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ENHANCING SCHOOL-AGE CARE ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH POSITIVE INTERACTIONS

Abstract

This research is devoted to the implementation of the School Educational Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) in Almaty schools, a project approved as a state initiative of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023-2025. The research aims to describe the SACERS scale, which includes 48 indicators assessed on a 7-point scale and allows for evaluation of the educational environment that promotes the development of students. Research method: In this research work, a mixed method. The quantitative component included bibliometric analysis data operations using R Studio software (version 2023.3.1.446) and a Google Forms survey administered to 99 students aged 10-13. The qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews with staff, parents, and teachers, in observations, focused on the “Interactions” subscales (27-34) of the SACERS scale. Integrating the findings with broader educational research, this analysis allowed for a detailed assessment of Almaty’s school environment. A comparison of Schools A and B revealed strong disciplinary norms, positive peer interactions, and effective communication between teachers and students. These results emphasize the importance of such elements in creating a positive school environment that promotes learners’s holistic development and global achievement.

Keywords: SACERS, scale, PBIS, educational environment, positive interactions, collaboration.

Introduction. It is crucial to create effective school-age care environments to nurture children’s well-being, motivation, and development. These environments provide a vital support system outside regular school hours, offering a safe and nurturing space for children to grow socially, emotionally, and academically (Robinson et al., 2016., Milton et al., 2023). The crucial role of parents in children’s development was emphasized by the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym Zhomart Tokayev(akorda. kz. 2019). He quoted educator Vasily Sukhomlinsky, who compared a child to a mirror. A mirror reflects the moral purity of its parents. Kassym Zhomart Tokayev Kassym Jomart Tokayev noted that parents should realize that a child’s character is formed at an early age in the family, rather than putting all the responsibility for education on schools and kindergartens.

Positive interactions between staff, pupils, parents, and teachers play a key role in shaping these environments. It helps to build trust, a

sense of belonging, and community, in learner’s development. The quality of interactions impact on learner’s experiences and outcomes in school environment. It is important to understand and improve these interactions (Siddique, Khan, & Rauf, 2024). The impact of positive interactions between staff, students, parents and teachers on children’s welfare, engagement and holistic development. These interactions are crucial in creating a nurturing environment that supports social-emotional growth and academic success(Bekmurzayeva, Yuqi, Begimbetova, Hebeeci, & Khang, 2023). Staff-student interactions that promote trust and belonging, active engagement, and open communication are essential for enhancing social-emotional development (Healey & Healey, 2024). Similarly, regular parent-child communication and involvement in program decisions strengthen the care environment. The cooperation between teachers and parents, through workshops and exchanges, contributes to the creation of a holistic learning process

tailored to the needs of each student. According to Ashfaq, Sami, and Yousaf (2024), parent-teacher cooperation has a significant impact on student achievement at the preschool level. They highlight the importance of developing partnerships between teachers and parents to enhance vital behavioral development. Some papers reveal that fostering meaningful partnerships between teachers and parents enhances student outcomes by integrating diverse perspectives into educational practices. This collaborative approach not only supports academic progress but also promotes social-emotional growth and cultural responsiveness (Zhang & Jiang, 2024). Various research documents emphasize the pivotal role of open communication, mutual respect, and shared decision-making in bridging home-school relationships. Lance (2023) explores the re-imagining of parent-teacher relationships through human-centered design, while Sianturi, Lee, and Cumming (2023) Collaborative work in postcolonial schools explored changing perceptions from 'hard-to-access parents' to 'accessible parents'. It is important to maintain this positive interaction to improve the educational environment for school-aged children, which will ultimately contribute to their development and success (Begimbetova, Retnawati, Triyono, & Imangalieva, 2023). Positive interaction between all staff, students, teachers, and parents is important for all schools to save a convenient environment.

Materials and Methods. To improve the educational environment in Almaty schools, several key strategies need to be implemented. One effective approach is to focus on professional development for teachers. This can be achieved through regular workshops and training sessions that cover important areas like communication skills, conflict resolution, and cultural competence (Brigman, Villares, Mullis, Webb, & White, 2021). By mastering communication and conflict resolution, teachers can handle classroom disputes in a way that turns them into learning experiences. Additionally, cultural competence helps teachers understand and appreciate the diverse backgrounds of their students, creating a more inclusive and welcoming classroom environment (Markey,

O'Brien, Kouta, Okantey, & O'Donnell, 2021).

Additionally, research by Collier (2023) highlights the importance of developing effective student peer mentoring programs. According to the author, establishing such programs significantly strengthens student support systems by enabling older students to mentor and assist their younger peers. This method fosters a sense of community and belonging in the school environment. Peer mentoring through mechanisms such as academic tutoring, social support and leadership development creates a support network where students can learn from each other and build strong, positive relationships.

Skakova and Tukenova (2015) emphasize the critical role of parental involvement in fostering a successful educational environment. They argue that schools can enhance this partnership through regular parent-teacher meetings, workshops, and volunteer opportunities. Such initiatives help create a unified approach to student development, promoting both academic achievement and social-emotional growth. By strengthening the connection between home and school, these efforts build a supportive network that significantly benefits students.

Implementing regular feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and suggestion boxes, is essential for maintaining a school environment that is responsive to the needs of its community. Kutasi, R. (2023) highlights that such feedback systems play a crucial role in informing continuous improvement efforts. Collecting and analyzing feedback, schools can identify areas for enhancement and make informed decisions to better serve students, parents, and staff. A proactive approach aligns the evolving school environment with the community's needs and aspirations. Bradshaw, Waasdorp, and Leaf (2012) demonstrated that implementing school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) significantly reduces child behavior problems, underscoring PBIS's effectiveness in managing and improving student behavior.

In the context of Kazakhstani schools, adopting PBIS can be particularly advantageous. This proactive framework focuses on reinforcing positive behaviors, setting clear

expectations, and supporting students to meet these expectations. According to the SACERS scale Integration domain PBIS, Kazakhstani schools can foster a more supportive and organized environment Focusing on this method tackles disruptive behavior while fostering a more positive learning environment, ultimately creating a better educational experience for students.

A mixed-methods approach was adopted for this research. This included both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative strand used bibliometric analysis data analysis operations facilitated by the R Studio software, version 2023.3.1.446. While the qualitative strand observation and interview were used to explore in depth based on the SACERS scale “Interactions” (including subscales 27-34: Greeting/Leaving, Staff-Child Interactions, Staff-Child Communication, Staff Supervision, Discipline, Peer Interactions, Staff-Parent Interactions, Staff Interactions).

The research focuses on these questions:

What is the annual growth rate of publications in the field of educational interactions between 2017 and 2023?

What are the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents regarding the interactions and communication within the school environment, and how do these interactions influence students’ social and academic development?

How does the implementation of the School-

Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) impact the quality of educational environments in Almaty schools?

What insights can be gained from interviews with teachers, students, and parents regarding the interactions and communication within the school environment?

Participants: Quantitative data was collected through a Google Forms survey administered to 99 students aged 10-13 years. Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with staff, parents, and teacher

Results. A bibliometric analysis using RStudio and a Scopus CSV dataset explores teacher, student, and parent interactions in education. According to the data between 2017 and 2023, publications increased by 17.76% annually. This analysis is based on 146 documents including articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings. The average paper is relatively new (3.4 years) and receives a medium amount of citations (7.27 citations per paper). This analysis is based on a rich set of 886 keywords assigned by the Research Database (AIN) and 551 keywords suggested by the authors themselves. While 16% of papers have a single author, the average paper shows collaboration between 3.65 authors. It should be noted that more than 21% of these collaborations involve international co-authorship, which reflects the global nature of database research. The main information is shown in table 1.

Table 1. *Script of Scholarly Landscape (2017-2023)*

Description	Results
<i>MAIN INFORMATION</i>	
Timespan	2017:2023
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	114
Documents	146
Annual Growth Rate %	17,76
Document Average Age	3,4
Average citations per doc	7,274
References	6803
<i>DOCUMENT CONTENTS</i>	
Keywords Plus (ID)	886
Author’s Keywords (DE)	551
<i>AUTHORS</i>	
Authors	503
Authors of single-authored docs	16

Table 2. Student Comfort Levels in Classroom Interactions

Questions	Average	Standard deviation
1. During break or lunchtime, how often do you talk to your classmates?	5.62	0.91
2. Do you have trusted friends at school?	3.98	1.37
3. How often do you work together with other pupils on projects or homework?	3.75	1.30
4. If you disagree with someone in your class, how do you usually settle the matter?	3.92	1.37
5. How comfortable do you feel asking teachers questions in class?	3.68	1.17
6. Do you find it easy to get along with your teachers?	4.27	1.01

Teacher-Student Interactions and Supportive Learning Environments: The teacher-student relationships are a significant strength of the learning environment. A high average score of 4.27 for student-teacher rapport suggests a positive and supportive classroom climate. Moreover, students’ comfort level with asking questions (average score of 3.68) further reinforces this conducive atmosphere. Such conditions are likely to foster increased student engagement and academic achievement.

The Course Perceptions and Areas for Improvement: The average quality of teaching is rated as good (5.62). However, variations in the clarity of course materials (3.98), assessments

(3.75), TA support (3.92) and course structure (3.68) suggest that student experiences vary. These issues could be addressed by improving materials, exploring new assessment methods, and improving student support.

Variability in responses, particularly in the areas of cooperation and conflict resolution, indicates differences in students’ social integration and skills. High levels of teacher-student interaction indicate a supportive environment in which students feel comfortable and engaged. Strengthening peer and teacher-student relationships is critical to improving student engagement and educational outcomes, as illustrated in Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5.

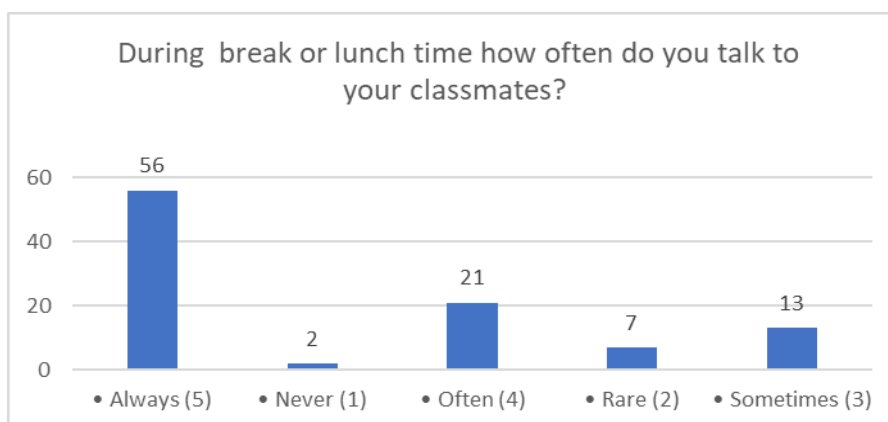


Figure 2: Interaction of students during break or lunch

The largest percentage of students, 56%, talk to their classmates “always” during breaks or lunch, and 21% talk “as often”. 13% of students talk “Sometimes”. 7% of students talk “rarely”. Only 2 % of students said they never talk to their classmates during the break or lunch. Most

students talk to their classmates at least once during their lunch break or lunch.

Figure 3 shows a survey of trusted friends at school. Most students said they had at least one trusted friend (41% said yes and 20% were sure).

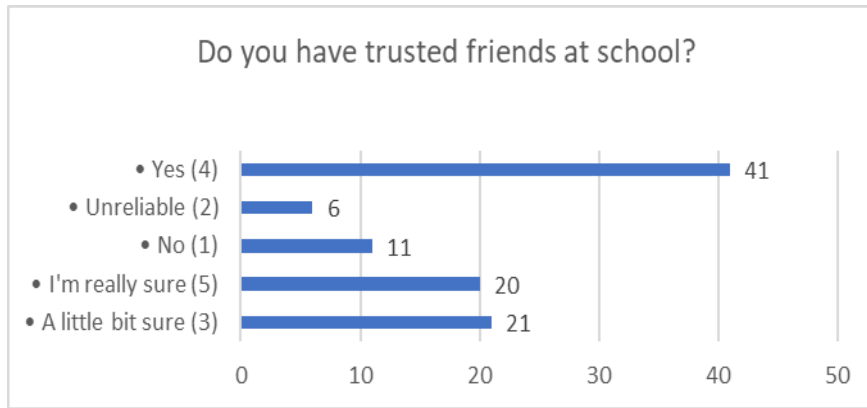


Figure 3: Trusted friends at school

Only a small number of students said they had no trusted friends (11% said no and 6% said their friends were unreliable).

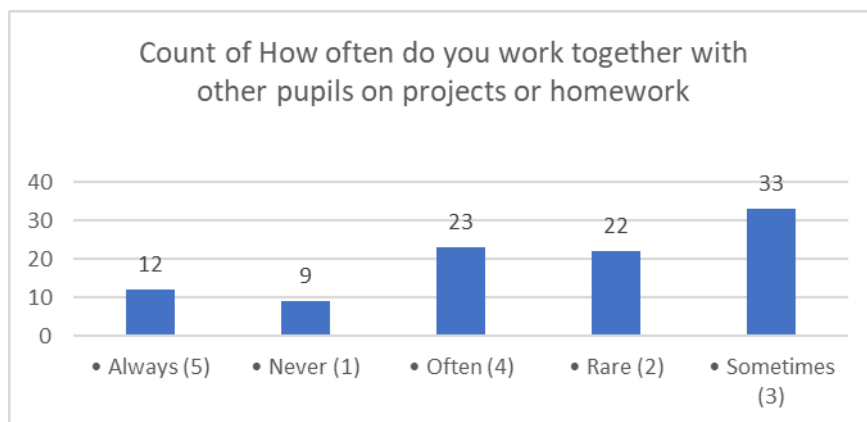


Figure 4: Work together with peers

Figure 4 shows how often students work together on projects or homework. “Always” (12 students), and the least common answer was “never” (9 students). According to the response, collaboration is better, but some students prefer to work alone. “Often” (23 students) and “Sometimes” (33 students) are the most common answers, followed by “Rarely” (22 students).

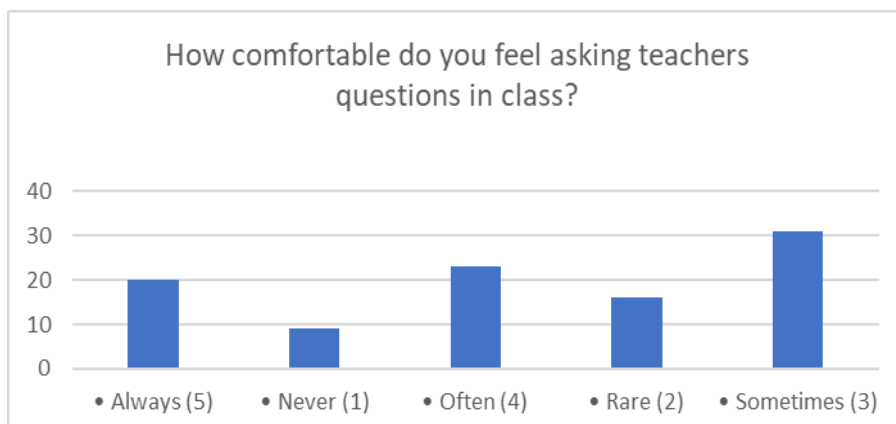


Figure 5: Interaction with teachers

The majority of students (35%) say they are always comfortable asking questions in class, while fewer students (22%), “Sometimes” (23%), “Rally” (12%), and “Never” (9%) say the same.

The results of the survey indicate the significance of peer interaction for students’ well-being. The high average score (5.62) for students’ conversations with classmates during breaks suggests the presence of a positive social climate. However, there is some variation in students’ experiences in this regard, as evidenced by the standard deviations of 3.75 and 3.92 observed for questions related to collaborative activities and conflict resolution, respectively. Such discrepancies may indicate different levels of social integration or interpersonal skills among learners.

Based on interviews with teachers, students, parents, and staff, along with observational data from two schools, this analysis explores educational interactions. It combines qualitative insights, quantitative assessments, and observations to assess student-teacher interactions, peer relationships, and teacher-parent communication, aiming to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the educational environment.

Interaction between teachers and parents

Parents 1:

Q: How would you describe the way teachers and parents communicate at your child’s school?

A: Communication is mainly formal, with scheduled meetings and occasional web updates. While these methods cover the basics, there is potential for improvement through more frequent and informal interactions.

Parent 2:

Q: In what ways do you think that communication with the teachers could be improved?

A: There could be more proactive communication, with regular updates on student progress and more opportunities for parents to be involved in classroom activities.

Parent 3:

Q: How effective do you think the current communication is between parents and teachers?

A: Communication is generally adequate

but tends to be reactive. The introduction of regular newsletters or detailed progress reports could make the dialogue more proactive and engaging.

Parents’ feedback highlights the need for more proactive and informal methods of communication between teachers and parents. The current formal mechanisms, while functional, are perceived as reactive. Schools should consider regular updates through newsletters and increased opportunities for parental involvement to strengthen the partnership between educators and families and support pupils’ development.

Interaction between students

Student 1:

Q: How would you describe your interactions with your peers at school?

A: Peer interactions are mostly positive, involving teamwork and mutual support. However, there are occasional conflicts that are usually resolved with the help of school staff and teachers.

Student 2:

Q: How does the school deal with peer interactions?

A: The school encourages positive interactions through structured activities. Nevertheless, there could be better management to ensure inclusivity and reduce cliques.

Student 3:

Q: What changes would you suggest to improve interactions among students?

A: Introducing more activities that involve students from different classes could help reduce cliques and create a more positive environment.

Student 4:

Q: How does the school deal with conflicts between pupils?

A: Conflicts are usually handled by teachers or counselors who mediate and help students resolve issues respectfully.

Student 5:

Q: Do you feel well supported by the staff in resolving peer conflicts?

A: Yes, staff are supportive and help us to resolve conflicts fairly and ensure that issues are addressed constructively.

Student interactions are largely positive, with effective conflict resolution in place. To

further improve the integration and reduce the formation of cliques, the school should introduce more structured cross-class activities. Ongoing staff support for conflict management and mediation ensures that issues are dealt with fairly and constructively.

Interaction between students and teachers

Teacher 1:

Q: How could student-teacher interaction be improved?

A: To ensure that all students feel involved, we need to create more opportunities for engagement, especially for quieter students. This could include using different strategies to encourage participation from all students.

Teacher 2:

Q: How do you provide extra support for students who need it?

A: We provide individual help through one-

to-one sessions and small group discussions. Various forms of encouragement and feedback are used to support students effectively.

Interaction between students and teachers is generally effective but could be improved. Although formal and informal methods are used, there is a need to improve communication with quiet students. Implementing strategies to engage all students and providing individual support can improve the quality of interactions.

The table 3 presents a concise summary of the thematic analysis conclusions on educational interactions. It details the current state, recommended improvements, and anticipated outcomes for teacher-parent, student, and student-teacher interactions. The goal is to foster enhanced engagement, inclusivity, and support within the educational environment, leading to greater overall effectiveness.

Table 3. Summary of Thematic Analysis Conclusions

Interactions	Current state	Suggested improvements	Expected Outcomes
Teacher-Parent Interaction	Formal and reactive (meetings, web updates)	Increase informal communication (newsletters, more classroom involvement)	Enhanced engagement and stronger school-family partnership
Student Interactions	Positive, but occasional conflicts arise; staff manage conflicts effectively	Promote inclusivity through cross-class activities	Reduced cliques, inclusive peer environment
Student-Teacher Interaction	Effective, but quieter students need more attention; manage behavioral issues constructively	Develop targeted engagement strategies; manage behavioral issues constructively	Improved learning outcomes, more supportive interactions

The SACERS scale subscale interaction was used to observe the school environment of two schools A, B in the areas of Meeting-Leaving, Learner-Teacher Interaction, Learner-Teacher Communication, Supervision of Students, Discipline, Peer Interaction, Interaction Between Teachers and Parents, and Communication Between Teachers and Subject Teachers. Figure 6 shows the result of the observation Series 1- School A, Series 2- school B.

Table 4 provides a comparative analysis of educational interaction scales between two schools, highlighting variations in student-teacher and peer interactions. It details mean

scores and standard deviations across various categories, such as Learner-Teacher Interaction, Supervision, and Discipline, offering insights into the strengths and areas for improvement in each school's practices.

Student-Teacher and Peer Interactions. Meeting - Leaving: Mean: 6.5, Standard Deviation: 0.5. Both Schools show good greeting and farewelling systems but School A has a better performance. High scores in this section are an indication of established procedures that make the environment friendly and organized. Low standard deviation indicates similar practices across the schools that are important in setting positively critical everyday routines.

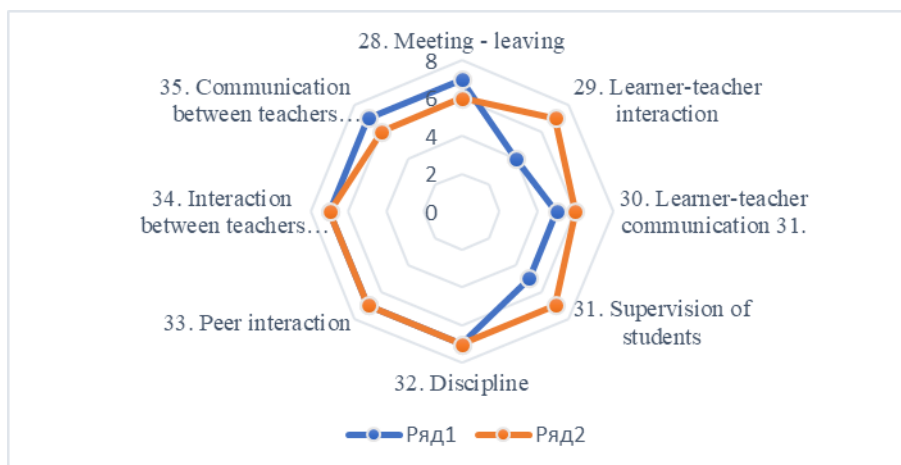


Figure 6: Interaction scale (SACERS)

Table 4. Comparison of Scores on Educational Interaction Scales

Scales	School A	School B	Mean A.B	Std Dev
Meeting - leaving	7	6	6.5	0.5
Learner-teacher interaction	4	7	5.5	1.5
Learner-teacher communication	5	6	5.5	0.5
Supervision of students	5	7	6.0	1.0
Discipline	7	7	7.0	0.0
Peer interaction	7	7	7.0	0.0
Interaction between teachers and parents	7	7	7.0	0.0
Communication between teachers and subject teachers	7	6	6.5	0.5

Learner-Teacher Interaction: Mean: 5.5, Standard Deviation: 1.5. There is a noticeable difference between the two schools with school B coming on top. The mean score of 1.5 shows how diverse interactions are from one place to another while the high standard deviation reflects inconsistency in the quality of the student-teacher relationship.

Learner-Teacher Communication: Mean: 5.5, Standard Deviation: 0.5. School B scores slightly ahead, so they are comparable. A mean score of 5.5 and a low standard deviation indicate relatively uniform communication practices in both schools. From a technological point of view, School A is experiencing dissatisfaction and poor learning conditions. However, School A has opportunities for improvement to ensure that students fully understand and interact with the curriculum.

Supervision and Discipline: Mean: 6.0. Standard Deviation: 1.0. School B received more points, it means better control of students. Differences in supervision quality correspond

to a mean score of 6.0 (SD = 1.0). To keep the educational environment harmless and serene, strict supervision is necessary. A can enhance its practices by adopting effective strategies observed in School B.

Discipline: Mean: 7.0. Standard Deviation: 0.0. Two schools achieved a maximum score with no variability, demonstrating consistent discipline practices. These practices are critical to maintaining discipline and encouraging positive behavior. Perfect scores demonstrate that the two schools have strong disciplinary foundations that can serve as an example to others.

Peer Interaction: Mean: 7.0. Standard Deviation: 0.0. Two schools achieved the highest score, indicating an environment conducive to healthy peer relationships. These relationships are essential for social development. Maintaining high standards and sharing best practices within the educational community are encouraged.

Interaction Between Teachers and Parents: Mean: 7.0. Standard Deviation: 0.0. A high score

in these two schools indicates a strong parent-teacher relationship. Effective communication and collaboration between teachers and parents are essential for coordinating home and school efforts to support student development. To maintain these high standards, continuous interaction and open communication must be maintained.

Communication Between Teachers and Subject Teachers: Mean: 6.5. Standard Deviation: 0.5. the results suggest School A's teachers work together better, likely thanks to good communication. This is important for a strong learning experience. School B can improve by encouraging more collaboration among the teachers.

Discussion. Bibliometric analysis, implementation of the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) in Almaty schools, and interviews with key stakeholders provide a comprehensive view of the quality of educational interactions and their impact on student development.

The bibliometric analysis shows a strong annual growth rate of 17.76% in publications on educational interactions, reflecting rising scholarly interest in how educational stakeholders engage. This growth highlights the field's growing importance in shaping educational outcomes and improving school environments. Additionally, 21.92% of international co-authorships indicate a global recognition of the field, bringing diverse insights and enhancing research quality.

Survey results indicate that interactions between students and teachers are generally positive, with students reporting high levels of comfort in asking questions and engaging with their teachers. The average score for interactions with teachers is 4.27, underscoring a supportive learning environment. However, variability exists, as reflected in the standard deviations for questions related to collaborative work and conflict resolution, suggesting differences in students' social integration and interpersonal skills.

The SACERS assessment indicates that educational environments in Almaty schools are characterized by positive outcomes, with high scores in the 'Peer Interaction' (7.0) and

'Discipline' (7.0) domains. These findings suggest the presence of a supportive social climate and effective disciplinary practices. Nevertheless, considerable variation is observed between schools, particularly in the domains of 'Learner-Teacher Interaction' and 'Supervision of Students'. For example, School A demonstrates excellence in social and disciplinary aspects but exhibits challenges in engaging students, whereas School B exhibits robust teacher-student relationships but necessitates enhancement in communication between teachers and subject teachers. These findings underscore the necessity for targeted enhancements to address discrepancies and augment the overall quality of education. Schools like A and B, with strong scores in 'Interaction between Teachers and Parents,' demonstrate the importance of bridging home and school environments. School A excels in discipline and peer relationships (Begimbetova et al., 2023), while School B faces challenges in learner-teacher interactions, highlighting areas needing improvement. Addressing these issues can boost student satisfaction and academic success (Healey & Healey, 2024). Using SACERS to assess and target specific areas for improvement, such as professional development for teachers, can foster better communication and interaction in schools.

Interviews with teachers, pupils, and parents revealed different perspectives on educational interactions. Teachers valued their close relationships with students but faced challenges in meeting diverse learning needs and maintaining consistent communication with parents. They expressed a need for additional training in behavior management and integration. Learners felt supported by their teachers but struggled with social dynamics and peer conflict, suggesting that structured activities could improve inclusivity. Parents emphasized the need for regular, informal updates from teachers and valued their involvement in school activities. They believe that increased communication and participation strengthen the partnership between home and school. Effective communication between teachers and parents enhances student support and achievement.

Conclusion. This research underscores how essential positive interactions between

pupils, teachers, and parents are for creating an effective school environment. The growing interest in educational interactions highlights the importance of nurturing supportive relationships within schools. Using the SACERS scale to assess these interactions has proven effective, offering valuable insights and guiding improvements. For Almaty's schools to progress, the focus should be on enhancing proactive communication between teachers and parents, better engaging quieter students, and addressing inconsistencies in learner-teacher interactions. Implementing professional development and structured peer mentoring can support these goals. The findings show that

while there are strengths, targeted strategies and continuous improvements are vital for fostering a nurturing learning environment that supports students' social, emotional, and academic development.

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Мемлекет басшысы Қасым-Жомарт Тоқаевтың “Білім және ғылым” атты тамыз конференциясының пленарлық отырысында сөйлеген сөзі. https://www.akorda.kz/kz/speeches/internal_political_affairs/in_speeches_and_addresses/memleket-basshysy-kasym-zhomart-tokaevtyn-bilim-jne-ylym-atty-tamyz-konferenciyasynyn-plenarlyk-otyrysynda-soilegen-sozi

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ACTUAL PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPING SAFE BEHAVIOR SKILLS IN CHILDREN OF THE SENIOR PRESCHOOL GROUP

Abstract

In the article, the authors consider the problems that hinder the development of safe behavior skills of children of the senior preschool group. A literary review of the works of foreign and Kazakhstani teachers and scientists on the safe behavior of older preschool children is made. The definitions of “safety” and “safe behavior” are analyzed. The current state of work on the development of safe behavior skills in a preschool organization, at home, on the street is studied; the characteristic of behavioral reactions of senior preschool children is given; the normative legal documents, the State mandatory standard of preschool education and training of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Standard curriculum of preschool education and training of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the educational direction “Formation of socio-emotional skills” are analyzed. The purpose of the study is to identify current problems that hinder the development of safe behavior skills in children of the senior preschool group. The authors analyzed the types of child safety (social, physical and psychological, information, transport, educational, environmental, medical, legal and others), which are currently debatable. Based on the analysis of psychological and pedagogical literature, the current problems of ensuring and threatening the safety of children at home, on the street, in a preschool organization are identified. The ways of solving the problems reflected in foreign and Kazakhstani studies on ensuring the safety of older preschool children are considered. In the perspective of our research, determining the effectiveness of “playful learning” in the development of safe behavior skills and its implementation in the educational process of a preschool organization.

Keywords: preschool age; safe behavior; health; educational process; social safety; physical safety; psychological safety.

Introduction. Today there is a necessary amount of literature, methodological recommendations devoted to the problems of children's safety. This indicates that this direction is relevant for modern society, but at the same time there are certain difficulties in its solution.