

Establishing the basics of moral culture in early childhood

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Received: 18 January 2026; **Revised:** 19 April 2026; **Accepted:** 23 April 2026

ABSTRACT

This study addresses the relevance of moral education as a fundamental component in the development of self-consciousness among preschool children and as a significant dimension of contemporary education. For preschool institutions, the priority task is the selection of curricula that contribute to the upbringing of a harmonious personality. Within this framework, the research focuses on the development of the foundations of moral culture in early childhood. The purpose of the study is to define the concept of moral education and to examine its influence on the upbringing of the younger generation in Kazakhstan. The relevance of this issue is reinforced by the limited theoretical and methodological elaboration of the topic and its growing practical importance in modern pedagogical practice. The research methodology is based on the analysis of approaches to moral education in the context of globalization, with particular emphasis on the necessity of synthesizing international practices to support the formation of a comprehensively developed personality. The study draws on the works of domestic and international scholars, allowing for the formulation of new conclusions and the modelling of future directions for educational development. Consideration of international expertise contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the role of moral education under current conditions. The findings highlight the main methods of moral-patriotic education that reflect contemporary trends. The practical value of the study lies in its applicability to the design of improved educational strategies for preschool institutions in Kazakhstan, aimed at fostering moral stability and social responsibility in the younger generation.

Keywords: Education, Spiritual-moral values, Personal development and upbringing, Humanity, Tolerance

Introduction

To date, the problems of moral education are the focus of attention in Kazakh pedagogy. It should also be emphasized that in this issue, the dominant role is played by those scientific findings that cover the theoretical and methodological foundations of a preschooler's moral consciousness, as well as the specific features of cultivating a sense of awareness of various social environments and behaviour within moral norms. The

problem concerning the moral education of preschool children is also quite popular in the modern scientific environment. It is necessary to develop more effective methods that contribute to the moral development of the child's personality to prove the substantial importance of the preschool period in the development of personality. All this, in turn, allows for the optimal timing of the development of the foundations of its harmonious development. Notably, it is important to remember that a preschooler should be considered not from the position of an object of pedagogical influences, but as a subject of the realization of their needs, aspirations, and interests.

In solving problems concerning the development of the moral image of a preschooler, it is necessary to understand that changes in the orientation of adult influences become fundamental, and the development of effective methods that allow the preschooler to demonstrate the importance of moral norms through their personal perception, according to S.M. Abylaikhan *et al.* [1]. The result of the actions of the educator should be the development

Access this article online

Website: www.japer.in

E-ISSN: 2249-3379

How to cite this article: Abylaikhan S, Karimova G, Zhumabaeva Z, Kertaeva G, Shaikheslyamova K. Establishing the basics of moral culture in early childhood. *J Adv Pharm Educ Res.* 2026;16(2):67-74. <https://doi.org/10.51847/TUKMUwjv7>

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of social feelings in the preschooler. This refers to, for example, feelings of self-esteem, satisfaction, shame, or dissatisfaction with oneself. Methods of moral education should focus on ensuring that, for a preschooler, in any situation that arises, an act of conscience is the highest priority, and not concentrate solely on the transfer of moral norms to create an appropriate practical experience. In the moral development of a preschooler, careful organization of the educational process is extremely important, the foundation of which is a personality-oriented model, states the paper by S.M. Abylaikhan *et al.* [2, 3].

Such a model assumes close interaction between a preschooler and a teacher who both allow and consider the preschooler's own suggestions and judgments. According to R.S. Bure [4], under such conditions, communication takes the form of dialogue, joint discussion, and the development of standard solutions. It should be emphasized that, recently, views on the preschool child have been substantially transformed, according to C.W. Chan [5, 6]. The opinion that preschool age is of substantial importance in the development of a child's personality and is the basis of harmonious, comprehensive development is becoming increasingly well-supported. At preschool age, a child has the opportunity to acquire practical experience of actions that correspond to the established moral norms of society. Based on this, it becomes possible to form a system of standards of behavior, where a responsible attitude to work, humanity, and tolerance, and an understanding of the moral meaning of everything that happens in social activities, are fundamental concepts. Morally acceptable motives for the development of personal mechanisms of behavior are also formed. A preschool-age child begins to realize the objectivity and fairness of moral norms, to understand their importance in situations of moral choice, as Q.A. Abdusamadovich [7, 8] believes.

The purpose of this study is to determine the key concept of moral education and analyze its impact on the upbringing of the modern younger generation of Kazakhstan. The main tasks were as follows: the influence of moral education on the comprehensive development of preschool children was analyzed, the current state of ethical culture in the Karaganda region was characterized, and methods for improving the modern educational process were proposed. The object of the study is the foundations of moral culture in children, which are reflected at various stages of the educational process in preschool educational institutions of the Karaganda region.

Materials and Methods

In this study, the methodological approach is based on an analysis of the concept of moral education within the educational process. A systematic approach to the problem under study, a fundamental consideration of the methods of moral education of preschoolers, is the basis of the methodology. The study assumes the definition of the importance of moral education in the educational process and aspects of the development of moral culture in preschoolers. Methods of analysis, comparison, and scientific generalization were used in the research. These

methods contributed to a detailed examination of the process of forming the foundations of moral culture in preschool children. The theoretical basis of this paper is the results of studies conducted by many Kazakhstani and European specialists, which were aimed at researching the problems associated with the definition of approaches to moral education, as those methods that are fundamental in the formation and complex development of personality. The presented study was conducted in three main stages.

In the first stage of the study, a systematic analysis of the main aspects of moral education was conducted, and it was identified that they substantially affect the educational process in preschool educational institutions of the Karaganda region. The key issues that can be solved optimally through the practical implementation of such modern research methods as analysis, synthesis, modeling, analysis of thematic literature, and documentation are outlined.

In the second stage of the research work, it was determined how the foundations of moral culture are formed in preschool children, and an analytical investigation of current problems in this area was conducted. During this stage, an experiment was conducted at one of the kindergartens in the Karaganda region. The sample consisted of 30 children aged 5 to 6 years. Ten educators of the highest category took part in the study. Teachers needed to track how children's emotional states change throughout the day over a month. This observation helped identify which children instilled feelings of responsiveness, empathy, and tolerance towards other preschoolers in various situations. The children were divided into subgroups of 10 people each to obtain the experimental results. Initially, a diagnosis was conducted, which assessed the climate in each subset, the ability of children to explain the concept of morality, its importance in simple words, and the emotional stability of children. The methods for resolving conflict situations proposed by the methodologist to preschoolers, as well as the behavior of pupils during the conversation, were also evaluated. For each subgroup, one of the methods was used in the classroom.

Thus, for the first subgroup, the methodology was based on developing each child's interest among other pupils, seeking an activity that is interesting to everyone. For the second subgroup, the primary task was to examine the characteristics, needs, opportunities, and interests of each pupil, as well as the child's verbal and nonverbal communication. For the third subgroup, a technique was used that involves a gradual transition to a situational-formal form of communication with children and teaching them methods for resolving situations of their emotional discomfort. At the end of the experiment, a conversation with a methodologist was held with all children to identify the basics of moral education among preschoolers. Notably, the goal of the experiment was considered achieved if, following the final conversation with the methodologist in one of the established subgroups, children were able to clearly explain, in simple words, the concepts of morality and tell the teacher how they would get out of the situations proposed by the specialist.

At the final stage of the research work, based on the results obtained, the study's results were summarised, identifying, in

general, the main trends in the further development of moral education in the education of the younger generation in Kazakhstan. As a result of the experiment, a comprehensive methodology was developed that helps the teacher address emerging situations and instill morality and cultural development in children. The studies are conducted within the framework of generally accepted moral principles, with a focus on the boundaries of proper behavior and ethical norms.

Results and Discussion

The concepts of morality are quite complex for children; therefore, in this study, preschool children are defined as pupils aged 5 to 6 years. The theoretical basis of moral education of preschool children is the concept of morality [7, 9]. Morality is defined as the basis of a culture that directs human activity toward strengthening the individual's sense of self-worth and toward equality among people in the pursuit of a whole and self-sufficient life. Morality is a system of values that orients a person toward the well-being of others in a certain way. Morality is based on the comparison of human behavior and the interests of society as a natural social phenomenon [10, 11]. To date, research explaining the importance of emotional regulation of behavior is essential for developing optimal solutions for the moral and social formation of a preschooler's personality [12-14]. This refers to papers aimed at creating a preschooler's ability to anticipate the outcomes of their intended actions and to assess their meaning for themselves and others [15-18]. All this allows for a modern teacher to determine the importance of social emotions and feelings that contribute to the emotional correction of behaviour. Thus, the results of the research of modern teachers allow the continuous development of optimal solutions for the moral development of a preschooler's personality and explain their relevance.

It is essential to understand that moral norms are not innate knowledge [19, 20]. They are assimilated by the child in the practice of relationships with society. Such norms depend on the child's upbringing and their social environment of residence. The emotional climate in a preschool educational institution, the atmosphere within the family, and other socio-economic factors are essential. Since the concreteness of thinking prevails among preschoolers, the child does not have the opportunity to master these norms in a generalized form. Today, the task of concretizing the norms of morality for the child to understand their meaning and to teach them the experience of actions corresponding to those norms becomes urgent. In this situation, an adult acts as an interpreter. They transform moral norms into rules that regulate the child's behavior, and into actions that simultaneously correspond to these norms and to situations that arise in everyday life and contain moral meaning. The following can be considered an example. There is a concept of a humane attitude toward people. Still, it is difficult to explain the essence of this term to a child, given the visual-figurative nature of children's thinking [1]. It is not enough for a preschooler to know that it is necessary to act in a friendly way, because depending on

the situation, in some cases it is required to give in or help, in others, to support or share a toy.

Difficulties in forming the foundations of moral culture among preschoolers, in actions corresponding to ethical norms, arise from limited experience: children, especially those in the younger preschool age, cannot always realize the essence of the situation that has arisen or apply the already familiar rule of behavior [21, 22]. For example, a child cries when losing a favorite toy. Another kid from the group approaches them to comfort them because they know the rule that you need to support someone who is crying. However, such an action does not reflect the essence of the situation, in which it would be necessary to help the child find a toy. Notably, solving the problems of moral education implies a competent organization of activities in such a way as to create the most favorable conditions for the use of all available opportunities. Through independent, diverse activities under appropriate conditions, a preschooler learns to use previously known rules to regulate relationships with peers. The education of tolerant feelings and relationships is the basis for the development of moral culture among preschoolers. A humane attitude towards peers, empathy – all this encourages preschool children to perform morally valuable deeds, helps develop friendly relationships among children, and contributes to an emotionally favorable climate in the group for each pupil in a preschool educational institution.

In the upbringing of preschool children, the interrelation of the cognitive factor and the spectrum of emotions is also of great importance. Thus, by influencing the intellectual field of a preschooler, it is possible to form their knowledge about the norms of behaviour, help the child to establish a correspondence between the rule and the situation that has arisen, and choose the most correct ways of behaviour in it. By influencing the emotional field, it is possible to form an emotional response in a child that encourages tolerance and empathy. Based on some studies, it can be noted that, by the third year of life, a child has primary, elementary moral experiences [3]. These, for example, include the emergence of doubts in the child about the correctness of the committed act. By the younger preschool age, the child already has relatively sufficient emotional experience. This means that a preschool-age child reacts quite vividly to joyful and sad events and easily adopts the mood of those around them. A child expresses emotions quite directly at this age. They, in turn, are manifested in facial expressions, movements, and words.

Notably, activity is significant in the development of the emotional spectrum in a child [23]. Thus, in the preschool period, moral experiences reach a sufficiently high degree of development in the process of fulfilling moral requirements. As a result, feelings of satisfaction, frustration, and joy develop. In Kazakhstan, the orientation of the pedagogical process toward the development of moral culture is a critical condition that contributes to the moral development of a preschooler's personality. Anticipatory elements of emotional behaviour are most developed in preschool children [2]. This feature allows one to anticipate and feel the personal meaning of the consequences of actions. All this contributes to the development of the ability

to determine the intended act corresponding to the moral norm independently. The most significant opportunities for the development of moral culture are created when there is a favourable emotional climate in the group, when each pupil feels the warmth and care of the teacher. As a result, the child willingly attends kindergarten, establishes friendly relationships with other pupils, and strives to be part of a team.

To foster a moral culture in preschool children, several components are necessary: a competent educational method, a favourable emotional climate within the group, and the educator's professionalism in addressing emerging situations. The leading role belongs to the teacher, or rather, their ability to understand the needs, emotional state, and interests of each pupil. Especially valuable is the communication between the pupils and the teacher at a time when hours of independent activity are allocated according to the day's regime. The educator supports children's initiative to share their impressions, demonstrating their emotional attitude toward the messages. In some preschool institutions in the Karaganda region, 10 educators of the first and highest categories monitored changes in children's emotional state over a month to understand how the foundations of moral culture are formed in preschool children. Three main types of situations that occur most often and cause emotional discomfort in preschoolers were identified [4, 24].

Thus, the first one is that the educator does not devote enough time to establishing an emotional connection with the pupils. Many preschoolers need a tutor, ask many questions, and want attention and approval. In such situations, the educator is recommended to show sincere interest in the child and play with the pupil to avoid exacerbating the child's emotional discomfort.

The second type of situation is that the preschooler does not receive enough attention and communication from the child who has priority for them in the group. If they pay attention to the child, the child willingly shares toys with them and shows joy. This means that the absence of such a pupil, or the manifestation of malevolence by them, causes emotional discomfort in the child. Such a child should be interested in other pupils and involved in an activity that is interesting for everyone. The third type of situation arises when the pupil does not achieve the desired result in their individual or collective work. This leads to the child being detached from the team, becoming shy and indecisive.

Based on this observation, an experiment was conducted to determine the basic methodology that would help the teacher minimize such situations during the day. Notably, while overcoming such situations, it is also possible to develop empathy and responsiveness in children. These elements serve as the basis of moral culture. At one of the preschool educational institutions in the Karaganda region, in the middle group, a psychologist conducted a conversation with the children at the beginning of the experiment. The purpose of this conversation was to identify which of the situations described above arise in children during the day and to what extent children are aware of the concepts of morality and empathy. It was identified that different types of situations can be observed in other children. At the time of initial diagnosis, it was determined that only 40% of children participated in collective classes. Only 45% of children in the group can explain, in simple words, what morality and ethics are. The results of the primary diagnosis are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Primary diagnostics of preschool children

Evaluation criteria (evaluation from 1 to 5)	Subgroup 1	Subgroup 2	Subgroup 3	Evaluation criteria (evaluation from 1 to 5)
Climate in the group before the experiment	3	3	4	Climate in the group before the experiment
The ability of children to explain the concept of morality and its importance in simple words	3	2	2	The ability of children to explain the concept of morality and its importance in simple words
Evaluation of the methods of solving conflict situations proposed by the methodologist by preschoolers	2	3	3	Evaluation of the methods of solving conflict situations proposed by the methodologist by preschoolers

Based on the data, there is clearly an insufficient level of moral education among preschoolers, an essential component of the comprehensive education of Kazakhstan's younger generation. For the experiment, 30 preschoolers aged 5 to 6 years were divided into three subgroups, 10 people each. For each subset, teachers in the classroom had to apply one of the methods, which included several basic steps, such as:

- establishing tactile contact, developing interest in other pupils of each child, searching for activities that are interesting for everyone, for the first subgroup;
- study of the characteristics, individual needs, capabilities, and interests of each child; verbal and non-verbal communication with the children for the second subgroup;

- gradual transition to a situational-formal form in communication with a child, teaching children methods for getting out of situations of their emotional discomfort independently, for the third subgroup.

At the end of the experiment with preschoolers, a thematic conversation was conducted to determine the level of moral education among them. The goal of the experiment was considered achieved when the children in one of the subgroups could explain, in simple terms, what the concepts of morality mean to them and what value they have. This means the technique the teacher uses in the classroom is effective and competent. Therefore, this will help to determine the main stages of the development of the foundations of morality in

preschoolers. The results of the experiment are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. The results of the experiment

Evaluation criteria (evaluation from 1 to 5)	Subgroup 1	Subgroup 2	Subgroup 3	Evaluation criteria (evaluation from 1 to 5)
Climate in the group before the experiment	6	6	5	Climate in the group before the experiment
The ability of children to explain the concept of morality and its importance in simple words	5	6	5	The ability of children to explain the concept of morality and its importance in simple words
Evaluation of the methods of solving conflict situations proposed by the methodologist by preschoolers	5	5	6	Evaluation of the methods of solving conflict situations proposed by the methodologist by preschoolers

Today, the main task both in Kazakhstan and in other countries is the spiritual and moral education of the younger generation, the teaching of love for the Motherland and the surrounding world in children. Morality is a kind of worldview that originates in infancy. Ultimately, from a young age, listening to stories about their native land and fairy tales in which the concepts of good and evil are clearly defined, a person acquires primary concepts of moral norms. Thus, among the main factors of Kazakh morality, such as empathy, tolerance, and a humane attitude toward others, can be distinguished. Democracy, science, and integrity – all these are the foundation of moral education. In one of the papers of D.M. Blau [25], it is stated that in this issue, the solution of the following tasks becomes the key:

- improvement of the methodological form of the moral education system;
- the development of socially critical personal aspects, such as, for example, love for one's country, respect and protection of one's native land;
- formation of the basics of a healthy lifestyle in the preschool environment.

The main elements of morality in preschool children are feelings of empathy, support, and responsiveness towards other children. The study by B.E. Demir and F. Demir [26] showed that to instill a sense of responsiveness in a preschooler and to demonstrate ways to manifest this feeling, the teacher needs to use game-based forms of education. For example, such situations can be shown to children through a puppet theatre. Therewith, the teacher creates a problem for the children in which the character is emotionally unstable. The educator needs to approve and highlight those children who help to build a house or comfort a doll. An approving assessment of a responsive child's actions encourages other children to do the same. Such situations are very primitive and correspond to what often happens in the life of preschoolers at this age. To effectively develop the foundations of moral culture in preschool children, it is also necessary to provide high-quality information and analytical support for educational work. For this, monitoring is a crucial stage for determining the state of children's moral consciousness. The paper of T.D. Blanusa *et al.* [27] state that Kazakh teachers are pretty concerned about this problem.

The changes that have taken place in recent years across all sectors and areas of the Republic of Kazakhstan have led to the formation of a new concept of education and upbringing for the younger generation in society. Modern schools have higher requirements for students. In the Republic of Kazakhstan, the upbringing of the younger generation is complicated by several contradictions. On the one hand, the child is becoming increasingly independent, with the opportunity to choose the type of behavior and to adapt to a new kind of social life. On the other hand, the upbringing of modern children takes place in rather difficult socio-economic conditions. This refers to a large-scale digital transformation across all industries, a period of globalization, the transformation of an outdated economic model, and its transition to a more modern one. Notably, in modern papers, insufficient attention is paid to the moral education of preschool children and the development of modernized educational methods. S. Amukune [28], for example, states that such aspects of moral education as social, meaningful, personal, and semantic will be relevant for the development of personality. They, in turn, mean the following:

- purposeful influence on personal consciousness, behaviour, feelings, to form in preschoolers those moral qualities that are compared with the requirements of public morality;
- mastering moral norms, principles, and rules for the well-being and status of the individual in society;
- human assimilation of the concepts of humanism, morality, patriotism, generally accepted values, and traditions and customs;
- the assimilation of moral values by preschool children is a fundamental component of their upbringing, humanity.
- formation of moral-volitional qualities, intransigence to immorality.

Today, the world's society is undergoing global transformations. All the social, economic, and political changes that have taken place in Kazakhstan have also affected the education system. The problems of integration and globalization of education have led to the development and modernization of schools and the retraining of qualified teachers. For any educational system, the main feature becomes the originality of the cultural legacy. The leading indicators are the amount of work done and the effectiveness of the educational process. Consequently, the role

of national components in Kazakhstan's education system is increasing. A modern young specialist should know the specific features of their people's life and work for the good of their country. Considering national education as a result of the development of a multinational country and upbringing, then the role of national components becomes quite evident from the standpoint of national policy and pedagogical practice. Thus, K. Ozgem and U. Akcil [29] claim that, in the educational process for the development of national components, the following is necessary: popularisation of historically formed cultural values; teaching children national, regional, and cultural knowledge; and the development of a worldview aimed at national social values. In modern conditions, the idea of national components can be realized through appropriate classes and complex work with pupils. The formation of a comprehensively developed personality and the training of highly qualified teachers – all this is the merit of national and regional components. In this issue, ensuring the implementation of national components becomes particularly relevant. According to K. Savolainen [30], national and regional components are most evident in classes for children, such as those on the native language, art, nature, and labor, which are included in the curriculum of preschool educational institutions in Kazakhstan. Characterizing the moral mentality of children, their value orientations are quite important aspects. In academic work with preschoolers, the primary vector is civic education and upbringing, which implies conducting activities aimed at the formation and development of moral culture among Kazakhstani preschoolers. Thus, J. Song [31] believes that the following components can be considered integral to this culture:

- awareness of the prospects of a liberal, democratic society;
- expressed sense of national identity, patriotism;
- generally accepted values and attitudes, organically intertwined with the mentality, customs, and traditions of Kazakhstan;
- tolerance, tact towards other cultures;
- respect for the state language, assistance in its development.

In the Republic of Kazakhstan, the national components are complemented by the characteristics of the younger generation, teachers, and social, ethnic, and political groups. Their content is inextricably linked to the specific features of the native land, the traditions and culture formed there, and economic development. There is a problem with the moral education of the younger generation in Kazakhstan. However, some steps have already been taken to resolve this issue. For example, in most modern schools in Kazakhstan, elements of ethnic pedagogy are used. This technique demonstrates the specific features of the citizens of multinational Kazakhstan, the norms and values of their lives. Ancestors invented many parenting tools. Therefore, the main task is to find the most effective of them and introduce them into the modern educational process. According to Z. Weng *et al.* contemporary society is open to various other cultures, and modernized technologies enable the establishment of international relations [32]. That is why foreign ideas and values that are not yet part of the moral foundations of Kazakhs

enter the state. The above circumstances necessitate the younger generation turning to national origins. Therefore, for Kazakhstan, the moral education of children is the foundation of modern society; to solve relevant issues, it is necessary to introduce children to the culture of their native land.

Conclusion

The findings of the study demonstrate that the implementation of targeted pedagogical strategies significantly enhances the formation of moral culture in preschool children. The experimental results indicate measurable improvements in children's understanding of moral concepts, emotional responsiveness, and participation in group activities. In particular, the most effective approach was the methodology based on a gradual transition to a situational-formal form of communication, which supports the development of children's ability to independently manage situations of emotional discomfort.

The study confirms that the successful formation of moral culture in preschool children depends on several interrelated factors, including the educator's professional competence, the emotional climate within the group, and the systematic application of appropriate educational methods. The observed positive dynamics, including increased awareness of moral norms and improved social interaction among children, highlight the practical applicability of the proposed approach in preschool educational institutions.

At the same time, the results emphasize the need for a comprehensive and consistent implementation of moral education strategies within the broader educational system of Kazakhstan. Further research is required to expand the empirical base and to refine methodological approaches aimed at strengthening moral education in early childhood.

The prospects for further research are associated with the integration of digital technologies into educational practice, which can enhance pedagogical content and methods in the context of modern educational transformation [33-36]. The development of a unified strategy for improving moral education in Kazakhstan remains a priority for educators and researchers.

Acknowledgments: The authors would like to thank all those who contributed to the completion of this study.

Conflict of interest: None

Financial support: None

Ethics statement: Informed consent was obtained from all participants before their involvement. They were fully briefed on the research's objectives, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without any repercussions.

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