



Folk Pedagogy and Folklore in Modern Preschool Education: Educational Potential, Emotional Maturity and Preservation of Cultural Identity

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a theoretical justification for the educational potential of folk pedagogy and folklore in contemporary preschool education and describes pedagogical practices involving their systematic application. Five aspects are examined: folk pedagogy as a system of values and educational traditions; the role of folklore genres in the formation of preschoolers' emotional and social maturity; ways to integrate folklore content into current educational programs; the use of folk games, songs, and fairy tales in working with children with special educational needs; and the significance of folk pedagogy for preserving cultural identity. The theoretical foundation is based on the works of M. G. Stelmakhovych, A. M. Bohush, N. V. Lysenko, H. H. Vashchenko, T. S. Kyrylenko, and O. V. Lisovets. The empirical basis consists of the results of pedagogical observation of 28 children aged 3–4 years (November 2021–January 2022): over the course of three months of systematic use of folk games, songs, and fairy tales, the proportion of children able to verbalize emotions increased from 35% to 75%; the proportion of conflicts resolved without the teacher's intervention increased from 20% to 65%; the proportion of children who avoided group games decreased from 57% to 18%. It is argued that folk pedagogy appears to correspond to the nature of child development, lays the cultural foundations of personality, and may be considered an integral component of preschool education.

KEYWORDS

folk pedagogy, folklore, preschool education, emotional development, cultural identity, ethnology, inclusive education, socialization.



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Народна педагогіка та фольклор у сучасній дошкільній освіті: освітній потенціал, емоційна зрілість та збереження культурної ідентичності

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СТАТТЯ	АНОТАЦІЯ
Дослідницька DOI: 10.70651/3041-248X/2026.4.05 Отримана: 24.02.2026 р. Прийнята: 29.03.2026 р. Опублікована: 09.04.2026 р. Авторське право © 2026 автора Цей твір ліцензовано на умовах Ліцензії Creative Commons «Із Зазначенням Авторства – Некомерційна 4.0 Міжнародна» (CC BY-NC 4.0).	У цій статті пропонується теоретичне обґрунтування освітнього потенціалу народної педагогіки та фольклору в сучасній дошкільній освіті та описуються педагогічні практики їх систематичного застосування. Розглядаються п'ять аспектів: народна педагогіка як система цінностей та освітніх традицій; роль фольклорних жанрів у формуванні емоційної та соціальної зрілості дошкільників; шляхи інтеграції фольклорного змісту в сучасні освітні програми; використання народних ігор, пісень та казок у роботі з дітьми з особливими освітніми потребами; значення народної педагогіки для збереження культурної ідентичності. Теоретична основа базується на роботах М. Г. Стельмахович, А. М. Богуш, Н. В. Лисенко, Г. Г. Ващенко, Т. С. Кириленко та О. В. Лісовець. Емпіричну основу складають результати педагогічного спостереження за 28 дітьми віком 3–4 роки (листопад 2021 – січень 2022): протягом трьох місяців систематичного використання народних ігор, пісень та казок частка дітей, здатних вербалізувати емоції, зросла з 35 % до 75 %; частка конфліктів, вирішених без втручання вчителя, зросла з 20 % до 65 %; частка дітей, які уникали групових ігор, зменшилася з 57 % до 18 %. Стверджується, що народна педагогіка, як видається, відповідає характеру розвитку дитини, закладає культурні основи особистості та може вважатися невід'ємним компонентом дошкільної освіти.



КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

народна педагогіка, фольклор, дошкільна освіта, емоційний розвиток, культурна ідентичність, етнологія, інклюзивна освіта, соціалізація.

1. Introduction

Although culturally grounded approaches to early childhood education are receiving increasing attention, the place of folk pedagogy in preschool practice is still described unevenly. It is more often visible in everyday routines than described as a clearly defined method. In group settings, it tends to take the form of simple, familiar actions. For example, when children use a counting rhyme to decide who begins a game, they follow a shared rhythm, count along, and take turns as part of the same activity. These elements are not introduced separately; they unfold within the flow of play itself. These elements are not introduced separately or explained in advance; they become meaningful as part of the activity the children are already involved in.

2. Literature Review

In Ukrainian scholarship, folk pedagogy has been analyzed quite deeply. Stelmakhovych M. G. defined it as “a multi-volume oral textbook of upbringing, preserved in the memory of the people since ancient times” [1]. Vashchenko G. G. in “The Educational Ideal” argued that an educational system without a foundation in folk tradition loses its inner moral core [2]. Bogush A. M. and Lysenko N. V. demonstrated that folklore in preschool settings simultaneously develops speech, broadens cognitive understanding, and shapes value orientations [3]. Each of these positions reflects one essential feature of folk pedagogy: it has its own internal logic, which can be described but is difficult to replace with a set of isolated techniques.

Russia’s full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine has heightened the issue of cultural identity to a level that goes far beyond the boundaries of pedagogical discourse. Preschool age is a sensitive period for the assimilation of cultural codes: it is during this time that primary notions of “one’s own” and “the other” and the emotional foundation of national self-awareness are formed [11]. Therefore, turning to folk pedagogy in working with preschoolers today is a pedagogically sound response to a real challenge.

3. Problem Statement

The purpose of this article is to theoretically substantiate the educational potential of folk pedagogy and folklore in preschool education and to describe the experience of their systematic application. To this end, the following tasks were addressed: to reveal folk pedagogy as a holistic system of values and educational traditions, to analyze the influence of folklore genres on the emotional and social maturity of preschoolers, to identify mechanisms for integrating folklore content into current educational programs, to characterize the application of folk forms in working with children with special educational needs, and to substantiate the role of folk pedagogy in preserving the child’s cultural identity.

4. Methods and Materials

This is a qualitative study employing an observational design. At the theoretical level, the study involved an analysis of the scientific literature, a systematization of pedagogical concepts, and an analysis of current regulatory documents in the field of preschool education. Empirical data were collected using the method of structured pedagogical observation.

Between November 2021 and January 2022, two naturally formed preschool groups were observed, each with 14 children. In total, 28 children aged 3–4 took part, evenly divided between boys and girls. Eighteen had previous experience attending a preschool, while ten were in the group for the first time and had no experience of prolonged interaction with peers. Observation sessions were conducted two to three times a week for 30–40 minutes. Three reference points were recorded: November (beginning), December (midpoint), and January (conclusion). The subjects of observation were free play, organized activities, conflict situations, and routine moments.

The data are of a pedagogical observational nature and are not the result of a controlled experiment. Several limitations should be acknowledged: the sample is small (28 children from a single institution), which restricts the generalizability of findings; the observation period of three months is insufficient to assess long-term developmental effects. The observations rely mainly on qualitative

judgments made during the study and were not supported by standardized psychodiagnostic tools. This makes direct comparison with other studies less straightforward. The figures presented are best understood as indicative patterns rather than definitive outcomes.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Folk Pedagogy as a Source of Values and Educational Traditions

Folk pedagogy is a system in which each element serves more than one function and none exists in isolation from the others. M. G. Stelmakhovych identifies five such elements: words (fairy tales, proverbs, riddles, lullabies, incantations), games (active and verbal folk games), nature (observation, ritual references to the seasons and natural phenomena), art (song, dance, embroidery, carving, pottery), and collective labor [1]. A lullaby is both word and music; a folk game combines movement, speech, and a social model of behavior; a ritual act synthesizes art, ritual, and labor practices. The depth of the educational influence of folk forms is therefore difficult to replicate using any single academic method: where a method affects one dimension, a folk game or song engages the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions simultaneously.

To systematize the main elements of folk pedagogy and to reveal their multidimensional educational impact, they are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Elements of Folk Pedagogy and Their Multidimensional Educational Impact

Element of Folk Pedagogy	Forms of Implementation	Educational Functions	Psychological and Pedagogical Impact	Example in Preschool Practice
Word (folklore)	Fairy tales, proverbs, riddles, lullabies, incantations	Transmission of knowledge, moral norms, language development	Develops figurative thinking, linguistic intuition, emotional connection with culture	Reading a fairy tale before sleep; using proverbs in daily situations
Game (folk games)	Active, circle, and verbal games	Socialization, development of behavioral rules, coordination	Enhances communication, self-regulation, and sense of group belonging	Circle dances, role-based games with rules
Nature	Observation, seasonal rituals, symbolism of natural phenomena	Formation of ecological thinking, cyclical perception of the world	Develops observation, sense of harmony, cause-and-effect understanding	Observing seasonal changes, discussing folk signs
Art	Song, dance, embroidery, carving, pottery	Aesthetic education, creative development	Forms emotional sensitivity, artistic taste, imagination	Learning folk songs, decorative activities
Collective labor	Joint activities, ritual actions, mutual help	Development of responsibility, cooperation, labor skills	Builds sense of belonging, social roles, value of shared results	Group cleaning, preparing for celebrations, shared tasks

Source: Completed by the author.

In "The Educational Ideal," Vaschenko G. G. argued that an educational system without a foundation in folk tradition lacks an internal moral core [2]. If a child does not acquire the experience of cultural belonging in early childhood through living forms - play, song, ritual, and collective action - it is much more difficult to restore this connection later. Value orientations not reinforced by the emotional experiences of early childhood remain at the level of declarations and do not form stable behavioral dispositions.

Bogush A. M. and Lysenko N. V. substantiated an important distinction: folklore in a preschool institution is direct educational content. It is not an illustration of a story about culture - it is culture itself, presented to the child from within [3]. When a teacher reads a fairy tale to children, they are immersed in the linguistic and imagery system of the people, assimilating its archetypes and moral-value frameworks. When children dance in a circle, they practically master a model of equal interaction in which every participant is both visible and needed. In practice, preschool children are more likely to engage through activity, with participation often proving more effective than direct explanation.

The empirical material in this article draws on the author's experience as a teacher-methodologist at a preschool institution in Lviv, where folk pedagogy has been integrated into daily practice over many years. Lysenko N. V. characterizes this approach as "the pedagogy of Ukrainian preschool education," where folk tradition is the living fabric of daily practice [4].

5.2. The Role of Folklore in the Development of a Child's Emotional and Social Maturity

Preschoolers think in images, learn through action, and master skills through repetition. These patterns of cognitive development are described in the works of Piaget and Vygotsky. Folklore genres structurally correspond to them: rhythm and cyclical repetition satisfy the child's need for a predictable structure; figurative concreteness corresponds to the visual-figurative thinking that dominates at this age; the moral situation embodied in the fate of a fairy-tale character is internalized through experience, more effectively than through a direct explanation of the norm. Folk texts, songs, and games are naturally aligned with the way young children learn.

Kirilenko T. S. has shown that a child's emotional development is deeply connected to the assimilation of cultural models of experience [5]. Fairy-tale characters experience joy, sorrow, fear, anger, and the triumph of justice. By identifying with the hero, the child experiences these states within the safe space of fiction, which allows them to learn to recognize and name their own emotions without the risks associated with real-life situations. In her 2021 monograph, Trofailya N. D. confirmed that folk art is one of the most effective means of developing a preschooler's emotional sphere: it simultaneously influences the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of the personality [6], whereas specialized classes usually focus on only one of them.

Observational findings. Pedagogical observation confirmed this connection. At the beginning of the cycle, about 60–70% of children did not use verbal means to express their emotions - behavioral reactions predominated: crying, withdrawal, and physical aggression. After three months of regularly using folk tales, songs, and role-playing games based on folk stories, 70–80% of the children began using verbal expressions such as "I'm angry," "I'm sad," and "I want to play." It is noteworthy that the children applied these phrases to new situations: they learned how to speak for themselves rather than repeating a memorized template.

A parallel trend was observed regarding social maturity. At the start of the observation, ~80% of conflict situations required direct intervention by the teacher; after three months, this figure dropped to ~35%. The ability to engage in cooperative interaction increased from 30% to 70% of the children, with the first signs of independent compromise-seeking observed as early as 4–5 weeks after the start of regular classes. The explanation for these changes lies in the very structure of folk games. Circle games such as "Podolyanochka," "Mack," and "And We Were Sowing Millet" incorporate specific social actions into their structure: waiting one's turn, focusing on a partner, and conforming to a collective rhythm. The child masters these skills through their own physical and social experience of the game, through practice. At the beginning of the observation, 57% of children avoided group games; by the end, only 18% demonstrated difficulties in group interaction.

Interpretation. A distinct effect of folk songs was observed regarding speech activity during the morning circle. The rhythm and repetitiveness of song lyrics lower the threshold for speech anxiety: a child who is hesitant to speak in a dialogue finds it easier to join in choral singing. At the start of the study, about 35% of children actively spoke during the morning circle; after 2–3 months of regular singing practice, this figure rose to 75%. At the same time, there was a transition from parallel speech to genuine dialogue: children began to respond to each other's words after about 1.5–2 months. Shared rhythm and adult guidance helped the child stay involved until they could begin to act more independently, reflecting what is described as the zone of proximal development.

5.3. Integration of Ethnology into Contemporary Educational Curricula

The current regulatory framework for preschool education in Ukraine includes folklore content as a systematic component of the educational process. The "Ukrainian Environment" program (Bilan O. I., 2022) is organized around folk traditions and the natural environment: folk culture serves as the guiding principle for structuring activities [7]. The "Confident Start" educational program (approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, 2024) includes folk games and folklore texts in the areas of linguistic, artistic-aesthetic, and social-emotional development. The "Okrilennya" program (2023) uses folklore material in working with preschool-aged children. Lisovets O. V. views folklore studies as a system-forming component of patriotic education in preschool education, emphasizing its cross-cutting nature [8].

However, practice shows that the presence of folklore content in a program document does not guarantee its actual integration into the group's daily life. There is a significant gap between the declared component and actual practice, which is bridged through several complementary approaches.

The first approach involves organizing thematic events in accordance with the folk calendar. The pedagogical value of such events lies in the fact that the child actively participates in the celebration: moving, singing, performing ritual actions, and assimilating cultural content through physical and emotional experience. The following events have been implemented in practice: Kupala festivities “Oh, on Ivan’s Day, oh, on Kupala” (2015), “Feast of the Savior” (2015), and the event “Bloom, Our Language” for Independence Day (2011). Open classes on folklore were held for the teaching staff: “Without Willow and Viburnum, There Is No Ukraine” (2013), “From the Depths of the Folk Treasury I Draw the Wisdom of My Ancestors” (2014).

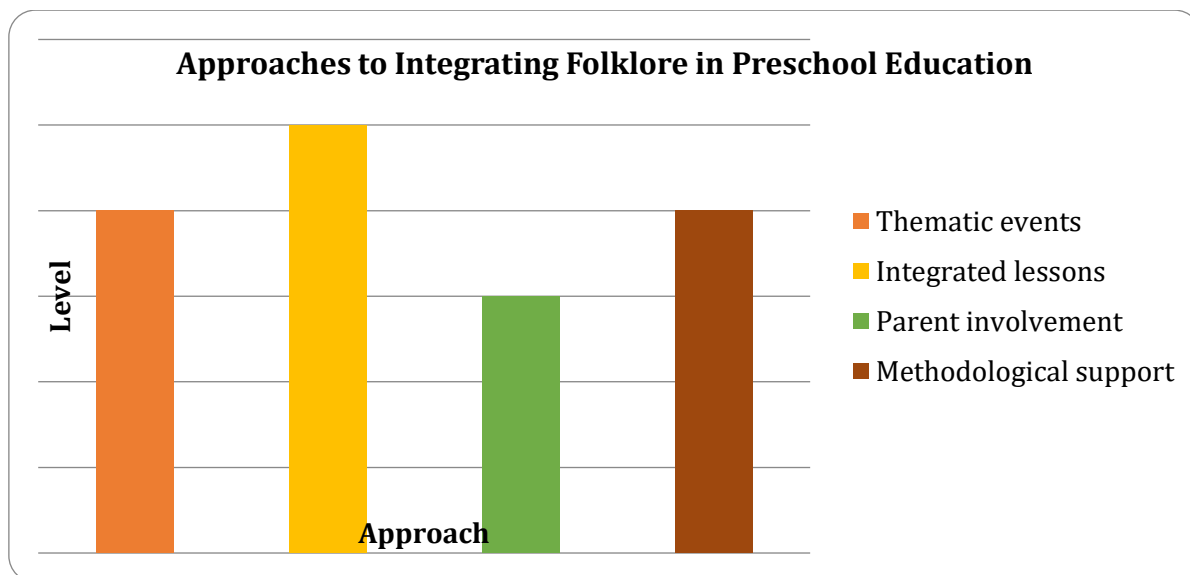


Figure 1. Approaches to integrating folklore into preschool educational practice

Source: Completed by the author

Thus, based on the analysis of the regulatory, institutional, technological and organizational foundations of the digital transformation of social protection, it has been established that its effectiveness during the recovery period is determined not so much by the implementation of individual IT solutions as by the formation of an integral sociotechnical system. Such a system should ensure territorial independence of access to support, increased targeting based on integrated data, reduction of administrative burden on recipients and personnel, a guaranteed level of cyber resilience and legal protection of personal data, as well as institutionally enshrined inclusivity.

The second approach involves integrated lessons, where folklore content serves as the core for simultaneously addressing several educational objectives. The lesson “The Journey of the Colorful Carriages” (2015) combined folk symbolism of colors, the development of mathematical concepts, and verbal activity; “Celebrating Candlemas” (2016) covered folk customs, artistic activities, and the formation of concepts regarding the changing seasons. Both were presented to methodologists in the Halytskyi District of Lviv as examples of interdisciplinary integration. Such lessons demonstrate that folklore material fits organically into any educational curriculum without requiring a separate module.

The third approach involves engaging parents. A workshop on making a motanka doll (2016) and a consultation titled “The Vyshyvanka in Our Lives” (2015) turned parents into active participants in the educational process. A child needs to see that folk practices exist at home as well: if the family also engages in what is discussed in class, the value of these practices increases. According to survey results (~22–25 parents), 80% noted positive changes in their children’s behavior following folklore activities; approximately 90% expressed a willingness to continue collaborating.

The fourth approach is methodological support for the teaching staff. Since the 2021–2022 academic year, more than 20 teachers have received support from a teacher methodologist. Many early-career educators want to use folklore but are unsure how to bring it into everyday lessons or when it starts to feel forced. This often becomes clearer in practice, especially during open classes and discussions of real situations. Watching it in action helps them feel more confident.

5.4. Traditional Games in Working with Children in Inclusive Groups

In traditional games, children can often take part without speaking. In a circle dance, a child can simply hold hands and move with others. For children who find verbal interaction difficult, this makes joining in easier.

In the groups observed, there were typically no more than three children with special educational needs. This number made it possible to combine an individualized approach with participation in shared activities. Among them were children with autism spectrum disorders. For them, folk forms with a clear rhythmic structure (hand clapping, clapping games, counting rhymes) provided a predictable sequence of sensory and motor stimuli, which reduced the risk of sensory overload and supported anxiety regulation. Kompanets N. M. described this neuropsychological mechanism in a 2023 guide: rhythmic practices activate self-regulation processes and reduce hyperarousal in children with developmental disorders [9]. Thus, the same folklore forms that serve a cultural-educational purpose in working with the entire group simultaneously perform a corrective-supportive function for children with developmental disorders.

Folk songs helped gradually involve children with limited verbal activity in group communication experiences, without the pressure of direct verbal contact. At first, the child simply sat nearby and listened; then they began to sing along involuntarily; eventually, they participated consciously. Fairy tale sessions in small groups (5–7 children) helped make social interaction more manageable and gave children a safe way to explore emotions through characters. Changes in how they understood these emotions usually became noticeable after 1–2 months of regular work.

To summarize the observed developmental effects of folklore-based activities for children with special educational needs, the main impact areas are presented in Figure 2.

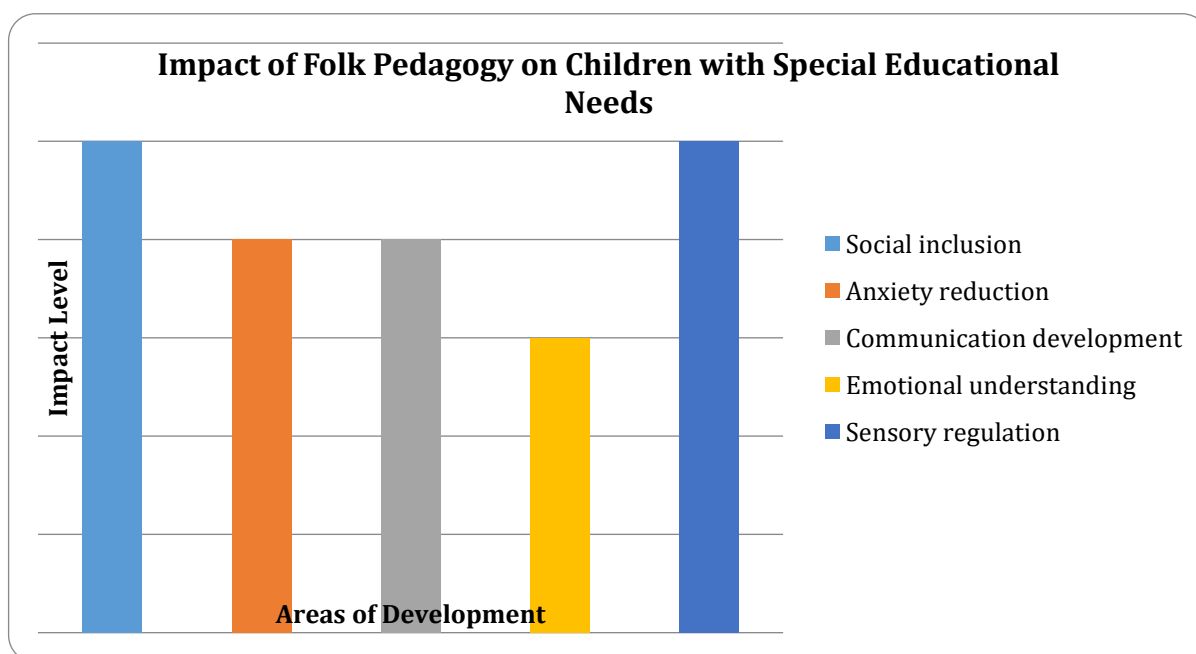


Figure 2. Impact of folk pedagogy practices on children with special educational needs

Source: Completed by the author.

The daily visual schedule cards also included familiar folk symbols, such as the sun, a bird, a tree, an ear of grain, and water. Because these images were already part of children's experience from folklore-based activities, they were readily recognized in the daily routine. In practice, the symbols acted as simple reference points within the flow of the day and seemed to ease transitions. In this way, the same material supported both cultural learning and elements of pedagogical support, without a clear separation into different types of activities. Peers' reactions to playing with children with special educational needs were generally positive. Shared play reduced social distance faster than teacher explanations.

5.5. The Educational Potential of Folk Pedagogy for Preserving Cultural Identity

A preschooler's cultural identity develops through experience, not abstract ideas. It comes from the sound of the native language, movement in dance, and shared moments in songs and games. Folk pedagogy works at this level. It reaches something that cognitive approaches alone cannot.

Loboda T. views ethnopedagogy as a tool for shaping national identity through socialization: cultural tradition here serves as the environment in which the child's development takes place [10]. This distinction is practically significant. When folk culture is the subject of a separate lesson, the child receives information about tradition. When it is the daily environment of the institution, the child grows into it. Stelmakhovich M. G. described precisely this mechanism: participation in living forms of culture leaves a mark that later determines the child's attitude toward their own people [1].

Zhurba K. O., Bekh I. D., and others demonstrated in their 2024 monograph that a stable cultural identity is formed only through the simultaneous influence on the cognitive, emotional-volitional, and behavioral dimensions of the personality [11]. Folk pedagogy engages all three in a single action: the child knows the song, experiences its collective performance, and reenacts the ritual action. Most didactic methods distribute these dimensions across different forms of work and only rarely bring them together.

Folk pedagogy is especially important when working with displaced children, who are now more common in preschool groups. When a child is separated from a familiar environment, they need something that feels known. This does not come from instruction alone. Familiar songs, stories, and games help restore a sense of safety and connection. In practice, counting rhymes, nursery rhymes, and circle dances were the first shared activities that bridged the social gap between a new child and the group faster than any words could. Manzheliy N., Fazan T., and Vashak O. emphasize that folk practices retain their role even in a multicultural environment: they provide the child with a cultural anchor from which they can open up to others without becoming closed off within their own tradition [12].

Many educators are unsure how to use folklore in everyday teaching. They may know it as a subject but have little experience applying it in the classroom. So it is often used for celebrations rather than regular learning.

This does not change through lectures or written guidelines. It changes when educators see it in use during open classes, shared reflection, and discussion of real situations. Such experience builds confidence in a way theory does not.

6. Conclusions

Theoretical analysis and the results of pedagogical observation confirm that folk pedagogy and folklore align with the nature of children's perception and are capable of addressing several educational objectives simultaneously. A three-month observation of 28 children aged 3–4 years recorded positive trends across all monitored indicators: the proportion of children who verbalize their own emotions increased from ~35% to 75%; the proportion of conflicts resolved without the teacher's intervention increased from 20% to 65%; the proportion of children who avoided group games decreased from 57% to 18%. These indicators represent indicative trends and require verification in larger samples using standardized psychodiagnostic tools.

Folk forms have also proven effective in working with children with special educational needs. The rhythmic predictability of games and songs reduces anxiety and the risk of sensory overload. Inclusion through joint activity opens the door to group experiences for children who find direct communication difficult. The practical value here lies in the fact that the same form of work serves both cultural education and remedial support.

For folklore to become part of everyday learning, it has to be part of daily routines, not just the curriculum. It shows up in everyday moments: a rhyme in the morning, a song between activities, familiar words in conversation. Children bring this from home, and educators pick it up in the classroom. It does not need to be taught directly - it is lived in everyday routines.

Folk practices can give children a sense of belonging. This begins early and gradually becomes part of how they see themselves. Further work could examine how this is expressed in larger groups, how different forms of folklore are used in practice, and how it can be observed in everyday preschool settings.

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