Shulyhina Raisa Andriivna, Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor, Professor of the Department of Preschool Education, Dragomanov Ukrainian State University, Kyiv, Ukraine, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5857-351X

Kalientsova Dasha Oleksandrivna, a student pursuing a second (bachelor's) degree in the A2/012 program "Preschool Education" at the Dragomanov Ukrainian State University, Kyiv, Ukraine

TEACHING THE FUNDAMENTALS OF A CULTURE OF HEALTH TO PRESCHOOL CHILDREN THROUGH INTERACTIVE PLAY ACTIVITIES

Abstract

This paper addresses the key issue of fostering a foundation for a healthy lifestyle among preschool-aged children and examines the specific ways in which interactive play is used in contemporary practices involving children's interactions with peers and adults. It substantiates the importance of play as an effective pedagogical tool for shaping children's perceptions of a healthy lifestyle, developing motor activity, and mastering the rules of personal hygiene, physical activity, safe behavior, and health-preserving skills. The article highlights the periods of active awareness of the importance of health preservation, which begins in early childhood, continues to strengthen in middle and late preschool age, and evolves into enduring beliefs in later life. Attention is focused on an effective means of fostering the foundations of health culture in preschool-aged children – interactive play activities –with a description of their main functions corresponding to each stage of a child's development: cognitive, developmental, educational, and socializing. Various types of interactive games are proposed for use, which have been tested in the author's own pedagogical

practice, including: movement games, role-playing games, didactic games, diverse game scenarios, workshops, etc., where the child has the opportunity to master the rules of a healthy lifestyle in a natural, accessible, and engaging format.

The focus is on the important role of cooperation between educators and parents in creating appropriate educational conditions for fostering a culture of health among preschool-aged children, in which they (the children) will have the opportunity to internalize the core values of a healthy lifestyle, develop a positive attitude toward their own health, and effectively cultivate individual qualities, interests, and predispositions toward health-promoting behaviors in the future.

Keywords: health culture, preschool-aged children, healthy lifestyle, health-promoting technologies, play, interactive play activities, preschool education.

Problem statement. At present, the health and physical fitness levels of the younger generation remain insufficiently high. One of the most pressing issues in recent years has been the deterioration in children's health indicators, as well as a decline in their physical fitness levels [5, p. 70].

The beginning of the 21st century was marked by many changes in academic circles regarding the understanding of the concept of "health," which, in turn, led to a certain reevaluation of the very essence of the process of establishing the foundations of a healthy lifestyle in preschool-aged children, since previously this had been focused exclusively on the development of their physical abilities [7, pp. 215-216].

Analysis of recent research and publications. Today's world places new demands on the work of teachers, parents, and the families of children in preschool education institutions (hereinafter referred to as "preschools") regarding the development of a culture of health among the youngest members of society. The preschool education system is increasingly focusing on health promotion. A

child in good health is an indicator of an effectively organized educational process, and a culture of health serves as an important intrinsic value for the preschooler's personality. That is why health is considered one of the key criteria for the realization of a person's life plans, a means of self-realization, and the achievement of the highest possible level of intellectual and physical capacity.

Recent works by T. Andriushchenko, O. Bohinich, E. Vilchkovsky, O. Dubogay, V. Koshel, V. Krutiy, O. Kurka, O. Khudoliy, and others emphasize the significant importance of using health-promoting technologies in the preschool education system. Various aspects of children's social interaction, particularly in interactive play, have been studied by L. Artemova, V. Agilar Tukler, I. Bekh, N. Gavrysh, T. Markova, R. Shuligina. However, there remains a lack of research on the judicious combination of traditional and innovative forms, methods, and means currently used in early childhood education institutions at this stage of developing the national education system [6, p. 184].

Purpose of the article – to analyze scholarly perspectives on fostering the fundamentals of health culture in preschool-aged children through interactive play activities, and to explore its potential for teaching the principles of a healthy lifestyle in a natural, accessible, and engaging way for children.

Presentation of the main material of the study. An analysis of scientific research indicates that fostering a culture of health in modern early childhood education settings involves children internalizing the core values of a healthy lifestyle, developing a positive attitude toward their own health, and effectively cultivating individual qualities, interests, and inclinations toward health-promoting behaviors. An important role in this process is played by the active participation of parents, as their close cooperation with the preschool's teaching staff, aimed at fostering a culture of health among children, will contribute to the fullest possible realization of the educational potential of modern society.

The challenge of raising a healthy generation is a large-scale issue. It concerns not only the medical field but is also a matter of critical importance to the nation's overall national security, one that can be effectively addressed through the application of modern pedagogical approaches and methods [3, p. 582].

Fostering the foundations of a culture of health among preschool-aged children through interactive play is one of the key areas of modern preschool education. During early and middle preschool years, children begin to form their first concepts of health, a healthy lifestyle, personal hygiene, physical activity, and safe behavior. During this period, play is an effective form of activity, as it meets children's natural needs for movement, exploring the world around them, and interacting with others. All of this lays a solid foundation for the child's further harmonious development in the older preschool years and subsequent stages of growth.

The concept of health literacy encompasses a system of knowledge, skills, and values aimed at maintaining and improving one's health. In preschool-aged children, an understanding of the importance of maintaining health begins to emerge at an early age through such components as: the formation of initial ideas about the structure and functioning of one's own body; realizing the importance of following hygiene rules, eating a balanced diet, and engaging in sufficient physical activity; acquiring basic skills for a healthy lifestyle; and developing a positive attitude toward physical exercise and health-promoting activities.

Fostering the fundamentals of a culture of health in early childhood involves creating an environment conducive to the child's harmonious physical, mental, and social well-being, as well as cultivating a responsible attitude toward one's own health.

Early preschool age (3-4 years) is characterized by a number of distinctive psychological and pedagogical features, including: a strong need for physical activity; emotional openness and spontaneity in behavior; a passion for play (the

primary activity); a tendency to imitate adults and peers; and the rapid formation of new habits during practical activities.

In the older preschool age group (5-6-7 years): the emergence of significant new developments in the psychological and personal spheres; an intensification of intellectual development; and the development of readiness for school.

It is precisely because of these characteristics that interactive play serves as an effective means of fostering a culture of health, as it combines cognitive processes, physical activity, communication, emotional experiences, and more.

An interactive game involves active interaction among children, both with each other and with the teacher. During these interactions, children not only acquire new information but also actively participate in various activities, reenact real-life situations, and reinforce healthy habits.

The main functions of interactive games in fostering a culture of health include: cognitive – nsuring the acquisition of knowledge about health and personal hygiene rules; developmental – promoting the development of motor skills, thinking, and speech; educational – fostering a positive attitude toward a healthy lifestyle; socialization – teaches children to interact and cooperate with their peers.

By incorporating play into their activities, children learn the principles of a healthy lifestyle in a natural, accessible, and engaging way. In early childhood education, various types of games are used. Let’s take a closer look at them.

Active games promote health, muscle development, improved coordination, and increased endurance. They stimulate children’s physical activity and foster an interest in physical exercise [2]. Examples of such games include: “Catch the Dragon’s Tail,” “Pass the Ball Around,” and “Find Your Color.”

Role-playing games involve children reenacting various real-life situations related to health issues. These include games such as “Hospital,” “Pharmacy,”

"Family," and others. Through these activities, children learn about the role of a doctor, the importance of treatment, and the need to follow hygiene guidelines.

Educational games are designed to help children acquire knowledge about health and safe behavior. Examples include games such as: "Healthy vs. Unhealthy" (identifying healthy foods), "What's Needed for Cleanliness?" (identifying hygiene items), and "Dress Appropriately" (choosing clothing according to weather conditions).

Role-playing scenarios and training exercises. The teacher creates specially designed problem situations that encourage children to find the right solutions on their own: what to do if their hands get dirty; how to behave properly during a walk; how to help a friend who has fallen ill.

To effectively foster a culture of health among preschool-aged children, certain pedagogical conditions should be established, such as: 1. Creating a health-promoting environment in the preschool setting. 2. Regular and systematic use of play-based methods in children's daily activities. 3. A harmonious combination of various types of activities – play, physical, and cognitive (conversations, observation). 4. Establishing cooperation with parents who support and reinforce the child's healthy habits at home. 5. Taking into account the age-related and individual characteristics of children, as well as their interests and abilities [1].

A child's health is of inestimable value and is unparalleled among other life's blessings. When a child is healthy, the processes of upbringing and learning are significantly more effective: the child absorbs new information more easily, actively explores the world around them, develops their own personality, and experiences the joy of life. It is during the preschool years that the foundation for a person's future health is laid, and the prerequisites for longevity, endurance, and the child's body's resilience to various influences are established [4, p. 3].

Conclusions. Therefore, fostering the fundamentals of health culture in preschool-aged children is a key objective of modern preschool education, as it is

during this period that initial concepts of a healthy lifestyle are formed and beneficial habits for the future are established. The use of interactive play activities promotes children's effective acquisition of health knowledge, the development of physical activity, and the formation of a positive attitude toward health-promoting behavior, while the systematic use of interactive games in collaboration between educators and parents creates favorable conditions for the child's harmonious development and the strengthening of their health.

References

1. Derzhavnyi standart doshkilnoi osvity. Postanova Kabinetu Ministriv Ukrainy vid 26 lystopada 2025 r. № 1557. URL: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1557-2025-%D0%BF#Text

2. Vilchkovskyi, E. S., Kurok, O. I. Teoriia i metodyka fizychnoho vykhovannia ditei doshkilnoho viku : pidruchnyk. Sumy : PF «Vydavnytstvo «Universytetska knyha», 2019. 467 c.

3. Kalichak, Yu. Formuvannia kultury zdorovia ditei doshkilnoho viku : preventyvnyi aspekt. Public health system in Ukraine and EU countries : realities, transformation, development vectors, perspectives : scientific monograph. Riga : Baltija Publishing, 2024. P. 561-585. URL: https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-497-9-27

4. Koshel, V. M., Pochitaieva, O. I., Dubrovska, I. M. Formuvannia kultury zdorovia ditei doshkilnoho viku v umovakh zakladiv doshkilnoi osvity : posibnyk dlia studentiv spetsialnosti «Doshkilna osvita», pratsivnykiv zakladiv doshkilnoi osvity ta batkiv / V. M. Koshel, O. I. Pochitaieva, I. M. Dubrovska. Chernihiv : FOP Balykina O. V., 2018. 177 s.

5. Pysmennyi, O. M., Yaroshenko, A. S. Suchasnyi stan fizychnoho zdorovia ditei molodshoho shkilnoho viku. *Zasoby fizychnoho vykhovannia u formuvanni ta ukriplenni zdorovia pidrostaiuchoho pokolinnia :* zbirnyk statei za

materialamy naukovo-praktychnoi konferentsii (Kryvyi Rih, 15 lystopada 2018 roku). Kryvyi Rih, 2018. S. 69-73.

6. Shulyhina, R. A., Hnatiuk, Yu. V. Formuvannia kultury vzaiemyn z odnolitkamy u ditei starshoho doshkilnoho viku zasobom interaktyvnoi hry : analiz problemy, diahnostyka stanu. *Osvitno-naukovyi prostir* : naukovyi zhurnal. UDU imeni Mykhaila Drahomanova, 2025. Vyp. 8 (1–2025). Tom 2. S. 181-195. URL: https://doi.org/10.31392/ONP.2786-6890.8(1)/2.2025.16

7. Shulyhina, R. A., Prokopenko, M. O. Osoblyvosti formuvannia osnov zdorovoho sposobu zhyttia u ditei starshoho doshkilnoho viku zasobom ihor-estafet v osvitnomu prostori zakladu doshkilnoi osvity. *Osvitno-naukovyi prostir* : naukovyi zhurnal. Vyp. 6 (1–2024) / Ukrainskyi derzhavnyi universytet imeni Mykhaila Drahomanova. Kyiv : Vydavnytstvo Lira-K, 2024. S. 212-224. URL: https://doi.org/10.31392/ONP.2786-6890.6(1).2024.21