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The Role of Family and Preschool in Shaping Social Competencies of Preschool-Aged Children

Rola rodziny i przedszkola w kształtowaniu kompetencji społecznych dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym

KEYWORDS

social competencies, interpersonal skills, tasks of family, tasks of kindergarten, emotional and social skills training

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to highlight the importance of social competencies and the need to develop them in preschool-aged children. It also aims to demonstrate the roles and tasks of parents and preschool teachers in shaping these competencies in children. The analysis focuses on selected definitions of social competencies and the contents of the Preschool Education Curriculum, as well as on two functions of the family: educational and socializing, which are particularly important for the development of children's social competencies. The research problem concerns the role and tasks of parents and preschool teachers in shaping social competencies of preschool-aged children. To answer this question, an analysis of selected psychological and pedagogical texts was conducted using the desk research method.

Human beings are social creatures; for proper development and effective functioning, they should establish appropriate relationships with other people. This also applies to the youngest generation. Developing emotional and social competencies, especially interpersonal skills, can help children establish satisfying relationships with their peers and reduce the risk of undesired behaviours. Parents are most responsible for educating and socialising children. In carrying out the educational and socialising functions, preschools should support parents, so it is very important for preschool teachers to know how to support parents in this regard.

SŁOWA KLUCZE	ABSTRAKT
kompetencje społeczne, umiejętności interpersonalne, zadania rodziny, zadania przedszkola, trening umiejętności emocjonalnych i społecznych	Celem artykułu jest wskazanie znaczenia kompetencji społecznych oraz potrzeby ich rozwijania u dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym. Celem jest również ukazanie roli i zadań rodziców i nauczycieli przedszkola w kształtowaniu u dzieci tych kompetencji. Przedmiotem analizy uczyniono wybrane definicje kompetencji społecznych oraz zapisy Podstawy programowej wychowania przedszkolnego, a także dwie funkcje rodziny – wychowawczą i socjalizacyjną, które są szczególnie istotne dla rozwoju kompetencji społecznych dzieci. Problem badawczy dotyczy tego, jaka jest rola i zadania rodziców i nauczycieli przedszkoli w kształtowaniu kompetencji społecznych dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym. W celu uzyskania odpowiedzi na ten problem przeprowadzono analizę wybranych tekstów psychologiczno-pedagogicznych, stosując metodę desk research.

Człowiek jest istotą społeczną, dla prawidłowego rozwoju i efektywnego funkcjonowania powinien nawiązywać właściwe relacje z innymi ludźmi. Dotyczy to również najmłodszego pokolenia. Rozwijanie kompetencji emocjonalnych i społecznych, a zwłaszcza kompetencji interpersonalnych może pomóc dzieciom w nawiązywaniu satysfakcjonujących relacji z rówieśnikami oraz zmniejszyć ryzyko występowania zachowań niepożądanych. Największą odpowiedzialność za wychowanie i uspołecznianie dzieci ponoszą ich rodzice. W realizacji funkcji wychowawczej i socjalizacyjnej powinno ich wspierać przedszkole, dlatego tak istotna jest współpraca rodziców i nauczycieli przedszkoli. |

Introduction

The concept of competencies is defined and interpreted in various scientific disciplines. However, it is most often referred to in the pedagogical, psychological and sociological sciences. Competence can be defined as "the ability to use one's own and the environment's resources in order to fulfill developmental tasks in a given developmental phase and in relation to the anticipated fulfillment of tasks in adulthood" (Artymiak & Pawelec, 2019, p. 51). Competencies not only enable adaptation to found environmental conditions, but are also the basis for human development through creative activity. Therefore, they should be shaped in children from an early age. Particularly important in the pre-school period is the development of social-emotional competencies that enable an individual to function in a group and fulfill the social roles undertaken (Żmudzka, 2018, p. 58).

Social competencies have been of interest to researchers for many years. They have been addressed in recent years by Anna Matczak (2007), Lucyna Markowicz (2008),

Katarzyna Martowska (2012), Katarzyna Knopp (2013), Jadwiga Lubowiecka (2013), Magdalena Czub (2014a, 2014b), Karolina Kaszlińska (2015), Małgorzata Artymiak, Marta Pawelec (2019) and many other psychologists and teachers.

Matczak (2007) defines social competencies as "complex skills determining the effectiveness of coping with certain types of social situations, acquired by an individual during social training" (p. 7). According to Martowska (2012, p. 30), they are formed during natural training, when an individual engages in a variety of activities. Czub (2014b) defines these competencies as "the ability to understand and control one's own feelings and behaviour, to understand the feelings of others, and to establish good and friendly relationships with other people" (p. 12). She points out that the development of social competencies is influenced by emotion regulation mechanisms which enable people to recognise and manage their emotions in a way that makes it possible for them to satisfy their own needs in accordance with social norms and to maintain good relationships with others. There are interdependencies between social and emotional competencies, which is why Czub believes it is good to analyse them together. In doing so, she distinguishes five categories of social-emotional competencies: 1) self-awareness, 2) social awareness, 3) responsible decision-making, 4) managing one's own behaviour, and 5) managing relationships with others (Czub, 2014b, pp. 12–13).

Agata Popławska (2015) classifies social (interpersonal) competencies as subjective competencies through which "the subject actively develops his/her potentialities and acts effectively, using his/her knowledge and skills, influences the surrounding reality and changes himself/herself at the same time" (p. 168). An individual's social competencies are reflected in interaction, assertiveness, communication, and support (Popławska, 2015, p. 172).

According to Knopp (2013, pp. 1–2), social competencies consist of: skills related to social perception (accurate perception of others, their experiences, intentions, as well as proper understanding and evaluation of social situations); social sensitivity, empathy, interpersonal decentration; knowledge of social rules and the ability to adapt one's own behaviour to them in social situations; the ability to solve interpersonal problems and control social situations; the ability to deal with conflict situations and to be assertive; effective self-presentation and the ability to influence other people; communication and cooperation skills.

Thus, social competencies are complex skills that facilitate social relationships. An individual acquires them through his/her own activity when interacting socially. However, it is important to bear in mind that establishing contacts with other people is usually accompanied by positive or negative emotions. The relationship between behaviour and emotions, which occurs during the establishment of relationships with other people, has received the most attention from Czub, which is why her suggested

definition and the listed categories of socio-emotional competences were used as the basis for further considerations.

Social Competence of Preschool Children

Czub operationalized the objectives of social competence, distinguishing nine areas and indicating specific skills characteristic of each area. In relationships with adults (1), she considered it important to freely establish contact with people known to the child, the ability to cope with separation from loved ones with the help of other people known to the child, the increasing ability to comply with rules especially when receiving praise, and to cooperate. While watching relationships with peers (2), she noted an increasingly intentional relationship and cooperation with peers, participation in "pretend" play, entering into negotiations with peers in situations of conflict, and an increasing ability to cooperate in a group. In terms of emotion expression (3), what she considered diagnostic was the ability to describe one's own and others' emotions, as well as practising expressing emotions (pretend emotions) in play. Preschoolers' empathy (4) manifests itself in understanding that other people's feelings may differ from one's own; in caring for others' needs, comforting them and trying to help them. Emotion regulation (5) and impulse control (6) consist of an increasing ability to self-soothe – with occasional help from adults. Understanding other people's mental states, emotions, needs and intentions (7) manifests itself in seeking to understand others' feelings and behaviour, and in trying to find reasons for their behaviour and making attempts to separate experiences into one's own and others'. Self-awareness (8) enables one to describe one's own qualities and behaviours and compare them to those of others; it also raises awareness of one's own thoughts and feelings. A sense of competence (9) is expressed in the desire to do things independently and demonstrate one's skills, as well as in taking responsibility for the completion of simple tasks (Czub, 2014a, pp. 37–38).

In children who start preschool age it is difficult to notice and diagnose all these skills, as some of them only appear at the threshold of early childhood education. Therefore, it is also worth mentioning the skills mentioned by Kaszlińska (2015, pp. 214–215), which can already be observed in 3–4-year-old children. These include: the ability to communicate effectively and adequately to the context and the interlocutor (both verbal and non-verbal); the ability to restrain oneself expressed in respecting agreements and discharging emotional tensions in a socially acceptable way (refraining from aggressive behaviour), as well as in the ability to defer the fulfillment of one's own desires; the ability to show care, compassion and interest (expressions

of empathy), and to establish and maintain friendships; the ability to interact with other children and to achieve the common goal.

The basis for the proper development of social competencies is the development of interpersonal skills. Markowicz (2008) defines them as "ways of dealing with other people that foster satisfying, positive mutual relationships and relations and contribute to personal development" (p. 9). The ability to speak is important for the proper development of these competencies.

Language and Communication Skills of Preschool Children

During middle childhood, passive and active speech improves, and vocabulary enriches: the child masters around 8–10 words a day; by the end of pre-school he/she uses around 5 000 words, and understands twice as many. The frequency of using verbs increases. Older preschoolers also use them to describe mental processes (know, understand, remember). Children are developing language awareness. They can make descriptive definitions (what something looks like) and functional definitions (what it is used for). They understand some metaphors and ambiguous words. They create fairly complex grammatical forms and use them in the correct context. Children improve their storytelling skills (narrative skills), conversation skills, and questioning skills. Some children start reading (Kielar-Turska, 2011, pp. 216–219, 230–231). Language development in children proceeds at different rates, with preschoolers mastering these skills more quickly if they are in a linguistically stimulating environment (Bee, 2004, pp. 229, 267). Understanding and creating stories depends on the preschooler's knowledge of human interactions, people's expectations, goals, values and motivations for action. Stories of 5–6-year-old children contain a clear composition: they present the course of events, a description of the background of the plot, and a foreshadowing of its resolution. However, they have difficulties with the introduction of characters into the plot and the psychological characteristics of the protagonists. These do not appear before children reach the age of 7. For the improvement of conversational skills, it is important that the child takes into account the interlocutor's point of view and modifies the speech according to the needs of the interlocutor and the situation (Kielar-Turska, 2011, p. 231). By the end of the preschool age, the child is able to name emotions with functional and descriptive definitions. He or she is also able to identify their causes and ways of coping with them, and increasingly understands and expresses his/her own feelings – both verbally and non-verbally. He/she is also able to control his/her own emotions when interacting with others. Growing language skills enable the child to replace outbursts of anger and aggression with negotiations (Kielar-Turska, 2011, pp. 219–220).

Social Development of Pre-School Children

At preschool age, interaction with peers becomes increasingly important. From the age of 3–4, children begin to play together, although at first they rarely pay attention to others, so they may unintentionally hurt or upset someone. Gradually, the forms of contact improve; children learn to control their actions, and they start taking into account the needs of others. This is undoubtedly influenced by increasing language and communication skills. Around the age of 5, children enjoy interacting with their peers in play, which is their primary form of activity. During play, the preschooler tries to do the right thing so as not to expose himself to rejection. If a child is only focused on fulfilling his/her own desires and does not care about his/her peers, nobody wants to play with him/her and he/she is left alone. This causes unpleasant emotions and deprives the child of the opportunity to interact with the peers and their toys. Only by interacting with other children can the child fulfill the need for contact and gain access to what their friends have. Through contacts with peers, the preschooler learns cooperation and competition (Smykowski, 2005, p. 176). While playing together, "children gain knowledge about themselves and their classmates and develop a range of interactional behaviours. Pro-social behaviour, empathy, giving up one's own goal for the common goal emerge and develop" (Lubowiecka, 2013, p. 394). Peers become playmates (horizontal relationship), while parents become authorities (vertical relationship). At preschool age, the need for emotional closeness with parents diminishes and physical distance increases, as the need for contact with peers becomes stronger. If the child misbehaves, parents, by intervening, reduce the distance with the child, which automatically reduces contact with other children. In order not to cause the parents to intervene and interrupt the fascinating play with a friend, the 5–6-year-old makes sure to do the right thing – he/she learns self-discipline and self-restraint (Smykowski, 2005, pp. 177–178).

Gradually, both positive behaviour (tinged with altruism) and negative behaviour (such as aggression) change their form of expression. With the development of language skills, children move away from physical aggression to verbal aggression. The change in the form of aggression is also undoubtedly linked to the disappearance of egocentrism and the increase in the understanding of other children's thoughts and feelings. Aggression most often occurs in conflict between peers as a result of frustration caused by the child's inability to meet his/her own needs. When the ability to verbalise one's own needs and expectations, as well as to plan and organise activities increases, frustration levels decrease and aggression levels clearly drops. It is important to remember that children also learn aggressive behaviour through imitating adults or other peers, especially if they perceive in their environment the effectiveness of such

actions. Therefore, the use of corporal punishment on children does not eliminate aggressive behaviour, but encourages it to increase (Bee, 2004, pp. 236–237).

By being in a group, the preschooler acquires the ability to interact with other children and to influence his/her peers. Under the influence of socialisation, pro-social behaviour, e.g. sharing, giving help, support, appears and develops. The level of empathy and altruism is influenced by the way children are brought up (Kielar-Turska, 2011, pp. 230–233).

Pre-school children do not yet form lasting relationships with their peers and are often unstable in their feelings. One day they are happy to play with someone, the next day they show hostility. Single-gender relationships predominate in their peer contacts, which is related to the processes of establishing gender identity that take place at this age (Smykowski, 2005, p. 181–183). Differences in preferred ways of playing also play an important role. Boys' friendships are characterised by bickering, meddling, boasting and various forms of showing off. Close friends are more competitive with each other than with others. When trying to influence other children, girls are more likely to express requests and ask questions, while boys demand and command. Because playing with boys provides girls with little positive reinforcement, they prefer to play in their own group and resign from forming mixed playgroups (Bee, 2004, pp. 237–241).

The Role of the Family in Developing the Child's Social Competence

Human social development stems from human nature, but takes place in social groups. The first and most important environment of the child's life is the family. It constitutes "a rather specific form of social life [...] based on cooperation and collaboration, respect for the rights of others, sacrifice, generosity" (Adamski, 2010, p. 9). The way in which the family fulfills its basic functions is important. The functions of the family are the goals pursued by the family in its actions; the tasks it performs towards its members and their effects (Adamski, 2006, p. 309). For the proper formation of the child's social competencies, the most important thing is the family's fulfilment of its educational and socialization functions.

The upbringing function is related to the transmission to children of basic principles and models of behaviour, customs, habits, and to their introduction into the world of values. The fulfilment of this function depends on the parents' attitudes and behaviour towards each other and the children, the emotional atmosphere, and the culture of everyday life (Kawula, 2006, p. 59). In fulfilling the upbringing function, the family "introduces the child into social life and the world of culture; satisfies

their emotional needs, prepares them to fulfil social roles; shapes a specific system of moral values; and controls their behaviour. In the process of upbringing, it transmits specific behaviour patterns, ideals, aspirations, and attitudes to children" (Filipowicz, 2017, p. 132). The socialisation function conditions "the preparation of the child for independent life; the transmission of knowledge and skills – both instrumental and those related to social functioning; it is also responsible for the formation of the child's personality" (Kęska, 2019, p. 19). The scopes of the two functions mentioned often overlap. According to Kawula (2006, p. 60), the family's fulfillment of each of its functions carries with it certain educational consequences, hence it is sometimes difficult to determine whether a particular action is geared towards the fulfillment of the socializing or educational function.

The family introduces the child to various social groups. It is the young person's primary source of information about interpersonal relationships, and the space for gaining his or her own experiences in this area. It also provides opportunities for the child to open up to relationships with the non-family environment. "Parents have the greatest responsibility for fulfilling the child's potential and providing such conditions through which the child will open up to other relationships, become accustomed to other people and, with a certain degree of confidence, both continue the existing relationships and come up with new ones" (Piecuch, 2016, p. 354). Therefore, parents should have knowledge of their child's developmental patterns and know what determines this development. The most important factors influencing the child's development within the family include emotional warmth, the adequacy of the parents' emotional response, the emotional discourse between parents and their offspring, and the degree of freedom left to the child and the adaptation of demands to the child's abilities (Arytmiak & Pawelec, 2019, p. 53).

In the family, a toddler learns social behaviour by imitating his parents and other family members, which is the basic model in the formation of social relationships and interactions. It teaches the child to interact with others, to fulfil responsibilities, to resolve conflicts that arise, and to express emotions in a socially acceptable way. Interactions in the family result from the natural situations of everyday life. Parents' attitudes towards their offspring, the parenting styles implemented in the family, and the atmosphere in the family are important. These can hinder or support the development of the young person's social competences. Excessive protection of the child, as well as excessive tolerance and freedom for the offspring are not beneficial. They foster in the child an inappropriate attitude of excessive expectations of others, egocentrism and selfishness, or helplessness and a constant search for support from others. These traits and the resulting behaviour undoubtedly hinder the establishment of positive social contacts and the acquisition of social competence. Very important for a child's socialization are his/her relationships with siblings and playing the role of brother or

sister. Therefore, parents should support their children in building positive sibling relationships (Miskowiec, 2012, pp. 24–25).

The family should introduce children into society, and prepare them for certain social functions. The child must be given the opportunity

> [...] to establish social bonds with peers; to engage in play with them; to observe the agreements made regarding group coexistence; to encounter difficult situations during play; to try out one's own coping skills in conflict situations; to notice the inner experiences and needs of other group members; to make choices and to be aware of their consequences (Lubowiecka, 2013, p. 377).

Responsible parents create the conditions for activities that allow for the acquisition of appropriate social competences. The child's first social contacts with people outside the family depend on the parents. Parents make it possible or difficult for their son or daughter to meet peers, older children and adults, and they decide whether to send the child to a nursery school, toddler club or kindergarten.

Parents also have many opportunities to foster social-emotional competencies in their children. They can already develop self-awareness in their pre-school child by helping him or her to identify and recognise his or her emotions, perceive themselves adequately and recognise their own strengths and weaknesses. They should also make their son or daughter aware of what their effectiveness in achieving their goals depends on. In developing social awareness, it is useful to teach the child to accept other people's points of view, to accept differences between people, to respect others and to be empathic (Czub, 2014b, pp. 12–13). At preschool age, the child develops the ability to control and express emotions in a socially acceptable way. Wise support from parents will enable desired behaviours to be consolidated. Parents should also teach children conflict resolution, negotiation skills, assertiveness and how to ask for and give help to others. In their daily interactions with their children and when interacting with people outside the immediate family, parents have many opportunities to fulfill these goals. Talking about one's own emotions and the emotions of others with adults in the family and with siblings, using literature, having an emotional dialogue with the child and providing support when experiencing stress can all help in recognising and naming emotions. The child should also be taught how to express emotions in a socially acceptable way by setting a good example from parents and older siblings and by presenting role models (films, fairy tales). It is also necessary to show respect and attention to the child's experiences, not to disregard them, so that the child learns to accept his or her own feelings: both pleasant and unpleasant ones (Deptuła, 2013, pp. 145, 154). Therefore, the role of parents in shaping the social competences of their children can hardly be overestimated.

If the child attends a childcare centre, the cooperation between parents and teachers will facilitate the achievement of educational goals and the overcoming of emerging difficulties in the child's social functioning.

The Role of Preschool Teachers in Socializing the Child

After the family, the kindergarten is the second most important social environment for the development of a young child. Its task, in addition to achieving educational goals, is to actively support the child in the process of adapting to new conditions, associated with separation from parents for a few hours and inclusion in a group of peers. For a few-year-old, this is a completely new situation. Although preschool children have a desire for social contact, much depends on the course of adaptation to the new situation. At preschool age, the desire to be with other children, to play together, to form friendships intensifies. The child reinforces behaviours and learns new ones that are accepted and desired in the preschool environment. He/she takes on new social roles: as a colleague, initiator of a task, executor of someone else's idea; experiences the alternation of these roles in contact with others; has the opportunity to take on different positions in the group; learns about his/her own possibilities and those of his/her peers; and compares himself/herself to other children. Being in a peer group provides the opportunity to experience different emotions: both positive and negative. Children learn to be tolerant of others, to respect common property, to value and to differentiate, and to keep social distance. Staying in a kindergarten enables the child to practise social behaviour and experience its consequences (Lubowiecka, 2013, pp. 372–375).

The duty of the kindergarten is to create conditions for the full development of its pupils. These tasks are defined in the Core Curriculum for Preschool Education. It states, among other things, that the aim of such upbringing is to support the holistic development of the child. The kindergarten implements the upbringing assumptions in the areas of physical, emotional, cognitive and social development, supporting the child's multidirectional activity by creating conditions that enable the child to acquire relevant experiences. In terms of social development, the acquisition of social-emotional competences is particularly important. The core curriculum for the stage of education under review stipulates that the child completing preschool education has, among other things.: a sense of self-esteem, respect for others; is able to establish peer relationships and evaluate his/her own behaviour in the context of the group norms in force; respects and co-creates group rules, interacts with other children; is able to recognise and name values related to social skills and behaviour (respect, kindness, dutifulness); pays attention to the needs of others; communicates with others verbally

and non-verbally, and expresses his/her social expectations of the group and individual children (Podstawa programowa…, 2017).

In the kindergarten, the child learns to cooperate, to interact with peers, and to respect group norms. The teacher should use the opportunities provided by the child's stay in the group to shape social competencies. Being the creator of the educational space, he/she should take special care to develop the child's subjective competencies by organising a variety of activities

> […] related to recognising, understanding values, building a personal value system and a sense of responsibility, […] with awareness of one's own self, one's feelings, motivations, aspirations and character traits, and a sense of independence and confidence in one's own abilities; […] to processing information, constructing knowledge, solving problems, using knowledge and a sense of agency and efficacy; […] to different ways of coexisting, interacting with other people and a sense of acceptance and belonging (Popławska, 2015, p. 178).

When analysing the role and tasks of preschool teachers, it is worth drawing on the above-mentioned operationalization of goals in the formation of social competences suggested by Czub (2014a, pp. 37–38) and Kaszlińska (2015, pp. 214–215). Kindergarten teachers should pay attention to their pupils' appropriate relations with adults and peers, and especially to their ability to communicate effectively and adequately to the context and the interlocutor. They must take care to develop in children the ability to understand the rules of a social group and the ability to conform, the ability to self-limit by respecting agreements, to cooperate with peers, to negotiate with them in situations of conflict, and to resolve emotional tensions in a socially acceptable way (refraining from aggressive behaviour). They should also develop in their pupils the ability to defer the fulfilment of their own desires. It is important to talk to children about feelings, encourage them to describe their own and other people's emotions, and teach them empathy (showing care, compassion, interest). Preschool children can already understand that other people's feelings may be different from their own, so it is important to create situations that enable them to show concern for the needs of others, to comfort those who are sad, and to try to help. Real-life situations between children can be used for this, as well as themed games and 'pretend' games, which provide an additional opportunity to empathize with others and to see the 'problem' from a different perspective. Teachers should also take care to develop children's awareness of their own distinctiveness in terms of experiences, qualities, thoughts and feelings, as well as their competence to pursue independent tasks and demonstrate their skills. It is also their responsibility to develop in pupils the ability to interact with other children and to achieve the common goal.

The social relationships that occur in the kindergarten are different from those experienced by a child in the family, even if he/she grows up with siblings. Being a preschooler involves completing tasks that are subject to evaluation by teachers, parents and peers. These evaluations affect the child's perception of himself/herself, his/her self-assessment by comparing himself/herself with other children, his/her attitude to tasks, his/her motivation to perform, and his/her position in the peer group. Although the adaptation of the child to new conditions, situations and requirements is not easy, it creates the conditions for the development of social competences, which are important for functioning as a kindergarten child, but also provide the basis for establishing satisfying social relationships in the future. It is, therefore, worth ensuring that the process of adaptation and subsequent socialization proceeds correctly (Lubowiecka, 2013, pp. 375–376).

Developing the skills required by the Core Curriculum for Preschool Education requires time and effort on the part of the kindergarten teachers, but also the cooperation of the children's parents. The idea is that the interaction between the kindergarten and the family home should be consistent, so that parents do not question the teachers and the teaching staff's influence is a natural extension of the upbringing in the family home. Teachers and parents or guardians should develop a common vision of parenting during meetings, and their cooperation must be based on mutual trust and respect. They should be partners in the upbringing process, for the benefit of the children.

Summary

Social competencies should already be developed in preschool children because a person becomes a social being through his/her contacts with other people, and attitudes are formed over a longer period of time. These competencies give the child the satisfaction of belonging to a group, which involves the need for security. In a friendly environment with classmates, the preschooler trusts others, but also himself. He/she becomes increasingly trusting and open in his/her dealings with other people and shows a readiness to form close relationships with both children and adults. Equally important is the sense of autonomy that comes from seeing one's own individuality and being able to control one's own behaviour. At the same time, the child should know that, in situations in which he or she feels threatened, he/she can and should seek help from parents, teachers or other adults in his/her environment.

Developing the social competencies of preschool children, especially the development of their openness to others, empathy, a sense of responsibility for oneself and one's friends, respect for peers and adults, and dealing constructively with one's

own emotions, can prevent undesirable behaviour both now and in the future. Many parents and teachers complain, for example, about aggressive behaviour by children and young people – both in the real world and in the virtual world. Perhaps paying more attention to the development of social-emotional competencies at preschool age, when children are particularly vulnerable to adult influences, will prove to be an effective way of developing pro-social behaviour.

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