedagogicheskoi psikhologii* [New Ideas in Child and Educational Psychology], 3(1–2), 81–92. <https://doi.org/10.11621/nicep.2023.0405>
- Klopotova, E.E. (2017). Osobennosti tsennostnykh orientatsii sovremennykh doshkol'nikov [Features of value orientations of modern preschoolers]. *Psikhologicheskaya nauka i obrazovanie PSYEDU.ru* [Psychological Science and Education PSYEDU.ru], 9(1), 96–105. <https://doi.org/10.17759/psyedu.2017090110>
- Kornienko, D.S., Veraksa, A.N., Chichinina, E.A., Bukhalenkova, D.A., & Chursina, A.V. (2022). Ispol'zovanie tsifrovyykh ustroystv doshkol'nikami severnykh i tsentral'nykh regionov Rossii [The use of digital devices by preschoolers in the northern and central regions of Russia]. *Arktika: gumanitarnye vektory razvitiia* [The Arctic: Humanitarian vectors of development] (Conference proceedings, pp. 139–142).

- Liew, J., & Zhou, Q. (2022). Vospitanie, emotsional'naiia samoregulatsiia i psikhosotsial'naiia adaptatsiia v doshkol'nom i podrostkovom vozraste v kitaiskikh i kitaisko-immigrantskikh sotsiokul'turnykh kontekstakh [Parenting, emotional self-regulation, and psychosocial adjustment across early childhood and adolescence in Chinese and Chinese-immigrant sociocultural contexts]. In D. Dukes, A.C. Samson, & E.A. Walle (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of emotional development* (pp. 421–436). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhdb/9780198855903.013.37>
- Luzina, L.M. (2000). *Teoriia vospitaniia: Filosofsko-antropologicheskii podkhod* [The theory of education: A philosophical and anthropological approach]. Publishing Center PGPI imeni S.M. Kirova.
- Oparnikova, V.I., & Danilova, M.E. (2018). Empiricheskoe issledovanie lichnostnogo kharaktera podgotovki detei doshkol'nogo vozrasta [An empirical study of the personal character training of children of preschool age]. *Vestnik Tsentral'nogo rossiiskogo universiteta konsortsiума obrazovaniia. Seriia: Gumanitarnye nauki* [Bulletin of the Central Russian University Educational Consortium. Series: Humanities], 11, 98–102.
- Prizhozhan, A.M., & Tolstykh, N.N. (2005). *Psikhologiiia sirotstva* [The psychology of orphanhood]. Peter.
- Project, Y.L., Spasskaya, E.B., Ivanushkina, N.O., & Bocharova, O.S. (2024). Otsenka vliianiia ispol'zovaniia mobil'nykh ustroistv na obrazovatel'nye rezul'taty shkol'nikov: metaanaliz vtorogo poriadka [Assessment of the impact of mobile device use on educational outcomes of schoolchildren: A second-order meta-analysis]. *Rossiiskii psikhologicheskii zhurnal* [Russian Psychological Journal], 21(2), 35–59. <https://doi.org/10.21702/rpj.2024.2.3>
- Rani, K. (2023). The impact of advertisements on today's youth: A comprehensive analysis. *EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR)*, 9, 241–243.
- Rivera Valdez, L.D., & López Cortés, V.A. (2024). Mezhfunktsional'naiia vzaimosviaz' teorii soznaniia i vnutrennei rechi [The interfunctional relationship between theory of mind and private speech]. *Psychology in Russia: State of the Art*, 17(1), 3–23. <https://doi.org/10.11621/pir.2024.0101>
- Sergienko, E.A., Lebedeva, E.I., & Prusakova, O.A. (2009). *Model' psikhicheskogo v ontogeneze cheloveka* [The model of mental development in human ontogenesis]. Institute of Psychology, Russian Academy of Sciences.
- Veraksa, A.N. (2012). *Individual'naiia psikhologicheskaiia diagnostika rebenka 5–7 let: Posobie dlia psikhologov i pedagogov* [Individual psychological diagnosis of a child aged 5–7 years: A manual for psychologists and educators]. Mozaika-Sintez.
- Veraksa, A.N., Bukhalenkova, D.A., & Chichinina, E.A. (2021). Vzaimosviaz' ispol'zovaniia tsifrovyykh ustroistv s lichnostnym i emotsional'nyim razvitiem detei doshkol'nogo vozrasta [Relationship between the use of digital devices and personal and emotional development in preschool children]. *Psikhologicheskaiia nauka i obrazovanie* [Psychological Science and Education], 26(1), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.17759/pse.2021260101>
- Veraksa, A.N., Bukhalenkova, D.A., Chichinina, E.A., Kalimullin, A.M., Oshchepkova, E.S., Shatskaya, A.N., & Zinchenko, Y.P. (2024). Tsifrovye ustroistva v zhizni sovremennykh doshkol'nikov [Digital devices in life of modern preschoolers]. *Nauka teledeniia* [The Art and Science of Television], 20(1), 171–215. <https://doi.org/10.30628/1994-9529-2024-20.1-171-215>
- Veraksa, A.N., Kurilenko, V.B., & Novikova, I.A. (2023). Fenomenologiiia detstva v sovremennykh kontekstakh [Phenomenology of childhood in modern contexts]. *RUDN Journal of Psychology and Pedagogy*, 20(3), 419–430. <http://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1683-2023-20-3-419-430>
- Veraska, N.E., Veraksa, A.N., Gavrilova, M.N., Bukhalenkova, D.A., & Tarasova, K.S. (2021). Test na ponimanie emotsii: adaptatsiia russkoi versii na vyborke detei doshkol'nogo vozrasta v Rossii [Emotion understanding test: Adaptation of the Russian version on a sample of preschool children in Russia]. *Psikhologiiia. Zhurnal Vysshei shkoly ekonomiki* [Psychology. Journal of the Higher School of Economics], 18(1), 56–70.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1966). Igra i ee rol' v psikhicheskom razvitiu rebenka [Play and its role in the mental development of the child]. *Voprosy psikhologii* [Issues of Psychology], 6, 62–68.

- Wellman, H.M. (1990). *The child's theory of mind*. MIT Press.
<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/1811.001.0001>
- Zaporozhets, A.V., Neverovich, Ia.Z., & Kosheleva, A.D. (1985). *Emotsional'noe razvitie doshkol'nika: Posobie dlia vospitatelei detskogo sada* [Emotional development of a preschooler: A manual for kindergarten teachers]. Prosveshchenie.

Original manuscript received February 25, 2025

Revised manuscript accepted April 18, 2025

First published online May 20, 2025

To cite this article: Guseva, U. D., Bukhalenkova, D. A., Morozova, O. V. (2025). Relationship Between Value Orientations and Emotion Understanding in Preschoolers. *New Ideas in Child and Educational Psychology*, 5(1-2), 67–83. DOI: 10.11621/nicep.2025.0504