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(IN)DELICATE ISSUE: PREVENTION OF CHILD SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SEX EDUCATION

Abstract. The urgency of the need to increase the educational community's attention to the problem of sexual violence against children is due to its hidden nature – it is extremely difficult to establish the exact number of victims. The purpose of the study is to analyze the theoretical aspects of the problem of sexual violence against children; to characterize the potential opportunities of sex education in terms of preventing sexual violence against children. Research methods: literature analysis, systematization, synthesis, consistent methodological approach to presentation. The key aspects of the novelty of the study are the interpretation of sex education as a tool for preventing sexual violence against children and the emphasis on its role in shaping children's ideas about personal boundaries and consent. The practical significance of the study lies in the fact that what is presented in it can be useful for teachers of secondary education institutions and lecturers of higher education institutions.

It has been found that the problem of sexual violence against children is very difficult to describe, since only a small percentage of the total number of incidents is registered and recorded, and additional complexity is caused by the high dynamics of the spread of the problem and the rapid scaling of its consequences. A number of factors are described that influence the interpretation of the concept of «child sexual abuse» and the ability to identify behavior that is considered sexual abuse. The conceptual principles of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse are highlighted. The approaches to defining the concept of «sexual violence against children» declared in international and domestic legislative documents are analyzed. One of the classifications of forms of sexual violence against a child is presented.

Characteristic symptoms (somatic, psychosomatic, psychological, behavioral) that may indicate that a child has been sexually abused are described. The role of parents in ensuring the protection of children from sexual violence is emphasized. It is noted that the purpose of sex education is to form in children ideas about their own boundaries, safe and dangerous touches, and to form a culture of consent and mutual respect, the preventive function of sex education is characterized. The content of the manual «Teach your child to defend themselves» is briefly described. It is concluded that the result of comprehensively implemented sex education is the child's personalized knowledge about recognizing dangers, establishing personal boundaries, and the concept of consent.

Keywords: safety, personal boundaries, danger, prevention, sexual violence against a child, sex education.

(НЕ)ДЕЛІКАТНА ПРОБЛЕМА: ПРОФІЛАКТИКА СЕКСУАЛЬНОГО НАСИЛЬСТВА ЩОДО ДИТИНИ І СТАТЕВЕ ВИХОВАННЯ

Анотація. Актуальність потреби посилення уваги освітянської спільноти до проблеми сексуального насильства над дітьми зумовлюється її прихованим характером – точну кількість потерпілих установити надзвичайно складно. Мета дослідження – проаналізувати теоретичні аспекти проблеми сексуального насильства над дитиною; схарактеризувати потенційні можливості статевого виховання у вимірі профілактики сексуального насильства над дитиною. Методи дослідження: аналіз літератури, систематизація, синтез, послідовний методичний прийом викладу. Ключовими аспектами новизни дослідження є трактування статевого виховання як інструмента профілактики сексуального насильства щодо дитини і увиразнення його ролі у формуванні у дитини уявлень про особисті кордони і згоду. Практичне значення дослідження полягає у тому, що викладене у ньому може стати у нагоді вчителям закладів загальної середньої освіти і викладачам закладів вищої освіти.

З'ясовано, що проблему сексуального насильства над дітьми дуже складно описати, оскільки реєструється і фіксується лише незначний відсоток від загальної кількості інцидентів, а додаткова складність зумовлена високою динамікою поширення проблеми і стрімким масштабуванням її наслідків. Схарактеризовано низку чинників, які впливають на трактування поняття «сексуальне насильство над дітьми» і на здатність ідентифікувати поведінку, яка вважається сексуальним насильством. Висвітлено концептуальні засади Конвенції Ради Європи про захист дітей від сексуальної експлуатації та сексуального насильства. Проаналізовано підходи до визначення поняття «сексуальне насильство над дитиною», задекларовані у міжнародних і вітчизняних законодавчих документах. Представлено одну з класифікацій форм сексуального насильства щодо дитини.

Схарактеризовано характерні симптоми (соматичні, психосоматичні, психологічні, поведінкові), які можуть засвідчити про те, що дитина зазнала сексуального використання. Увиразнено функцію батьків у забезпеченні захисту дітей від сексуального насильства. Зазначено, що метою статевого виховання є формування у дітей уявлень про власні кордони, безпечні і небезпечні дотики, формування культури згоди і взаємної поваги, схарактеризовано превентивну функцію статевого виховання. Стисло описано зміст посібника «Навчіть дитину захищатися». Зроблено висновок, що результатом комплексно реалізованого статевого виховання є персоналізовані знання дитини про розпізнавання небезпек, встановлення особистих кордонів і концепцію згоди.

Ключові слова: безпека, власні кордони, небезпека, профілактика, сексуальне насильство щодо дитини, статеве виховання.

INTRODUCTION

The problem formulation. Child sexual abuse is a serious global problem that has profound negative social and psychological consequences. Their duration and intensity depend on many factors, such as: the child's developmental stage at the time of the abuse; the child's relationship with the abuser; the duration of the abuse; whether or not information about the abuse was disclosed; support provided or not (Beisert & Izdebska, 2012). Among other things, people who were sexually abused in childhood often have difficulty creating a healthy family institution and fulfilling parental responsibilities (Vasylevich & Levchenko, 2023, p. 150).

The urgency of the need to increase the educational community's attention to the problem of sexual violence against children is primarily due to its hidden nature: the fact is that it is extremely difficult to establish the exact number of victims. According to estimates from the Council of Europe, one in five children suffers from various forms of sexual violence at least once in their lives (Teach your child to protect themselves, 2022, p. 4). Media outlets that cover stories of children who have been abused, kidnapped, or even murdered very often describe the perpetrators as strangers. However, according to The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (The National Society, 2026), in eight out of ten cases of sexual abuse of children, people well known to the child are committed: family members, friends, neighbors. When the abuser is a loved one, children often hide their experiences for months or years out of fear, shame, or emotional dependency. Often the truth only comes out in adulthood, and in some cases the secret remains forever.

The basic prerequisite for effective prevention of sexual violence against children is a multifaceted educational process called «sex education». Its formalized dimension (in schools) is characterized by general societal support. For example, parents find this format extremely convenient: it relieves stress and helps if you yourself don't fully understand the topic of human sexuality. In addition, parents are not always ready to discuss such issues with their children. Almost 84% of parents and teachers believe that sex education should be included in the school curriculum. Most often, respondents suggest starting in the first or fifth grade. Certain activities that can be considered as components of sex education are already being implemented in schools – these are educational hours and optional classes, lectures by invited external specialists (for example, health workers), film screenings, preparation of posters, etc. (Awareness and attitude of the teaching community, 2020, p. 5).

The relevance of the topic raised in the article is evidenced by the multifaceted and diverse publications available in the domestic scientific space. Chronologically, one of the first in this context is the manual by N. Leshchuk, Zh. Savych and O. Lototska «Sexual Education and Reproductive Health of Adolescents and Youth» (Leshchuk, Savych & Lototska, 2014). The psychological and pedagogical aspects of sexual education of the younger generation were characterized by N. Slyusarenko and Ya. Ospanova (Slyusarenko & Ospanova, 2017). The legal determinants of the problem studied in our article are expressed in the publication «Sexual Violence Against Children: Coordination of Actions» edited by T. Bugayets, O. Kovaleva and N. Pashko (Sexual Violence Against Children: Coordination of Actions, 2020). The theoretical foundations of the problem of sexual education of schoolchildren are discussed in the research of O. Rogozhina (Rogozhina, 2021). The issues of sexual socialization of Ukrainian schoolchildren in the light of «Standards of sexual education in Europe» became the subject of analysis by V. Kravets and S. Kravets (Kravets & Kravets, 2021). O. Kyslova and A. Nikolaevska represented the problems of adolescent sexuality and sexual education in Ukraine (Kyslova & Nikolaevska, 2023). The psychological dimension of the problem of sexual violence against children as a social destruction was highlighted in the publication of L. Procyk (Procyk, 2023). The current state and prospects for the development of this pedagogical process were highlighted by A. Molotokas and A. Proskurnia (Molotokas & Proskurnia, 2024). N. Saiko and O. Batsman raised the issue of sexual education as a conscious and planned system of actions to prevent sexual violence (Saiko & Batsman, 2025). In turn, O. Karpenko, Zh. Petrochko and A. Dulya analyzed the content and technology of organizing this pedagogical process in the context of developing a health preserving environment in a general secondary education institution (Karpenko, Petrochko & Dulya, 2025). Therefore, we can say that a certain basis has been formed for solving the problem of sexual education.

However, researchers identify several key reasons that hinder the implementation of sex education courses in Ukrainian schools. The main barriers include: the lack of clearly structured program concepts; systematic underestimation of this direction within the general educational process; a shortage of qualified teachers who have undergone special training and possess the methodology for teaching such sensitive topics; lack of unified curricula and teaching aids for all grades approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine; lack of proper methodological recommendations; lack of literature for teachers on sexual education of children, etc. (Karpenko, Petrochko & Dulya, 2025; Kravets & Kravets, 2021).

Research has shown that teachers who would like to engage in sexuality education for students have questions about their own training and supporting materials. Many teachers consider it useful to take a course on sexual education, receive training on approaches and methods for conducting appropriate classes with students, learn about the experience of implementing sexual education from other colleagues who already have it, etc. (Awareness and attitude of the teacher community, 2020, p. 7-8).

An analysis of the scientific and pedagogical literature demonstrates a critical lack of research that directly reveals the specifics of teacher training for the implementation of relevant programs at school. We found only one publication of the specified content – R. Chubuk analyzed the training of social workers in the formation of sexual culture of youth as a means of preventing sexual demoralization (Chubuk, 2020).

Therefore, dynamic changes in the educational environment and new challenges are outpacing the pace of modernization of pedagogical education in the context of sexual education of children and youth, creating a significant gap between theory and practice.

THE AIM AND RESEARCH TASKS

The aim – to analyze the theoretical aspects of the problem of sexual violence against children; to characterize the potential possibilities of sex education in the dimension of preventing sexual violence against children.

RESEARCH METHODS

The following research methods were used: literature analysis – a systematic process of collecting, evaluating, and synthesizing previous scientific works; systematization – the division of knowledge into certain categories for an orderly picture; synthesis – combining facts identified during analysis into a new, holistic system for forming one's own conclusions; a consistent methodical presentation technique that contributes to the competent structuring of the text.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

In general, the phenomenon of sexual violence against children directly contradicts the basic principles of world order, legal systems, moral values, and cultural traditions of the vast majority of states and societies. Systematic documentation and research into the scale and mechanisms of this phenomenon began in the 1980s. Every year, new large-scale global studies on the sexual exploitation of children appear (Fry & all, 2025). It turned out that it is very difficult to describe the problem of sexual violence against children, since only a small percentage of the total number of incidents is registered and documented. Additional complexity is caused by the high dynamics of the spread of the problem and the rapid scaling of its consequences.

These transformations are due to a number of factors that influence the interpretation of the concept of «child sexual abuse» and the ability to identify behavior that is considered sexual abuse. For example, the digital age has made children vulnerable to online violence (Slyvka, 2025): the development of technologies, such as social networks, artificial intelligence, and instant messengers, makes it easier for perpetrators to access minors and recruit them to participate in online sexual contacts, as well as to distribute pornographic images (photos, videos) involving children. Modern methods of sexual abuse against children are constantly expanding. In parallel, the spectrum of traumatic sexual experiences of children is expanding. Large-scale investigations have exposed «epidemics» of sexual and physical abuse of children by clergy and staff of various childcare institutions in various countries. In these cases, victims often report experiencing violence in adulthood (historical violence), which is associated with a later awareness of the consequences or a period of post traumatic recovery.

The first international agreement to criminalize all forms of sexual violence against children, including domestic violence, forced prostitution and pornography, is the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, known as the Lanzarote Convention (Council of Europe Convention, 2012). The ratification of this document and the implementation of the convention provisions by a certain state poses a number of institutional and legal challenges to the state authorities. They are related, in particular, to the creation of prevention programs, appropriate education, the organization of systemic therapeutic support for victims of sexual violence, the introduction of legal representation for children, the modification of the justice system focused on children, the establishment of international cooperation, etc. Among other things, states that have ratified the Convention are obliged to collect various statistical data on the problem of sexual exploitation of children (Włodarczyk, 2022, p. 325).

The World Health Organization offers the following definition of «child sexual abuse»: involving a child in sexual activity that the child is not capable of fully understanding and giving informed consent to, and/or for which the child is not yet developmentally mature and cannot give legal consent, and/or which is contrary to the legal or social norms of a particular society. and/or which is contrary to the legal or social norms of a particular society. Sexual abuse of a child includes both situations in which there is physical contact between the child and the abuser (contact sexual abuse) and situations of a sexual nature in which there is no sexual contact (non-contact sexual abuse). A child is forced into contact with the specified content through violence or the abuser uses his power (status, age, financial independence or position) in order to subjugate the victim, make them feel helpless and afraid to express their

own opinions. Such power (hierarchy) objectively exists both within the child-parent relationship and in the child's interaction with representatives of various institutions that exercise administrative or educational control. The key forms of psychological and covert violence against children are coercion (psychological pressure), manipulation, and seduction (destructive involvement). Before a child reaches the legally established age of sexual consent, any sexual contact with a minor is illegal (it is considered sexual abuse), regardless of the child's wishes and regardless of whether or not the perpetrator used any coercive measures. Commercial sexual contact with a child is also distinguished: this phenomenon has been called «sexual exploitation of children». A child is sexually exploited when they engage in sexual acts in exchange for something (such as a benefit or even the promise of a benefit) received from a third party, the perpetrator, or the child themselves (ECPAT, 2016).

There is no separate document in domestic legislation dedicated to the problem and definition of sexual violence against children. However, the above mentioned Convention is part of the national legislation of Ukraine (On the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention, 2013). The answer to the question of what behavior is considered sexual abuse of children under Ukrainian law is contained in the relevant articles of the Law of Ukraine «On Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence» (On Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence, 2018). For example, Article 1, Part 1, Clause 15 states that sexual violence against a child as a form of domestic violence includes: any acts of a sexual nature committed against a child regardless of their consent or in the presence of the child; forcing a child to engage in a sexual act with a third person; other offenses against sexual freedom or sexual integrity of a person, including those committed against or in the presence of a child.

Sexual abuse occurs when such activities occur between a child and an older or adult person, or between a child and another child, if these individuals are dependent on each other due to age or stage of maturity, with one person having power or caring for the other. The purpose of child sexual abuse is to abuse a child for sexual gratification, to stimulate them, or to use them for sexual stimulation (Sajkowska, 2002, p. 7).

There are a large number of classifications of sexual abuse against children. Researchers most often distinguish the following types:

- lack of physical contact: sexual conversations (the perpetrator directly expresses his sexual desires towards the child («Look at my penis», «Show me what's under your panties»), expresses opinions about the child's or his/her own sexual attractiveness («You have nice buttocks, I want to see them better», «You have nice breasts, I want to kiss them»), does he tell the child about his own sexual relationships with other people); exhibitionism (the perpetrator shows his intimate body parts to the child without her consent, may also masturbate in her presence); voyeurism (a social deviation in which a person derives sexual pleasure by secretly watching another person bathing and performing bodily functions); online recruitment for sexual purposes (the perpetrator establishes online friendships during which the perpetrator attempts to induce the child to engage in sexual behavior);
- sexual contact involving stimulation of intimate body parts: touching a child's body against their will, forcing a child to touch another person; kissing intimate body parts; manual stimulation of a child's genitals;
- oral-genital contact;
- femoral intercourse;
- sexual penetration (oral-genital);
- sexual exploitation of children: sexual contact in exchange for money or other gifts; child pornography; prostitution;
- sexual violence against children associated with other forms of violence: deviant forms of sexual violence (Izdebska i Pilarczyk, 2019).

The scale of the problem of sexual violence against children is much greater than that expressed by statistical studies. According to researchers, despite the fact that court reporting demonstrates the overall dynamics of responding to offenses and the effectiveness of justice institutions, it is not a representative indicator for assessing the real state, volume, and qualitative characteristics of crime in the context of child sexual abuse (Izdebska & Pilarczyk, 2019). This is primarily explained by the fact that the data provided in them relate exclusively to cases that have criminal status. In addition, these studies only take into account those incidents that have been successfully investigated and confirmed in court. Therefore, the real «picture» of sexual violence against children can be reflected in official data only when society is ready to openly discuss and reveal the problem (Włodarczyk, 2014).

Other studies that show the scale of sexual violence much more fully are the results of social surveys of current children to study their current experiences (Krechetova, 2025) and so-called retrospective studies of adults that analyze children's experiences through the prism of time (Sexual Violence in Ukraine, 2021; 43% of Ukrainians, 2021).

Scientists identify a number of factors that increase the likelihood of long term consequences of sexual violence. These include: microsystemic, family level factors (early negative family experiences (including conflicts between parents); experiencing other forms of violence that justify aggressive behavior and alcohol abuse in the family; proximity to the abuser (family ties or acquaintances; physical proximity – living together); factors of the exosystem level, i.e. the immediate social environment (low socio-economic status; lack of alternatives due to lack of family and social support); macrosystemic level factors (social blaming of the victim of violence; patriarchy) (Włodarczyk, 2016).

Persons working with children (parents, caregivers, teachers, etc.) must be very attentive to their conditions and behavior in order to be able to recognize characteristic symptoms that indicate that a child has been sexually

abused (Dwyer & Wilkinson, 2026). Somatic symptoms that may indicate that a child has been sexually abused include pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, urogenital infections, injuries to the external genitalia and/or anus, pain in the vaginal or anorectal area, rupture of the hymen, bleeding from the genitals, pain during urination or defecation, bloody stools, oral infections, difficulty walking or sitting, the child has a regression to behavior typical of a younger age (for example, enuresis – secondary nocturnal incontinence, return to sucking a thumb or pacifier).

Psychological and behavioral symptoms that may be warning signs that a child has been sexually abused include: the child complains of physical symptoms without a clear medical basis; the child exhibits personality changes, such as insecurity, depression, etc.; the child shows detachment or, conversely, excessive annoyance; the child behaves aggressively, has outbursts of anger; the child avoids social contacts, does not trust people (such symptoms are very often mistakenly interpreted as the child's desire to be independent); the child avoids being alone with a family member, the child shows unexpected fear of an adult or does not want to communicate with him; the child shows fear of adults of a certain type (gender, age, appearance); the child has an inexplicable fear of certain places; the child is afraid of sleeping alone; the child is chronically depressed, withdrawn; the child loses toilet skills (typical for young children); the child tries to talk about his/her use through hints (for example, he/she may say that someone asked him/her to keep a secret) or anxiously asks questions related to the breakdown of the family («Dad might take him/her away from home»); the child describes the behavior of an adult who is allegedly trying to seduce the child for the purpose of sexual exploitation; the child does not want to go to school or has a sudden loss of ability to concentrate; the child exhibits atypical, provocative and seductive sexual behavior (creates erotic drawings or games; masturbates intensely – inadequate to the phase of psychosocial development; demonstrates age inappropriate knowledge about sexuality that was not present before, uses words in the context of sexuality that are inappropriate for the child's level of development, uses new definitions for sexual acts or intimate body parts in communication); the child suddenly refuses to change clothes for physical education class or after activities involving physical activity; the child plays with toys or objects in an inappropriately sexual way; the child expresses his attachment to family and friends in a sexualized way; there is evidence that there is a secret connection between the child and the adult; a very disturbing fact is the appearance of gifts and money in the child; the child talks about sexual abuse from a third person («I know a girl...»); the child shows indifference to his or her own appearance, neglects personal hygiene, or, conversely, washes pathologically, as if he or she wants to «wash» or cleanse himself or herself (typical for older children); the child uses protective measures that make it difficult to remove clothing (many belts, several pants at the same time, etc.); the child has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, as well as eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia); the child's behavior becomes self destructive (alcohol, drug use, prostitution, suicide attempts, running away from home, excessively frequent accidents) (Teach the child to defend himself, 2022, p. 14-15).

Most of these behaviors and psychosomatic complaints (abdominal pain; headache; nausea; vomiting) may be related to other problems. However, they require close attention and careful analysis to prevent child sexual abuse.

Sexual violence causes profound psycho emotional and physical harm. The main insidiousness of such trauma lies in its «delayed» consequences – devastating symptoms can manifest or worsen months or years later. The nature of the consequences that a child will experience later in life depends on a number of factors, such as: age, personality, form and course of sexual abuse, and relationship with parents. The «delayed» consequences will be much more serious if: the perpetrator displayed extreme aggression and inhuman cruelty (violent acts included coercion to engage in sexual intercourse in perverted, deviant forms, including anal and oral sex); the child was «used» many times; the perpetrator belonged to the child's immediate environment, i.e. was a member of their family (father, uncle, cousin, etc.); the child was deprived of help and support from the immediate family; the child was psychologically traumatized during multiple procedural actions, in the presence of strangers; the child did not receive professional therapeutic care after the incident.

The key role in ensuring the protection of children from sexual violence lies with parents. However, as studies show, many parents deliberately avoid talking to their children about the risk of sexual violence, justifying their position by the absence of threats, and considering their child too young for such topics (Włodarczyk, 2022, p. 335-337). The modern concept of the protective role of parents goes far beyond simple warnings in the context of dangerous situations that could lead to sexual violence. Researchers agree that reliable child protection requires an integrated educational approach. Effective and efficient teaching of protective behavior to children by parents cannot be limited to random advice: to form sustainable and life saving skills, family conversations must be based on proven, scientifically based approaches and formal evidence based programs for developing parenting competencies (Rudolph & all, 2020).

Logically, the most effective tool for primary prevention of sexual violence is sex education: its goal is to form in children ideas about their own boundaries, safe and dangerous touches, and to form a culture of consent and mutual respect (Izdebska & Ruchel, 2011). Scientists emphasize the urgent need to reorient educational programs to study the individual, environmental, and situational determinants that provoke deviant behavior, as well as to identify protective and risk factors associated with the consequences of violence for child development (Sajkowska & Skierkowska, 2020, p. 39). Verified information on action algorithms, danger signs and support, as well as detailed recommendations for parents and teachers on child protection can be found, for example, on the UNICEF Ukraine platform (Youth from different regions of Ukraine, 2024; Sexual education of children, 2019).

The preventive function of sex education is that children and adolescents learn to be aware of their bodies, call their genitals by their correct anatomical names, and understand that no one has the right to touch them without permission. Education with appropriate content teaches to respect one's own «no» and the «no» of others, explaining that any physical or sexual contact is possible only with mutual and informed consent. Awareness reduces the risks of becoming a victim of grooming (psychological manipulation by adults or peers) or sexual violence, particularly on the Internet.

It is quite logical that the teacher who will implement the specified educational case must possess barrier free competence, which is defined as an integrated set of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that allow the specialist to identify and overcome barriers in interaction with students and create an inclusive environment (Komar, 2025).

Scientific research has shown that in Ukraine today there is no holistic, high quality system of sex education that would cover secondary education institutions. Some private schools have introduced similar courses, but there is no unified certification or defined indicators of education quality (Markova, 2024, p. 10). Despite public demands (for example, a successful petition to the President of Ukraine (Introduction of Compulsory Sex Education, 2023)), there is still no single standard in the education system, and information materials are often episodic.

To create an effective system of sex education that covers all stages and aspects of personality formation, combining socialization, upbringing, and education, it is necessary to use the full variety of its forms. We recognize the manual «Teach your child to protect themselves» as an effective scientific and methodological tool in the field of sex education, which we interpret as the basis for the prevention of sexual violence against children (Teach your child to protect themselves, 2022). This publication was prepared within the framework of the project «Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation of Children in Central and Eastern Europe – a Comprehensive Approach», implemented by the Ukrainian Children's Welfare Foundation in partnership with the Empowering Children Foundation (Republic of Poland) with financial support from the OAK Foundation (Switzerland). The materials contained in the manual are designed to solve the following tasks: determine safety rules while at home, at school, and in public places; teach the difference between safe and unsafe touches; explain the need to set personal boundaries to maintain privacy, safety, and expression of emotions; explain that everyone has the right to tell another person not to touch their body; explain the concept of personal boundaries; help learners identify the names of people who may be in the circles of personal space; learn the safety rule «It doesn't matter who touches»; develop active refusal skills in the event of a dangerous situation; identify the qualities of an adult whom the child can trust; identify situations when it is necessary to call for help from adults or call the police, etc.

Among others, the following forms, methods and means of work are offered: watching the cartoons «My Safety Rules», «Scream. Run. Tell», «Safe Touch, Dangerous Touch» and «My Neighbor», the characters of which voice the rules of behavior in dangerous situations; conversations during which students answer the following questions: «What types of body touches can be considered safe?»; «What parts of a person's body are considered intimate?»; «Describe the people who can enter the intimate, personal, social, and public circles of personal space»; «How do you understand the expression my body belongs only to me?»; «What might a dangerous stranger look like?»; discussing situations such as: «What would you do if a relative or friend touched you in a way that made you uncomfortable?»; «What should you do when another person asks you to touch their private parts?»; «Why is it important to respect other people's personal space?»; «What should you do when someone is very close to you in a public place?»; associative bush «An adult you can trust».

Educational publications similar to the above are no exception, but their total collection consists of only a few copies, they are, so to speak, a bibliographical rarity.

We believe that adapting the best foreign methods (Ferragut & all, 2023; Vikander & all, 2026) can improve the situation and ensure the effectiveness of domestic educational programs on the prevention of sexual violence against children.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

Therefore, the high degree of social danger of criminal offenses against the sexual freedom and sexual integrity of minors is due to the fact that such acts grossly violate the basic rights of the child. They have a destructive effect on the formation of personality, harm its moral and physical development, lead to corruption and premature involvement in sexual relations, which is contrary to the interests of childhood protection, enshrined in international standards. Comprehensive sex education plays a key preventive role in relation to child sexual abuse: it results in the child's personalized knowledge about recognizing dangers, setting personal boundaries, and the concept of consent.

It is promising to study the possibilities of updating educational programs of higher pedagogical education institutions with a focus on sex education as a basis for the prevention of sexual violence against children.

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