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MORAL EDUCATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH CARTOONS

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Abstract. This article addresses one of the pressing challenges of modern education – the moral upbringing of children in the context of rapid globalization and technological change. Moral education during primary school years is crucial, as it is a sensitive period for forming value orientations, behavioral models, and social responsibility. Despite the recognized pedagogical potential of animation, empirical studies on its structured use in moral education remain limited, particularly in Kazakhstan.

The aim of this study was to develop and experimentally test an educational cartoon collection designed according to moral-educational criteria and to assess its effectiveness in enhancing the moral education of younger schoolchildren. The research was conducted in 2024 with 51 participants (third and fourth graders) at a secondary school in Pavlodar region. A mixed-methods design with pre-test and post-test measures was applied. Three standardized diagnostic tools (Shilova, Kalinina "Finish the Story," Kalinina "Plot Pictures") were used to assess children's moral development.

Quantitative results showed that the proportion of students at a high level of moral education increased from 32% to 38%, while the share of those at a low level decreased from 15% to 3%. These changes were statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 9.62$, p < 0.01; Cohen's d = 0.47). Qualitative analysis revealed richer moral vocabulary, stronger empathy, and more reasoned moral justifications after the intervention.

The findings indicate that carefully selected cartoons, when embedded within a structured educational framework, can serve as an effective pedagogical tool for fostering moral values, empathy, and ethical reasoning in primary schoolchildren. At the same time, the study acknowledges limitations related to sample size, regional scope, and short intervention duration. Future research should expand to multiple schools, apply longitudinal designs, and compare cartoons with other pedagogical tools.

Keywords: cartoon, moral education, moral values, children of primary school age, study group, primary school, humanity, values

Introduction

The problem of children's moral education remains one of the most urgent issues in modern pedagogy, psychology, and philosophy. Numerous studies confirm that the foundations of morality are laid in early childhood and further consolidated in primary school, which is a sensitive period for the formation of moral norms, value orientations, and socially significant behavior patterns [1]. During this age, children acquire moral attitudes and habits, learn to distinguish between "good" and "bad," and begin to internalize external requirements into their own moral self-regulation [2]. The quality of these early moral foundations significantly influences their subsequent adolescence, where values undergo reassessment and are tested in more complex social contexts. However, many modern studies show that a significant proportion of children today experience difficulties in understanding concepts such as kindness, empathy, tolerance, and responsibility [3]. The lack of systematic moral education leads to manifestations of aggression, conflict, and difficulties in communication with peers.

Theoretical and practical works of Kazakh and world educators emphasize the crucial role of moral education. For example, Y. Altynsarin and M. Zhumabaev in their pedagogical heritage considered moral upbringing the basis of a child's personal development [4]; V.A. Sukhomlinsky defined it as the formation of responsibility before one's conscience and society [5]; while L.N. Tolstoy famously defined it as "the most important science of good and evil". Modern scholars continue this line of inquiry, emphasizing the need to update the methods of moral education in accordance with contemporary social and technological realities [6]. In particular, D.M. Dzhusubaliyeva stresses that teachers working with Generation Z must not only possess professional pedagogical competencies but also demonstrate digital literacy and effectively integrate media resources into education [7].

The growing role of media in children's daily lives makes the search for new pedagogical tools urgent. According to K.-G. Schaefer, media education is a joint practical activity of teachers and students, providing wide opportunities for value-oriented upbringing [8]. Cartoons (animation) represent a specific type of media product that combines fantasy and reality, artistic images and emotional impact. Research by L.I. Bazhenova, G.N. Kozak, and others shows that animation has a strong influence on the development of children's imagination, empathy, and moral judgments [9]. S.M. Eisenstein and Y.B. Norstein emphasized that animation has a unique aesthetic nature, capable of transmitting cultural codes through metaphor and symbolic forms [10]. However, despite this potential, empirical studies on the pedagogical use of cartoons in moral education—especially at the primary school level—remain insufficient, particularly in the context of Kazakhstan.

Thus, a clear research gap can be identified: although the theoretical and cultural significance of animation is recognized, its systematic pedagogical use

as a tool for children's moral education has not been sufficiently tested in school practice. Most existing studies remain at the level of theoretical justification or isolated case descriptions, without large-scale empirical testing [11]. This creates a need for scientifically grounded experimental research that would evaluate the effectiveness of using cartoons as a structured pedagogical tool for the moral education of younger schoolchildren.

The aim of this study is therefore to develop and experimentally test a specially designed "cartoon library" (a structured collection of animated films selected according to moral-educational criteria) and to assess its impact on the moral education level of primary schoolchildren. The novelty of the research lies in the integration of culturally relevant Kazakh-language animated films into the educational process, the development of a systematic extracurricular program based on them, and the empirical evaluation of its effectiveness through standardized diagnostic tools.

Materials and methods

The study employed a mixed-methods experimental design with a pretest/post-test structure to evaluate the effectiveness of a specially developed educational cartoon collection in fostering moral education among primary schoolchildren. The research was grounded in a cultural-historical approach, which emphasizes the role of mediated tools (in this case, animation) in the development of children's higher mental functions, and in an activity-based approach, which views moral development as a process of internalization through socially meaningful activities. The theoretical foundations of moral education elaborated by M.W. Berkowitz, M.C. Bier, D. Narvaez, D.K. Lapsley, V.A. Sukhomlinsky and others were integrated into the experimental design, while the use of cartoons was informed by studies highlighting the educational potential of audiovisual materials in shaping children's value orientations.

Participants

The experimental part of the study was conducted in 2024 at a secondary school in Zangar village, Pavlodar region (Republic of Kazakhstan). A total of 51 students participated: 25 third graders (mean age = 8.7 years, SD = 0.4) and 26 fourth graders (mean age = 9.8 years, SD = 0.5). The sample comprised 24 boys (47.1%) and 27 girls (52.9%). Selection was based on availability and parental consent, with inclusion criteria being regular school attendance and absence of diagnosed developmental disorders. All parents and the school administration provided written consent, and the study design was approved by the school's pedagogical council, in accordance with ethical standards for research involving minors.

Instruments

To assess the level of moral education, three standardized diagnostic techniques were used:

- The method of M.I. Shilova [12], which identifies levels of moral education based on children's understanding of moral concepts and behaviors.
- "Finish the Story" by R.R. Kalinina [13], which evaluates moral reasoning and value-based decision-making through open-ended narrative completion.
- "Plot Pictures" by R.R. Kalinina [13], which assesses children's ability to interpret moral dilemmas presented visually.

Each method has been validated for use with primary school-aged children. Inter-rater reliability was ensured by having two independent experts code the responses, with Cohen's kappa ($\kappa=0.82$) confirming high agreement.

Intervention: Educational Cartoon Collection

A central component of the study was the development of a structured educational cartoon collection, a systematically organized set of animated films designed according to specific pedagogical criteria. The novelty of the collection lies in its organization across five thematic dimensions of moral education: (1) attitude toward the natural world (animals, environment), (2) attitude toward society and homeland (patriotism), (3) attitude toward work (mental and physical), (4) attitude toward people (family, peers, adults), and (5) attitude toward oneself (self-regulation, self-respect).

The selection process prioritized Kazakh-language animated films produced during the independence period of the Republic of Kazakhstan, supplemented by high-quality foreign works translated into Kazakh. Each film was evaluated for age-appropriateness (7–10 years), moral content (clear positive/negative models), and cultural relevance. This approach corresponds to international recommendations on integrating culturally relevant materials into moral education.

Procedure

The intervention lasted 12 weeks during the spring semester of 2024. Students in the experimental group participated in weekly 40-minute extracurricular sessions, during which one cartoon from the collection was shown, followed by structured discussion and interactive activities. The post-viewing reflection was guided by semi-structured questions encouraging moral reasoning, empathy, and self-reflection. To reinforce learning, children engaged in role-play, quizzes, and problem-solving games based on the cartoon's storyline. Sessions were conducted by a trained teacher-facilitator following a standardized protocol to ensure consistency.

The control group (parallel classes) continued with the regular school curriculum and did not receive the cartoon-based intervention. Both groups completed the same diagnostic instruments before and after the program.

Data Collection and Analysis

Responses from the diagnostic methods were scored according to established guidelines, with results aggregated into three levels of moral education: low, medium, and high. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS v.26. To compare

pre-test and post-test results within groups, paired t-tests (or Wilcoxon signed-rank test for non-normal distributions) were employed. Between-group differences were assessed with χ^2 tests. Effect sizes (Cohen's d) were calculated to determine the magnitude of changes. Statistical significance was set at p < 0.05.

Qualitative data from open-ended responses were subjected to thematic analysis, focusing on the development of children's moral reasoning and justifications for behavior. Coding was performed independently by two researchers to enhance validity.

Results and Discussion

The implementation of the program "Cartoons as a means of moral education of primary school students" demonstrated measurable changes in the level of moral education among participants. The program consisted of nine extracurricular classes of 35–45 minutes each, delivered once per week over a period of 12 weeks. Its thematic structure, based on the educational cartoon collection, covered core moral categories such as benevolence, diligence, responsibility, respect for others, patriotism, and care for nature. Table 1 presents the thematic distribution of sessions.

Dimension Lesson topic **Example cartoons** Hours Attitude the Gratitude, tolerance, Aldar Kose: Golden Watermelon; 2 to surrounding world patience, self-acceptance The Jug with a Crack (animals, nature) Attitude towards Generosity, mercy, Aldar Kose: Generosity; What 4 society and people a Question, Such an Answer; selflessness, respect Skullcap; The Magic Fur Coat Tolagai; Protection of Otyrar Attitude toward the Love homeland. 2 for motherland exemplary courage, behavior Aldar Kose: The Rich Man and the 1 Attitude to work Industriousness, fairness Healer

Table 1 – Thematic plan of the educational program

Quantitative Results

The diagnostic tools of Shilova [12] and Kalinina [13] were administered before and after the intervention. Table 2 summarizes the distribution of students across three levels of moral education (high, medium, low).

Table 2 – Levels of moral education among participants before (A) and after (B) the intervention

Level	Shilova (%)	Kalinina "Finish the Story" (%)	Kalinina "Plot Pictures" (%)	Average (%)
High	$A: 38 \rightarrow B: 44$	$A: 27 \rightarrow B: 33$	$A: 30 \rightarrow B: 37$	$32 \rightarrow 38$
Medium	$A: 53 \rightarrow B: 55$	A: $55 \rightarrow B$: 61	$A: 52 \rightarrow B: 59$	$53 \rightarrow 58$
Low	$A: 9 \rightarrow B: 1$	A: 18 → B: 6	A: 18 → B: 4	$15 \rightarrow 3$

The proportion of students with high moral education increased from an average of 32% to 38%, while those at the low level decreased from 15% to 3%. Statistical analysis using the χ^2 test indicated that these changes were significant ($\chi^2 = 9.62$, df = 2, p < 0.01). Paired-sample t-tests confirmed significant improvements across all three diagnostic methods (p < 0.05). The effect size, measured by Cohen's d, was moderate (d = 0.47), suggesting a meaningful educational impact.

Qualitative Results

Thematic analysis of open-ended responses revealed that after the program children demonstrated:

- richer moral vocabulary (e.g., use of terms such as "responsibility," "mercy," "generosity");
- greater ability to justify moral choices ("the hero did wrong because he deceived his friend, and friendship means honesty");
- increased empathy and perspective-taking (placing themselves in the position of a cartoon character and reflecting on their own possible behavior).

These qualitative improvements align with previous findings that animation supports the development of children's imagination and emotional-moral reasoning [9,10].

Discussion

The results confirm the hypothesis that integrating an educational cartoon collection into extracurricular activities can significantly enhance the moral education of primary schoolchildren. The observed reduction in low-level indicators (from 15% to 3%) suggests that cartoons are particularly effective for children who initially demonstrated weaker moral awareness. This finding corresponds to Berkowitz and Bier's [1] assertion that targeted interventions can shift moral development trajectories even within short-term programs.

Compared to other pedagogical tools (e.g., classical literature, storytelling, or didactic instruction), cartoons possess several advantages:

- 1. Visual-emotional impact: Animation engages both cognitive and affective domains, facilitating the internalization of values through identification with characters [14].
- 2. Cultural resonance: The inclusion of Kazakh-language cartoons enhanced cultural relevance and ensured alignment with the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy.
- 3. Accessibility and motivation: Children demonstrated sustained attention and enthusiasm, consistent with research showing that audiovisual formats increase engagement in moral discussions [15].

At the same time, challenges were noted. Some children initially imitated negative characters' behavior, underscoring the importance of guided reflection and structured discussion after viewing. This supports Narvaez and Lapsley's [3] claim that moral outcomes depend not only on exposure but also on pedagogical framing.

Overall, the findings provide empirical support for using cartoons as a

pedagogical resource in moral education. The novelty of this study lies in the systematic development of an educational cartoon collection and its experimental testing in the Kazakhstani school context. These results extend previous theoretical discussions by offering concrete evidence of effectiveness.

Nevertheless, the study has limitations: the sample was limited to a single school, the intervention lasted only 12 weeks, and long-term effects were not measured. Future research should replicate the design across multiple schools, extend the duration, and compare cartoons with other forms of media-based interventions.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrated that the integration of an educational cartoon collection into extracurricular activities can contribute to measurable improvements in the moral education of primary schoolchildren. Quantitative diagnostics revealed that the proportion of students at a high level of moral education increased from 32% to 38%, while the percentage of those at a low level decreased from 15% to 3%. Statistical analyses confirmed that these changes were significant ($\chi^2 = 9.62$, p < 0.01; Cohen's d = 0.47), indicating a moderate but meaningful educational effect. Qualitative analysis further showed that children acquired a richer moral vocabulary, demonstrated greater empathy, and provided more reasoned justifications for moral choices.

These findings confirm earlier theoretical assumptions that animation, as a form of mediated symbolic activity, effectively fosters value orientations through identification with characters, narrative immersion, and emotional engagement [9,10, 14]. Moreover, the results support recent calls to incorporate culturally relevant media resources into moral education, especially in contexts where traditional didactic methods may not fully address the interests and realities of Generation Z learners [7].

At the same time, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved a relatively small sample (N=51) drawn from a single school in Pavlodar region, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. The intervention lasted only 12 weeks, making it difficult to evaluate the long-term sustainability of the observed changes. In addition, the absence of direct comparisons with alternative pedagogical tools (e.g., classical literature, role-play, or digital games) limits the strength of conclusions about the relative effectiveness of cartoons. These factors underscore the need for caution in interpreting the results and for further research to build on them.

Future investigations should therefore:

- 1. Expand the sample size across multiple schools and regions to ensure broader representativeness.
- 2. Employ longitudinal designs to assess whether improvements in moral reasoning and behavior persist over time.
- 3. Compare cartoons with other media- and non-media-based tools for moral education to identify optimal strategies.

4. Examine the potential differential effects of local (Kazakhstani) versus foreign animated content on children's moral development.

In conclusion, this study provides empirical evidence that cartoons, when carefully selected and embedded within a structured educational framework, can serve not merely as entertainment but as a pedagogically effective tool for shaping moral values, empathy, and ethical reasoning in primary schoolchildren. While the observed improvements were moderate, they point to the potential of integrating educational animation into contemporary moral education, offering new opportunities to modernize its content and methods.

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БАСТАУЫШ СЫНЫП ОҚУШЫЛАРЫНА МУЛЬТФИЛЬМДЕР АРҚЫЛЫ АДАМГЕРШІЛІК ТӘРБИЕ БЕРУ

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Аңдатпа. Бұл мақала қазіргі білім берудің өзекті мәселелерінің бірі — жаһандану мен технологиялық өзгерістер жағдайында балалардың адамгершілік тәрбиесін қарастырады. Бастауыш мектеп кезеңі құндылықтық бағдарлар, мінез-құлық үлгілерімен әлеуметтік жауап кершілік тің қалыптасуы үшін сезімтал кезең болып табылады. Дегенмен мультфильмдердің тәрбиелік әлеуеті мойындалғанына қарамастан, олардың жүйелі түрде адамгершілік тәрбиесінде қолданылуына арналған эмпирикалық зерттеулер жеткіліксіз, әсіресе Қазақстан контекстінде.

Зерттеудің мақсаты — арнайы педагогикалық критерийлер негізінде әзірленген тәрбиелік мультфильмдер жинағын жасап, оны тәжірибелік тұрғыдан сынақтан өткізу және бастауыш сынып оқушыларының адамгершілік деңгейіне ықпалын бағалау. Эксперимент 2024 жылы Павлодар облысы, Зангар ауылындағы орта мектепте үшінші және төртінші сыныптың 51 оқушысының қатысуымен жүргізілді. Зерттеу аралас әдістерге негізделіп, алдын ала және кейінгі диагностика құрылымында жүзеге асырылды. Балалардың адамгершілік дамуын бағалау үшін М.И. Шилова әдісі, Р.Р. Калинаның «Әңгімені аяқта» әдістемесі және Р.М. Калинаның «Сюжеттік суреттер» әдістемесі қолданылды.

Сандық нәтижелерге сәйкес, жоғары деңгейдегі оқушылардың үлесі 32%-дан 38%-ға дейін артты, ал төмен деңгейдегі оқушылардың үлесі 15%-дан 3%-ға дейін төмендеді. Бұл өзгерістер статистикалық тұрғыдан мәнді болды ($\chi^2 = 9.62$, р < 0.01; Коэннің d = 0.47). Сапалық талдау нәтижесінде балалардың адамгершілік сөздік қоры байып, эмпатиясы күшейіп, моральдық таңдауларды негіздеу қабілеті жетілді.

Зерттеу нәтижелері мультфильмдердің мұқият іріктеліп, жүйелі білім беру үдерісіне енгізілген жағдайда бастауыш сынып оқушыларының адамгершілік құндылықтарын, эмпатиясын және этикалық ойлауын дамытуға тиімді құрал бола алатынын дәлелдейді. Сонымен қатар, зерттеу шектеулерді де мойындайды: үлгінің шағын көлемі, аймақтық шеңбер және араласудың қысқа мерзімі. Болашақ зерттеулер үлгіні кеңейтуге, ұзақ мерзімді дизайнды қолдануға және мультфильмдерді басқа педагогикалық құралдармен салыстыруға бағытталуы қажет.

Тірек сөздер: мультфильм, адамгершілік тәрбие, адамгершілік құндылықтар, бастауыш мектеп жасындағы балалар, үйірме, бастауыш сынып, адамгершілік, құндылық

НРАВСТВЕННОЕ ВОСПИТАНИЕ ШКОЛЬНИКОВ НАЧАЛЬНЫХ КЛАССОВ С ПОМОШЬЮ МУЛЬТФИЛЬМОВ

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается одна из актуальных проблем современного образования — нравственное воспитание детей в условиях глобализации и технологических изменений. Период обучения в начальной школе является сензитивным этапом формирования ценностных ориентаций, моделей поведения и социальной ответственности. Несмотря на признанный воспитательный потенциал анимации, эмпирические исследования её системного использования в нравственном воспитании остаются ограниченными, особенно в казахстанском контексте.

Цель исследования — разработка и экспериментальная апробация образовательной коллекции мультфильмов, отобранных по педагогическим критериям, и оценка её влияния на уровень нравственного воспитания младших школьников. Эксперимент был проведён в 2024 году в средней школе села Зангар Павлодарской области с участием 51 ученика 3-х и 4-х классов. Исследование реализовано в смешанном дизайне с пред- и посттестовой диагностикой. Для оценки уровня нравственного развития использовались методика М.И. Шиловой, метод «Закончите рассказ» Р.Р. Калининой и метод «Сюжетные картинки» Р.М. Калининой.

Количественный анализ показал, что доля учащихся с высоким уровнем нравственного воспитания увеличилась с 32% до 38%, а доля с низким уровнем снизилась с 15% до 3%. Эти изменения оказались статистически значимыми ($\chi^2 = 9.62$, p < 0.01; d Коэна = 0.47). Качественный анализ выявил расширение нравственного словаря детей, рост эмпатии и способность аргументировать моральные выборы.

Полученные данные подтверждают, что тщательно подобранные мультфильмы, включённые в структурированную образовательную программу, могут служить эффективным средством формирования моральных ценностей, эмпатии и этического мышления у младших школьников. В то же время признаются ограничения исследования: небольшой объём выборки, региональные рамки и краткосрочность программы. Дальнейшие исследования должны включать расширение выборки, продольные дизайны и сравнительный анализ мультфильмов с другими педагогическими инструментами.

Ключевые слова: мультфильм, нравственное воспитание, нравственные ценности, дети младшего школьного возраста, кружок, начальная школа, гуманность, ценность

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