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Teachers' Values as Predictors of Socio-Psychological Safety in a Classroom

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Abstract

Turning to the analysis of risk and protection factors of the learning environment, the role of the teacher remains unexplored. Among various characteristics of the teacher, it is necessary to highlight the importance of a special class of phenomena - values and value orientations. Values form a holistic motivational structure and integrate into one system with other components, such as attitudes and behavior. The purpose of this study is to understand the influence of the values of the teacher on the socio-psychological safety of the classroom. The focus of the study is on the following questions: Do the teacher's value orientations affect the class's socio-psychological safety? If so, what particular values affect the safety of the class? In addition, how do they relate to each other? In the framework of the acmeological approach, we used quantitative research methods: structural equation modeling (SEM), comparative analysis. Technique: "Adolescence socio-cultural safety index", the Schwartz Value Survey and the Portrait Values Questionnaire. The study sample consisted of 38 teachers and their 510 students at the age of 11-16 years. It was concluded that the values of the teacher influence the socio-psychological safety of the classroom, which determines the importance of the acmeological aspect of the teacher's personality analysis. The basis of a safe educational environment depends on self-transcendent and conservative values of the teacher. The results of the study can be applied to create a safe learning environment of the school.

Keywords: socio-psychological safety, teacher, conservative values, self-transcendent values, student-teacher relationship.

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Introduction

The relevance of the study is due to the growth of deviations in the youth environment. Students' antisocial behavior has a negative impact on students and teachers (Allen, Bird & Chhoa, 2018). According to our definition, the key role in the safety of the learning environment belongs not to the autonomous characteristics of different aspects of the learning environment, but the quality of their interrelation. One of the areas of the analysis of such interrelation is the analysis within the teacher-student system. As McGrath and Van Bergen emphasize (2015), children's behavior problems have consistently been associated with a poor-quality teacher-student relationship. The attention of scientists to the study of teacher-student interaction is characterized by a number of works, which note the students with antisocial behaviour may be prone to a problematic cycle of negative teacher-student interactions, teacher-student conflict may lead to further behaviour difficulties (Pardini, Lochman & Powell, 2007). For example, elevated levels of teacher-student conflict and low levels of teacher-student closeness in early childhood have been found to predict later behaviour problems, such as physical aggression (Hughes, Cavell & Willson, 2001; O'Connor, Collins & Supplee, 2012; Runions, 2014), students with higher student-teacher conflict were more likely to be victims (Marengo et al., 2018). Conversely, teachers' aversion to aggression contributed to peer rejection of aggression (Roorda et al., 2014). The characteristics of the learning environment that enhance respectful and caring interaction between teachers and their students decrease aggressive behavior and determine a safe learning environment, positive motivations and emotions of students (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hugener et al., 2009). In the scientific literature, while confirming the importance of the teacher's personality for the safety of educational environment, very few works reveal the cause of this influence (Ki, 2019; Suvorova, 2011).

Purpose of the study

In-line with previous research, showing the relationship between teacher personality and classroom safety (Khusainova, Gilemkhanova, 2019) we predicted that students' self-awareness of psychological safety of the learning environment would be associated with (1) focusing the teacher on the value of safety, both at the level of normative ideals and at the level of personal priorities; (2) the dominance of the teacher's social values. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the influence of the values of the teacher on the socio-psychological safety of the classroom. The focus of the study is on the following questions: 1) Do the teacher's value orientations affect the class's socio-psychological safety? 2) If so, what particular values affect the safety of the class? In addition, how do they relate to each other?

Literature review

Studying the mechanisms that cause quality of teacher-student relationship, there is a well-established link between personal and professional characteristics of the teacher and psychological well-being of students in the classroom. For example, the clarity of instructions, given by teacher, was negatively related to anxiety in class (Lazarides & Raufelder, 2021), the subjectivity of the teacher as an environment-forming factor in the safety and humanization of the educational environment, its protection from violence (Suvorova, 2011). At the same time, there are scientific works considering the safety of the educational environment from the point of view of its physical protection, for example, in the framework of the involvement of teachers in the policy of school shooting (Hara, 2019).

One of conceptual frameworks for classroom interactions belongs to Pianta and Hamre (2001). An emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support characterize classroom interactions of students and influence on their school achievements according to these authors. Another conceptual framework for classroom interactions is the concept of teacher professional development (Mitina & Bartsevich, 2012). The main provisions of this concept can be formulated as follows: 1) the objects of development are such integral teacher characteristics as orientation, competence, flexibility; 2) fundamental conditions are the transition to a high level of professional self-awareness; 3) a main psychological mechanism is the transformation of the teacher's own life activity into the subject of their practical transformation. According to this concept, the authors accentuate the question of the teacher's responsibility and influence on psychological safety of students. Authors confirmed theoretically those teachers who realize the development model and organize the psychological safety conditions for creative development of students. In the adaptive model, teachers had low levels to interfere with the creation of conditions for students' psychological safety. However, the impact of personal characteristics of the teacher to psychological safety of school was not subject to special laboratory research (Mitina & Bartsevich, 2012). The area which has received little research attention when examining teacher-student relationship is the correlation of teachers' values and students' self-awareness of psychological safety of the learning environment. Values form a holistic motivational structure and integrate into one system with other components, such as attitudes and behavior (Schwartz, 2008). At the same time, values and value orientations are a powerful means of mediating the relationship in different human systems, including the student-teacher system (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015). According to our opinion, teacher's values are the central mechanism of influence the teacher personality on the safety of the educational environment. It is important to take into account that the value systems of different societies change in such a way that the nature of these changes have significant economic, political and social consequences (Yanitskiy et al., 2014), especially considering that the teacher is translator of the norms of activity and thinking.

As stated by researcher Laurie Brady (2011), teaching is values-laden, «in one sense teachers are inevitably

social and moral educators» (p. 56). Therefore, in Russian scientific publications, close attention is paid to the culture of the teacher as a predictor of the safety of the educational environment. According to Baeva and Semikin (2005) the most important factor and condition for maintaining a safe environment is psychological culture, which causes pedagogical activity and pedagogical interaction. Thus, psychological culture is mechanism of personal self-regulation, which ensures effective, safe and humane interaction with people (ibid.). Therefore, one of the most important goals in the training of future teachers could be to determine educational strategies that meet the requirements of humanism and personality development and help the future teacher to actualize their values and meaning of activity and pass them on to the child, realize their creative potential and involve students in different activities (Klimov, 2005). The significance of this underlies the birth of a new subject - "axiopedagogy", focused on the development of humanistic values (Pogodaeva, 2018). National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools states that one consistently overlooked factor in the values education is "the impact of the teacher's own personal values, and the way these values are expressed in classroom teaching"(Brady, 2011, p. 56). However, despite evidence of an association between the value-motivational framework of the teacher and safety in the classroom little is known about the mechanisms of interpersonal influence in the student-teacher system.

Methodology

When analyzing values, we were guided by Schwartz's concept of the motivational goal of value orientations and the universalism of basic human values. Schwartz (2007) understands basic values as desirable goals that go beyond specific situations, differ from each other in importance and are guiding principles in lives. Schwartz proceeded from the fact that the differences between values are mainly related to the type of motivational goals that they express. Therefore, he grouped the individual values into categories of values in accordance with the commonality of their goals (fig.1). The theoretical model of the relationship between ten motivational types of values by Schwartz is based on the theory that all values are divided into social and individual, which are opposing options. Thus, Schwartz's theoretical model allows us to describe the general scheme of conflict and compatibility between different value types. Values are considered by Schwartz as regulators of behavior, personality relations at two levels of the value system - the level of normative ideals and the level of personal priorities. The level of normative ideals reflects the values of the individual at the level of beliefs. The structure of values at the level of normative ideals has the greatest influence on the personality, but it does not always manifest itself in real social behavior. Values at the level of individual priorities are most often manifested in the social behavior of an individual. The difference in indicators for the types of values at two levels reflects the value pressure that is carried out through socialization, the reference group and traditions.

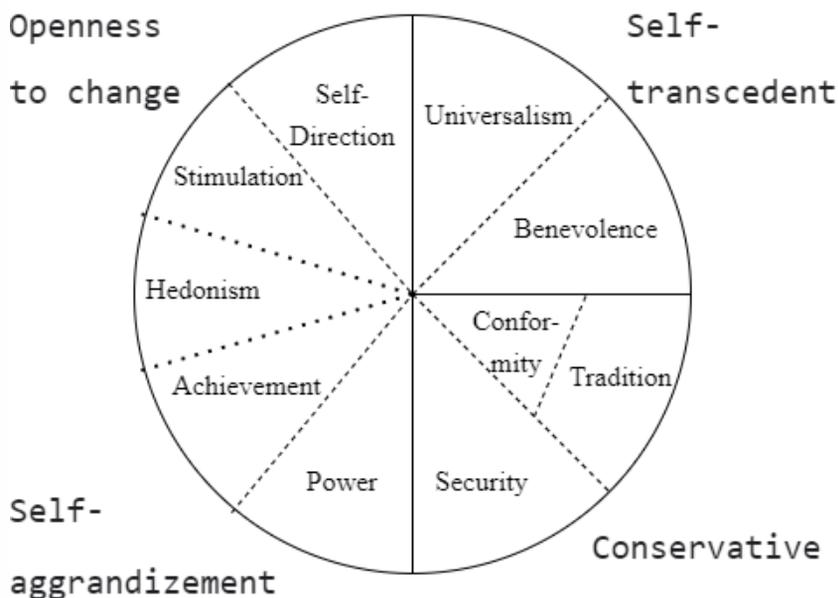


Figure 1. Theoretical model of the relationship between ten motivational types of values (according to Schwartz)

According to the model, value types form two bipolar axes: 1) openness to change as opposed to conservatism, and 2) self-aggrandizement as opposed to self-transcendence.

Within the framework of this model, we will pay special attention to the dichotomy "self-exaltation - self-transcendence", which correlates with the axis of the study of values "personal - social" identified by Rokeach (1973) and subsequently confirmed by Bilsky and Schwartz (1994). At the same time, that individualism and collectivism in the traditional sense, defined by Hofstede (1980), as characterizing social culture as a whole, is especially significant for the category of teachers as agents of broadcasting the values of social culture.

In the current research, the participants were 510 Russian-speaking students aged from 11 to 16 ($M_{age} = 13.57$, $SD_{age} = 1.49$), including 45.6% males and 54.4% females. In addition, the number of teachers involved in this research was 38, including 95% females and 5% males ($M_{age} = 41.21$, $SD_{age} = 8.97$, $min = 25$, $max = 60$). These teachers, on average, had 18.42 years of teaching experience ($SD = 9.10$, $min = 4$, $max = 38$). Nearly 10% of the participants were going to teach social studies; 39%, Russian, Tatar and foreign languages; 42%, science and mathematics; and 9%, the arts and gym. Table 1 shows more details about the teachers' demography and teaching activity characteristic.

Table 1. Demographics of Research Informants

Demographic	Number	Percent (%)
Gender		
Female	36	95
Male	2	5
Age (in years)		
20-30	6	15.79
31-40	11	28.95
41-50	14	36.84
51-60	7	18.42
Teaching Experiences (in years)		
0-10	10	26.32
11-20	11	28.95
21-30	14	36.84
31-40	3	7.89

All participants were informed of the objective of the study. All the scales were filled out anonymously during class hours. Standard instructions about the requirements of this research were given to all the participants in the classrooms by a researcher. Data were collected in a paper/pencil form. When the participants were filling out the questionnaire, a researcher answered questions about the items in the questionnaire. The results were collected in such a way as to ensure comparability of students and their class teacher.

The Schwartz Value Survey and the Portrait Values Questionnaire (Karandashev, 2004) measured teachers' values. Students' socio-psychological safety in classroom was measured by author's technique "Adolescence socio-cultural safety index". Psychometric characteristics of a technique are provided: Reliability ($\alpha_{Cr} = 0.76$), validity ($r = 0.71$), discriminatory power ($\delta = 0.9$). Technique "Adolescence socio-cultural safety index" has general scale "Index of sociocultural safety" and three additional scales: socio-psychological vulnerability; socio-psychological disintegration; virtual authorization.

To analyses teachers' values as predictors of socio-psychological safety in a classroom, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses. The goodness-of-fit indices indicated that the models fit the data well: CMIN=17.06; df=19; p=0.57; GFI=0.940; CFI=1.000; RMSEA=0.000; Pclose=0.725.

The data analysis was performed in SPSS AMOS v.23. First of all, descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables of interest and control variables were computed. Then we applied structural equation model, using maximum likelihood estimation.

Results

Table 2 and 3 shows the means, standard deviations for all variables.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations and ranks of teachers’ normative values and values at the level of individual priorities (N = 38)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Normative values</i>			<i>Individual priorities</i>		
	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank
<i>Conformity</i>	5.33	1.10	3	4.31	0.69	4
<i>Tradition</i>	5.02	1.19	6	4.14	0.78	6
<i>Benevolence</i>	5.44	1.09	1	4.67	0.73	1
<i>Universalism</i>	5.33	1.14	3	4.46	0.71	3
<i>Self-Direction</i>	4.97	0.97	7	4.16	0.81	5
<i>Stimulation</i>	4.39	1.08	9	3.66	0.97	7
<i>Hedonism</i>	4.73	1.43	8	3.63	1.10	8
<i>Achievement</i>	5.04	1.03	5	3.54	0.98	9
<i>Power</i>	4.09	1.49	10	2.86	0.91	10
<i>Security</i>	5.39	1.12	2	4.54	0.66	2

Table 3. Means and standard deviations of indicators of socio-psychological safety (N = 510)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Socio-psychological vulnerability</i>	13.5	4.23
<i>Socio-psychological disintegration</i>	10.91	3.84
<i>Virtual authorization</i>	15.96	4.44
<i>Index of safety</i>	12.55	2.35

Teachers' normative values was correlated with students' evaluation of socio-psychological safety (table 4). There are negative correlations between socio-psychological vulnerability and such normative values as Security and Universalism and between Virtual authorization and Security and Tradition. So, the indicators of socio-psychological safety of classroom are related with the type of value, which based on understanding tolerance, respect, mutual aid and protection of the well-being of all people and nature.

Table 4. Correlation coefficients between indicators of socio-psychological safety of classroom and teachers' normative values (N = 38)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Socio-psychological vulnerability</i>	-0.14	-0.20	-0.20	-0.31*	-0.17	-0.08	-0.14	-0.16	-0.02	-0.35*
<i>Socio-psychological disintegration</i>	0.05	-0.17	0.04	-0.01	0.15	0.09	-0.07	0.09	0.02	-0.12
<i>Virtual authorization</i>	-0.10	-0.35*	-0.13	-0.27	-0.02	0.03	-0.12	-0.24	-0.11	-0.36*
<i>Index of safety</i>	-0.05	-0.26	-0.09	-0.21	0.01	0.05	-0.13	-0.12	0.02	-0.31

Note: Significant correlations at $*p < .05$

1- Conformity; 2- Tradition; 3- Benevolence; 4- Universalism; 5- Self-Direction; 6- Stimulation; 7- Hedonism; 8- Achievement; 9- Power; 10- Security.

Teachers' values at the level of individual priorities - Conformity and Benevolence has negative correlations with Socio-psychological vulnerability (Table 5). Virtual authorization as well as Index of safety. Thus, we can conclude that school safety is connected with all teachers' values. linked to conservatism and self-transcendence according to the Schwartz model.

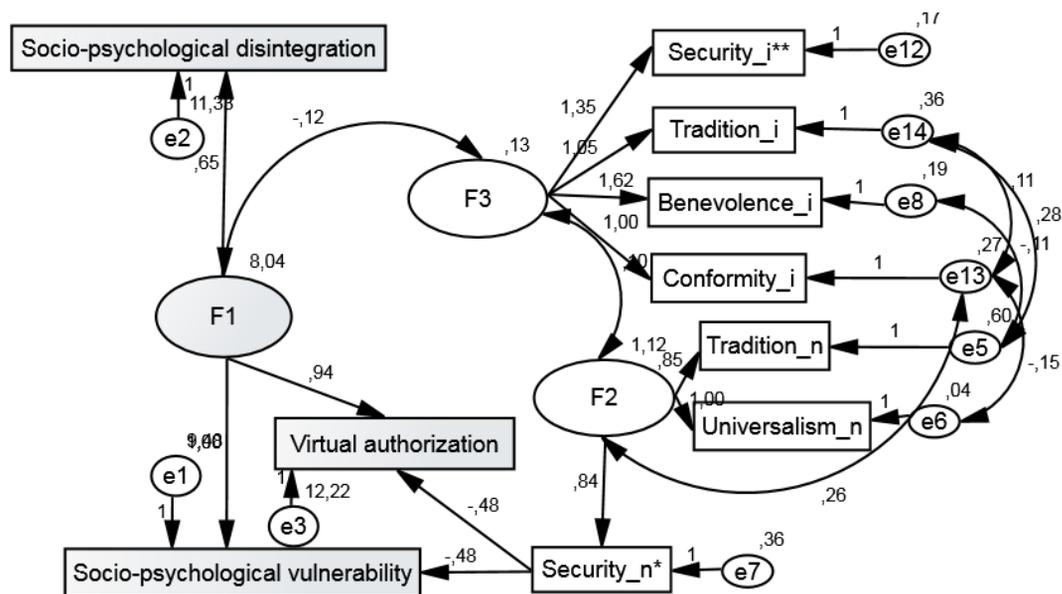
Table 5. Correlation coefficients between indicators of socio-psychological safety of classroom and teachers' values at the level of individual priorities (N = 38)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Socio-psychological vulnerability</i>	-0.24	-0.25	-0.34	-0.27	-0.17	0.28	0.00	0.14	0.18	-0.23
<i>Socio-psychological disintegration</i>	-0.29	-0.20	0.06	-0.09	0.05	0.19	-0.09	0.20	0.17	0.01
<i>Virtual authorization</i>	-0.35	-0.17	-0.08	-0.26	-0.08	0.15	-0.05	-0.03	0.19	-0.27
<i>Index of safety</i>	-0.35	-0.25	-0.14	-0.29	-0.11	0.20	-0.07	0.14	0.22	-0.22

Note: Significant correlations at $*p < .05$

1- Conformity; 2- Tradition; 3- Benevolence; 4- Universalism; 5- Self-Direction; 6- Stimulation; 7- Hedonism; 8- Achievement; 9- Power; 10- Security.

According to the model presented in the figure 2, the safety of the educational environment (F1) is related to the values of the teacher at the level of individual preferences (F3) and is mediated through the value of Security with the values of the teacher at the level of normative ideals (F2). That is, the most important for the socio-psychological safety of the class is the teacher's normative idea of the value of security, as well as the teacher's self-transcendent and conservative values assigned at the individual level.



CMIN=71,245; df=26; p=,000; GFI=,973; CFI=,980; RMSEA=,059; Pclose=,180

Figure 2. Model of involvement of the teacher's values in the socio-psychological safety of the class

Note: F1 - socio-psychological safety; F2- factor of teacher's normative values; F3- factor of teacher's individual priorities; *n - the level of normative values; **i - the level of individual priorities.

Discussions

The discussion was held around the research questions. 1. Do the teacher's value orientations affect the class's socio-psychological safety? What particular values affect the safety of the class? In addition, how they relate to each other? Based on the data of the correlation analysis and the model of involvement of the teacher's values in the socio-psychological safety of the class, our hypothesis about the influence of teacher values on classroom safety was confirmed. The normative level values that affect the safety of the educational environment are safety, tradition and universalism. The values at the level of individual priorities that affect the safety of the educational environment are Security, Tradition, Benevolence and Conformity. These values are dominant basically according our study. The highest level have Security, Conformity, Benevolence and Universalism in the system of personal values of teachers, the least significant values are Stimulation, Hedonism and Power. The importance of the values of preservation (conservatism) and self-transcendence (Security, Conformity, Benevolence and Universalism) increases due to the decrease of the values of self-eggrandizement (Power, Achievement) and openness to change (Self-Direction, Stimulation).

Therefore, in line with Schwartz's theoretical model, teachers are dominated by values associated with conservatism and transcendence, that is, those values that express mainly the interests of the group as opposed to individualistic interests. According to Magamedov, this is the meaning of the humanism of teachers (Magamedov, 2008). It is important to note that the structure of teachers' values is harmonious, there are no opposing dominant values in it. It is also significant that the discrepancies between the level of normative ideals and personal priorities are minimal, i.e. the category of teachers most fully fits into the Russian normative and cultural space. The results are in line with Gryaznova and Magun (2011), who approve that Eastern Europeans have adherence to conservatism and hierarchy, according the Openness to Change – Conservative axis, the Russian-speaking population is closer to the pole of conservative values. In our study, as well as in the study of colleagues Gryaznova and Magun (2011), it was shown that the average Russian teacher highly values safety. Material values among Eastern European teachers are also weakly expressed - only 6% of a sample of Lithuanian teachers indicated the importance of material values (Martishauskiene, 2012). According to Magometov (2008), who analyzed values depending on the teacher's success, the value types of kindness and universalism have a significantly higher status in the hierarchy of values of successful teachers. Successful teachers are distinguished by the greater significance for them of humanistic, moral values. This is probably an explanation for the influence of transcendental and conservative values on the safety of the class. At the same time, another study showed that the factor of attitudes towards a pupil as a value and a subject of development is weakly expressed (Aristova & Suvorova, 2012). The least pronounced and most alarming indicator of understanding and acceptance of others. Probably, the discrepancy is due to different models of teacher behavior (adaptive or value-based).

Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to explore association between teachers' values and safety of learning environment. The first hypothesis that there would be an association between between teachers' values and safety of learning environment was supported. This is in-line with previous research which suggests that teacher-student relationship relate to safety of learning environment (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015; Hughes & Cavell, 1999; O'Connor, Collins & Supplee, 2012).

In modern conditions characterized by an unformed system of value orientations or its disintegration, a certain loss of the meaning of life, which complicates the socialization and self-realization of the personality, the personality of the teacher remains the most important factor in the development of the value system of students (Yanitskiy et al., 2014). In this regard, the value system of the teacher himself is becoming increasingly important. As a result, value orientations become the most important component in the structure of professionally significant qualities of teachers.

The values of the teacher influence the socio-psychological safety of the classroom, which determines the importance of the acmeological aspect of the teacher's personality analysis. The basis of a safe educational environment depends from self-transcendent and conservative values of the teacher. The perspective of the study is to reveal the role of environment of the school. The results of the study should be useful for teachers' training and retraining, the supervising and psychological and pedagogical support of a teacher, as well as recommendations how to create safe educational environment of the school.

Research limitations

The limitations are related to the fact that the study of the values has sociocultural determination. That is why results are relevant only for the Eastern European population. It is also important to check the obtained data within the framework of the "forming" experiment.

Conflicts of interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contributions

Gilemkhanova E. N. (Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Methodology; Visualization; Writing – original draft), Khusainova R. M. (Data curation; Supervision; Writing – review & editing), Khairutdinova M. R. (Data curation; Supervision; Writing – review & editing).

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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