

# Models of Pedagogical Support for Early and Preschool-Aged Children Affected by Emergencies: Global Perspectives and Adaptation for Ukraine

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## Abstract

Modern emergencies, including armed conflicts and natural disasters, significantly affect the psycho-emotional state and development of young children. Therefore, analysing the primary support mechanisms for children affected by emergencies is a pressing task. This study focuses on children from birth to three years (infants and toddlers) and preschool-aged children (3–6 years) who are particularly vulnerable in such crises. Given their developmental needs, it is crucial to ensure adequate pedagogical support – defined here as structured educational and developmental interventions. The study aims to identify key aspects of pedagogical support for young and preschool-aged children affected by emergencies, with a particular focus on war-related crises. The study was conducted as a cross-sectional investigation, where data were simultaneously collected from different types of respondents. The data were processed from two groups of participants: educators (40 individuals) and international experts (10 individuals). Participants were drawn from multiple countries: Israel, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Hungary, and Poland, with direct experience in emergency response and child support. The results indicate that globally recognised methods of pedagogical support for children include using models such as play therapy, art therapy, family support, and social-emotional learning. The study also identified the main challenges, including the psycho-emotional state of affected children, the lack of necessary training for pedagogical teams, and the insufficient availability of material resources. Both educators and the surveyed experts equally recognised these findings. The conclusions state that the priority vector for integrating international experience lies in the optimisation of teacher training, integration with foreign socio-psychological support programmes, and the active participation of government structures.

**Keywords:** early development, psychological support, social-emotional development, emergencies, training of specialists

## 1. Introduction

In the current world, numerous emergencies, ranging from natural disasters to large-scale armed conflicts, significantly impact the psycho-emotional state and development of children. All these events significantly affect the psycho-emotional state and development of children in early childhood (birth to 6 years). However, the category of young children, particularly those in early childhood and preschool years, is particularly vulnerable, as their limited adaptive capacities and lack of self-defence mechanisms require increased attention and support (Sofianidis

et al., 2021; Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020). In such challenging circumstances, it is vital to implement effective pedagogical support mechanisms to restore emotional well-being and foster a safe and supportive educational environment. Therefore, addressing the issues faced by young children affected by extraordinary events is crucial, given their impact on psycho-emotional development and overall health (Korkh, 2024).

Simultaneously, global experience in this sector can demonstrate the implementation of various models of pedagogical support that consider not only the socio-psychological foundation. Modern pedagogical support models are based on a systematic approach, which includes a person-centred approach to the educational process, the integration of innovative interaction methods, and the active involvement of parents in restoring and supporting children. The Ukrainian educational system, currently under the strain of an active war, necessitates the adaptation of international experience and the implementation of effective models for supporting children. For this reason, the main research problem, which focuses on analysing and identifying key models of pedagogical support for children affected by extraordinary situations, is particularly relevant. Hence, this study focuses on pedagogical support models specifically tailored for children affected by emergencies, notably war. Based on a systematic, person-centred approach, these models integrate innovative interaction methods and emphasise active parental involvement in recovery.

Highlighting this research problem is particularly important in forming effective pedagogical support models that promote children's rehabilitation and stable development. As a result of the ongoing and active war, Ukraine faces extensive internal and external displacement, leading to an increasing number of children with traumatic experiences. In the educational setting, these children require specialised approaches to learning and emotional well-being support. Teaching such children should focus on rapid adaptation and creating a comfortable academic environment. Hence, examining effective pedagogical support models that contribute to children's rehabilitation and stable development is a particularly significant topic in modern pedagogical scientific discourse. Furthermore, the implementation of this study will provide an analysis of practical tools for preserving and developing the potential of children, thereby contributing to building an inclusive society as a whole. The research focuses on analysing practical experiences in supporting young children through surveys among educators. Additionally, the article will explore key aspects of international experience in pedagogical support for children in early childhood and preschool years through expert interviews. As a result, the primary effective models of pedagogical support for children affected by various extraordinary situations will be characterised, and potential markers for adapting these models to Ukrainian realities will be proposed.

While this study focuses primarily on children affected by war, the broader literature on responding to child development in emergencies also provides valuable insights into the support mechanisms needed during crises. Most of the existing research has examined children's vulnerability in various emergencies, including natural disasters, refugee crises and conflict. However, specific issues related to war-related trauma require particular attention due to the protracted and often violent nature of the conflict. Several studies highlight the negative impact of war on the emotional and psychological development of young children. For example, a survey by Sofianidis et al. (2021) demonstrates the long-term impact of war on children's mental health, especially children under the age of six, who may lack coping mechanisms. Vintimilla and Pacini-Ketchabaugh (2020) also provide evidence that early childhood education programs in conflict zones face trauma, displacement, and disrupted learning challenges. Moreover, The authors also drew attention to other situations. Shohel (2020) highlighted the challenges of providing education in refugee camps, pointing out that children in such conditions may experience anxiety and fear. Consequently, educators and psychologists must create a safe environment for children to express themselves and develop. Research has also shown that children who have experienced extraordinary events, including those related to military actions, may face difficulties in socialisation. Therefore, ensuring opportunities for interaction with other children through play or joint activities is critical (Biasutti et al., 2019). The issue of professional pedagogical support gained particular relevance with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, researchers extensively described the impact of the pandemic on the development of preschoolers and the peculiarities of organising the educational process during lockdowns (Andrzejewska et al., 2023; degli Espinosa et al., 2020; Duran, 2021). Contemporary studies indicate that quarantine restrictions significantly limit children's contact with peers and educators, sometimes causing disruptions in the development of social skills (communication, cooperation, and conflict-resolution abilities) (Ferri et al., 2020; Jalongo, 2021; Zdanevych et al., 2022). According to Martin et al. (2022) and Misirli and Ergulec (2021), preschool-aged children might not fully comprehend the reasons behind these restrictions, potentially leading to anxiety or fear. The works of Aydin and Kaya (2019), Goldman et al. (2016), and Nasie et al. (2021) discuss the psychological impact of war and the organisation of adequate psychological support for children. These studies indicate that children who have experienced stress may exhibit heightened emotional reactions. Thus, educators

should help them learn conflict resolution methods and foster emotional balance in the educational process. In Ukraine, the issue of pedagogical support for young children affected by emergencies remains little researched, but there are certain aspects of the studied phenomenon. Panchenko et al. (2022) emphasised the importance of using innovative methods to support children's motivation during wartime.

Additionally, research has found that the effects of extraordinary events on children vary, necessitating an individualised pedagogical approach (Sofianidis et al., 2021; Ventevogel et al., 2013; Mazur et al., 2023). While contemporary authors have addressed various aspects of adequate pedagogical support for children, these studies often have a local focus, concentrating on specific countries or contexts. There remains a need for a comprehensive examination and systematisation of international practices in modern models of pedagogical support for young and preschool-aged children. This study aims to fill this gap by characterising the main contemporary support mechanisms for children affected by numerous emergencies. The novelty of this study is the analysis of specific support models, in particular, art therapy, play therapy, and innovative methods of socio-emotional learning, which are actively used in international practice.

The primary hypothesis of this study posits that adapting modern models of pedagogical support (integrative approaches, therapeutic play, art therapy, and social-emotional learning) for early and preschool-age children affected by extraordinary situations facilitates effective recovery of their psycho-emotional state and cognitive development. A secondary hypothesis suggests that establishing an interdisciplinary support system (involving educators, psychologists, and social workers) enables comprehensive assistance for early and preschool-age children.

Accordingly, the study's key objective is to characterise pedagogical support for early and preschool-age children affected by numerous emergencies, examining the issue through the lens of Ukrainian realities and global experience.

The primary research questions are as follows:

1. What support models for early and preschool-age children affected by emergencies are used in Ukrainian and global practices?
2. What factors determine the effectiveness of pedagogical support for children?
3. What conditions are necessary for implementing innovative pedagogical support for early and preschool-age children in Ukraine?

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Research Design*

The study was conducted as a cross-sectional investigation, a research design that simultaneously collects data from individuals (Ukrainian educators and international experts).

This design was selected due to its efficiency in gathering information on various aspects of pedagogical support within a short timeframe. Given the urgency of addressing pedagogical support for children in extraordinary circumstances, this method enabled an evaluation of different implementation models without the need for prolonged observation. Furthermore, the cross-sectional approach allowed for the collection of data from diverse participants regarding modern mechanisms for delivering pedagogical support. This is essential for comparing different approaches and identifying particularly effective ones.

### *2.2 Sample and Participants*

This cross-sectional study processed data obtained from two groups of participants: educators and international experts. The selection of educators was based on purposeful inclusion. They were selected from kindergartens and higher education institutions, working in both the public and private sectors. All educators work with preschool children, including children affected by emergencies or conflict. The participants were based in Ukraine but included teachers from Poland and Hungary. All participants belonged to preschool educational institutions. Representatives from higher education institutions where teachers of pedagogical faculties research supporting children in crises were involved.

Thus, each educator had experience working with preschool children in emergencies. Their support included psychological assistance and therapeutic methods. Information about the teachers was collected through personal contacts and various channels, including international educational portals and platforms for sharing experiences. Invitations were initially sent to the official email addresses of contemporary academic institutions. These invitations

outlined the study's primary objective, the timeline, and the main data collection methods. All potential participants must submit a letter expressing their willingness to participate in the research.

The inclusion of participants was based on the following criteria:

1. Professional qualifications. All potential participants were required to have an educational background in preschool pedagogy, psychology, or related disciplines.
2. Experience in extraordinary circumstances. Participants needed to have experience working with children under exceptional circumstances.
3. Experience with traumatised children. Participants were required to have prior experience working with children who had undergone traumatic events.
4. Participation in child support programmes. Participants must have been involved in programmes supporting children.
5. Voluntary consent. Participants had to provide informed consent to participate in the study and process their responses.

These criteria ensured the representativeness of the educator sample. The study involved 40 educators with experience working with children in extraordinary circumstances or those who had experienced severe traumatic events. Detailed demographic data on the educators are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic Data of Educators

Data	%
Age of participants:	
25-30 years	30%
31-40 years	40%
41-60 years	30%
Specialty:	
Preschool education	60%
Psychology	25%
Special education	15%
Experience of professional activity:	
1-5 years	25%
6-10 years	40%
11-17 years	20%
Over 17 years	15%
Number of children with whom the teacher works:	
15-20 children	40%
21-30 children	45%
31-40 children	5%

Source: Author's development.

The inclusion of experts was based on purposive sampling, a method effective in cases where insights are required from individuals with experience working with children affected by specific extraordinary circumstances.

The study invited international educators, lecturers, psychologists, and rehabilitation specialists who had experience working with children impacted by traumatic events. Their involvement was facilitated through national and international professional networks, organisations, and associations specialising in supporting children. Announcements about the study and the need for expert participation were sent to the official channels of international organisations.

Ten individuals expressed their willingness to participate in total. Table 2 provides detailed information about the experts who participated in this study.

**Table 2.** Data on Experts Involved in the Study

N	Age	Gender	Education	Country	Direction	Experience	Institution	Partici-pat ion in programs	Number of children they work with
1	24	F	Higher	Poland	Preschool Education	2 years	Kindergarte n	+	14
2	32	F	Higher	Israel	Psychology	7 years	Rehabilitatio n Center	+	8
3	45	F	Higher	Israel	Psychology	15 years	Rehabilitatio n Center	+	16
4	38	F	Higher	Sweden	Preschool Education	10 years	Kindergarte n		25
5	47	M	Higher	Azerbaijan	Psychology	7 years	Rehabilitatio n Center	+	19
6	40	F	Higher	Norway	Preschool Education	12 years	Kindergarte n		29
7	50	M	Higher	Kazakh-stan	Special Education	29 years	Rehabilitatio n Center	+	21
8	41	F	Higher	Hungary	Preschool Education	15 years	Kindergarte n		25
9	55	F	Higher	Hungary	Preschool Education	34 years	Rehabilitatio n Center		25
10	28	M	Higher	Poland	Psychology	5 years	Institution	+	17

Source: Author's development.

The experts have worked in international organisations, higher education institutions, humanitarian and social services that support early childhood.

The selected experts had experience working in both public and private institutions (humanitarian organisations, educational foundations, international organisations, including UNICEF). Information about the experts was gathered through international educational portals and professional networks and through publications in academic journals and the media. Many experts had experience working in war or natural disasters and gave direct support to children and teachers in crises

### 2.3 Instruments and Procedure

The study used a cross-sectional research design and a survey instrument (questionnaire) to collect quantitative and qualitative data. A sample size of 50 was sufficient for an exploratory study of this nature and provided an essential basis for identifying pedagogical practices used in a crisis. The primary tool utilised in this study was a questionnaire administered to educators and experts. The questionnaire addressed various aspects of providing pedagogical support to early and preschool-age children affected by extraordinary circumstances, including identifying key challenges, effective methods of psychological support, prioritised tools from international practice, and the conditions for implementing innovative support models.

The main areas of the questionnaire were focused on the following aspects:

1. Individual experience working with children.
2. Identification of key challenges in organising adequate pedagogical support.
3. Characteristics of tools and methods used for support.
4. Prospects for adapting international experience.

The educators were surveyed first, followed by the experts. The questionnaires were distributed via the Google Forms platform, allowing participants to share their insights on providing qualified support to children affected by extraordinary circumstances—the primary questions are included in Appendix 1.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using Google Sheets, where columns were structured to categorise the key questions.

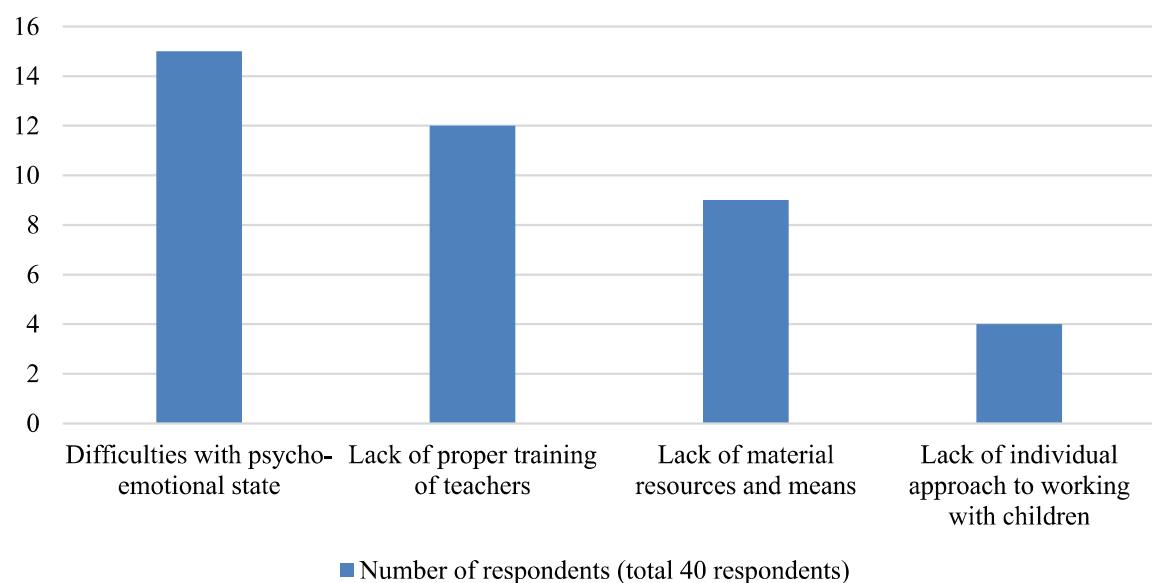
- The first table included data on educators, the number of participants, challenges, methods, tools from international practice, necessary conditions, and identification of "Primary institutions" to continue reforms in the preschool education system.
- The second table focused on experts, encompassing their identification numbers, challenges, methods, tools from international practice, necessary conditions, and identification of "Primary institutions" to continue reforms in preschool education.

These tables were created to categorise the primary data. Based on this categorisation, data coding was performed, and key themes were identified, such as the effectiveness of methods, challenges in practice, and the adaptation of international experience.

Subsequently, content analysis of open-ended responses was conducted, including calculating the frequency of keywords or phrases highlighting essential aspects of implementing pedagogical support. Comparative analysis was then performed to examine differences in responses between participants from various countries or with different levels of experience.

### 3. Results

As a result of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the need for rehabilitation and psychological support for early and preschool-age children has significantly increased. Consequently, attention to the specificities of this process has also grown. Primarily, this concerns identifying the challenges and difficulties encountered when applying educational interventions in the current context. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the obstacles that are particularly relevant when working with children who have experienced trauma. Surveyed participants indicated that the significant difficulties include the characteristics of the psycho-emotional state of affected children (15 participants), the lack of necessary training for teaching teams (12 participants), insufficient material resources (9 participants), and the lack of individualised approaches when working with children (4 participants) (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The Most Relevant Challenges in Working with Affected Children

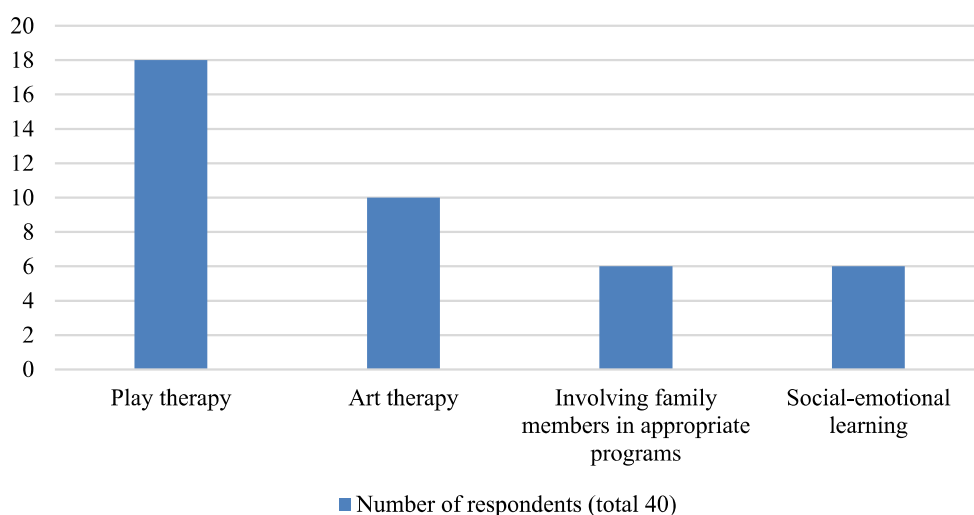
Thus, respondents highlighted that the key challenges include the characteristics of the psycho-emotional state of affected children, the lack of necessary training for teaching teams, insufficient material resources, and the lack of individualised approaches in working with children. The sequence in which these challenges are presented follows a logical progression, as the challenge of the Russian invasion has created unprecedented difficulties for rehabilitation. Experts' views partially confirm these survey findings (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** The Most Relevant Challenges in Working with Affected Children (Expert evaluations)

N	Answer option	Number of expert votes (total 100%)	Key comments from experts
1	Difficulties with psycho-emotional state	50%	Expert 1: The military challenge in Ukraine has created several pathologies that specialists rarely encounter in peacetime. Therefore, modern problems require special attention.  Expert 6: Working with victims of military actions has demonstrated the gaps in training specialists at the appropriate state and educational levels.
2	Lack of proper training of teachers	30%	Expert 7: The system of training relevant specialists (teachers, child psychologists, psychotherapists, etc.) will need changes in light of current trends in overcoming trauma and behavioural and mental health disorders.
3	Lack of material resources and means	20%	Expert 4: Modern methods of psychological support for children use simulators, exercise machines, and specialised computer programs for development and diagnostics. These materials are pretty expensive, and funding is partly lacking. This is especially relevant for specialists working in state institutions.
4	Lack of an individual approach to working with children	–	

Source: Author’s development.

Experts have identified that the Russian aggression has exposed all the deficiencies and issues within the system of pedagogical support. At the same time, there is a lack of teacher preparation and insufficient material resources (also caused by the war). Experts do not consider the absence of an individual approach to working with children as a problem, as many contemporary rehabilitation models have a group-based structure. A personal approach is necessary in highly complex cases where no other solution is apparent. There are also quite effective methods of pedagogical support (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** The Most Effective Methods of Psychological Support

Respondents noted that international methods of pedagogical support for children who have experienced trauma as a

result of emergencies include the use of play therapy. This approach provides opportunities through developmental games to express emotions, experiences, and fears. A smaller percentage of surveyed educators consider art therapy, family support, and social-emotional learning less effective. It is worth noting that social-emotional learning is a relatively new educational model primarily aimed at developing emotional resilience skills. As highlighted in the expert survey, this approach has not yet gained sufficient support in Ukrainian contexts (see Table 4).

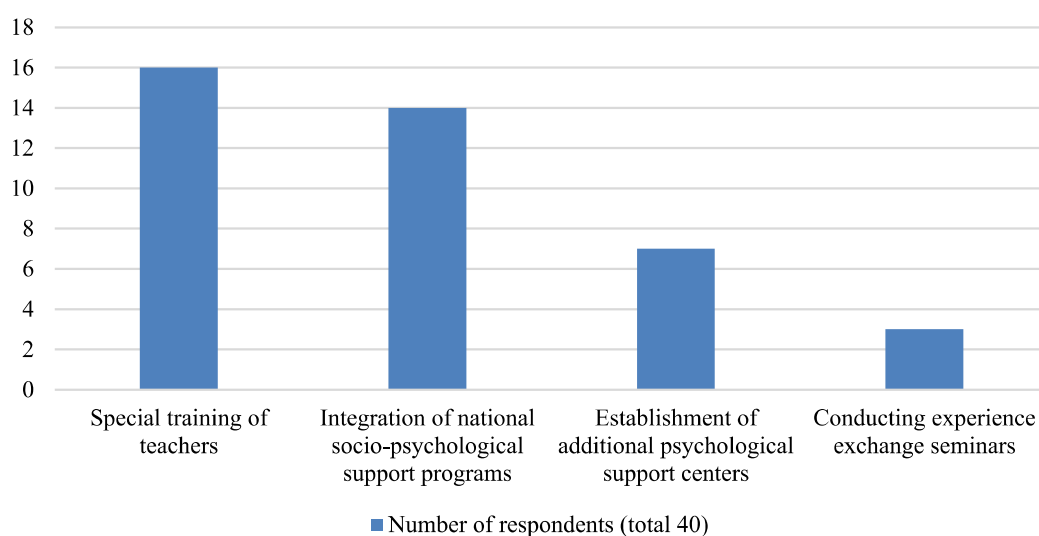
**Table 4.** The Most Effective Methods of Psychological Support (Expert evaluations)

N	Answer option	Number of expert votes (total 100%)	Key comments of experts
1	Involving family members in appropriate programs	40%	Expert 5: In modern realities, family support for the psychological rehabilitation of war-affected children can be considered even more effective than working with specialists. Thanks to family members' training, it is possible to constantly perform the necessary exercises, maintain psychological comfort, etc.
2	Play therapy	30%	Expert 3: The modern method of play therapy requires group classes, which allows for assistance during these classes.
3	Art therapy	20%	Expert 10: Art therapy requires the formation of an appropriate environment that will allow for a peaceful recovery from psychological trauma.
4	Socio-emotional learning	10%	Expert 2: Social and emotional learning is a universal means of counteracting psychological challenges, but it requires the time and training of teachers and psychologists.

Source: Author’s development.

Experts place the involvement of family members in relevant rehabilitation and psycho-correction programs at the top of the list. This is primarily motivated by the widespread adoption of this approach in European countries and the proven effectiveness of group activities. Under such conditions, play therapy and art therapy are considered less effective. These methods may require a specific environment for their application, whereas family support is more universal and, with proper organisation, may not even need additional specialist involvement.

At the same time, issues exist concerning using the most prioritised elements of international experience in Ukraine (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Most Priority Tools of International Experience Worth Integrating into Ukrainian Realities

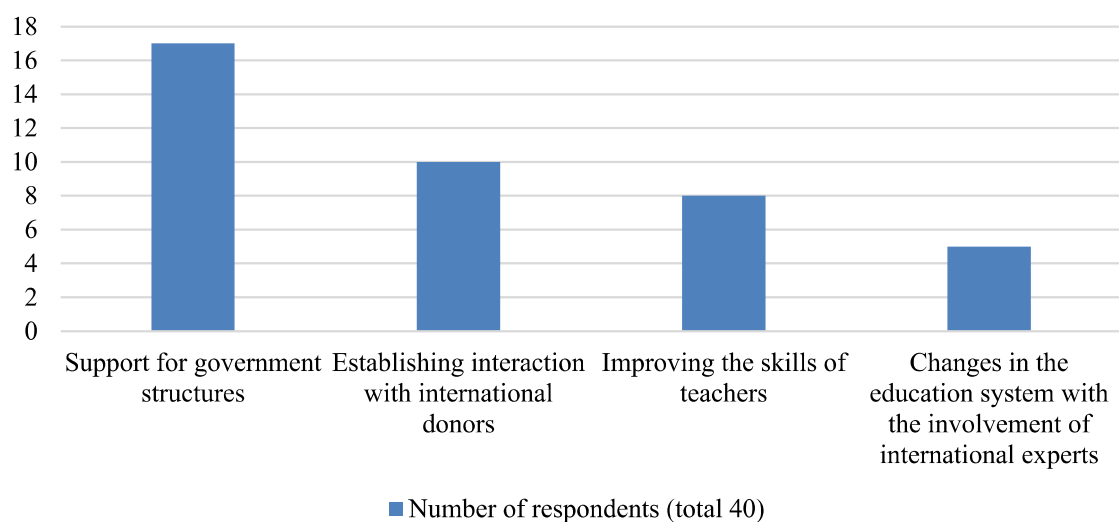


The survey results indicate that teacher training is the primary priority regarding integrating international experience. This primarily concerns the ability to respond to contemporary challenges, be flexible in using pedagogical models (approaches), and create individual support trajectories. Integration with foreign socio-psychological support programmes has also been recognised as relevant. Respondents paid less attention to the establishment of additional psychological support centres and the organisation of special events for the exchange of practical experience. Experts offered similar views (see Table 5).

**Table 5.** Most Priority Tools of International Experience Are Worth Integrating into Ukrainian Realities (Expert evaluations)

N	Answer option	Number of expert votes (total 100%)	Key comments of experts
1	Special training of teachers	30%	Expert 4: One of the foundations of international practice regarding educator support for children of early and preschool age affected by emergencies is paying special attention to educator training. This involves their acquisition of additional psychological competencies and social skills for working with children and parents.
2	Integration of national programs of socio-psychological support	30%	Expert 1: Overcoming the consequences of psychological trauma requires the formation of additional cross-sectional programs of socio-psychological support. Foreign experience indicates the effectiveness of such an approach.
3	Establishment of additional centres of psychological support	20%	Expert 10: New psychological support centres can create competition for psychological services. Competition is one modern means of improving even in a sensitive area such as educators' support for affected children. This practice is actively used in many countries, so it can also be transferred to Ukrainian realities.
4	Conducting seminars on the exchange of experience	20%	Expert 2: Constant work on improving the process of exchanging experience with foreign specialists is an essential component. For this reason, it is worth holding meetings, open lectures and seminars for training, practising practical skills, etc.

Source: Author's development.



**Figure 4.** Conditions Most Relevant for the Effective Implementation of Pedagogical Support Programmes in Ukraine

Thus, the experts' views align with the educators regarding essential tools, known from international experience, for the pedagogical support of young children and preschoolers. However, some specific points do not exhibit leadership, as seen in the educators' survey. The experts' opinions favour the broad application of existing practices, which will require an integrative approach. The respondents' views differ regarding the conditions that would most optimally foster the development of new models and support existing ones (see Figure 4).

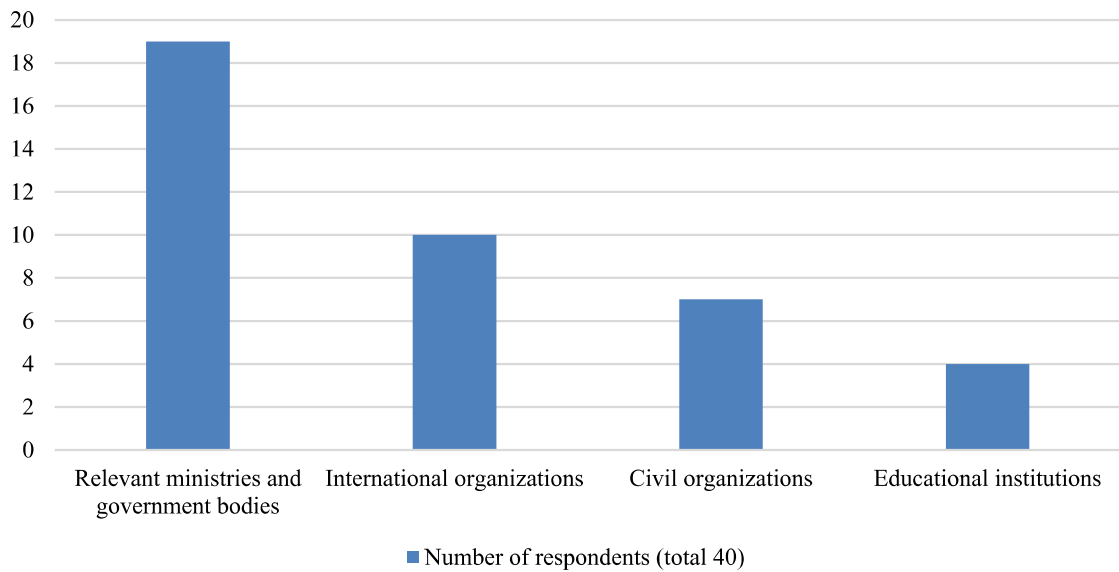
The most optimal conditions for the further development of pedagogical support models for young children and preschoolers affected by emergencies are the active participation of government structures (relevant ministries, executive authorities, legislative bodies, etc.). Another significant vector is the establishment of contacts with international organisations, which will enable the improvement of financial resources to implement these models. Continuous professional development for educators to improve their skills received a lower score. Among the least favoured is the involvement of international experts for reforms in the support sector. Experts' views slightly differ but generally align with the presented data (see Table 6).

**Table 6.** Conditions Most Relevant for the Effective Implementation of Educator's Support Programmes in Ukraine (Expert opinions)

N	Answer option	Number of expert votes (total 100%)	Key comments of experts
1	Support for government structures	50%	Expert 1: Ukrainian realities determine that state support in implementing pedagogical support programs is the main incentive for developing this area. We are talking not only about financial assistance but also about institutional, legislative, etc. support.
2	Establishing interaction with international donors	30%	Expert 2: Given Ukraine's financial crisis, any financial assistance in implementing relevant programs will be highly appropriate. Accordingly, searching for grants or projects based on co-financing is essential for improving the general state of work and enhancing the educator's support system in Ukraine.
3	Improving the skills of teachers	10%	Expert 7: Work on improving educator's skills should be part of the lifelong education program.
4	Changes in the education system with the involvement of international experts	10%	Expert 9: Taking into account international experience in changes in the training of Ukrainian specialist teachers. This will allow for a direct knowledge exchange with practising teachers with significant international experience.

Source: Author's development.

Thus, experts agree that further initiatives in the field of pedagogical support should be led by government bodies that possess the necessary authority to do so. At the same time, support from international organisations is recognised as the second most crucial factor that will enable the development of the child rehabilitation sector. The expertise of educators and transformations in the education sector, guided by the advice of international experts, are less popular, partly due to the high cost and scale of the proposed changes. Against this backdrop, the question arises regarding which organisations should lead the necessary transformations (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Leading Organisation in Implementing Reforms for More Effective Execution of Pedagogical Support Programmes in Ukraine

Thus, the surveyed educators primarily identify government bodies as the leaders in the forthcoming transformations. It is essential to highlight that international organisations are ranked second among the respondents. In contrast, Ukrainian non-governmental organisations and educational and care institutions have lower prospects for establishing new approaches. These views, however, receive differing assessments within the expert community (see Table 7).

**Table 7.** Leading Organisation in Implementing Reforms for More Effective Implementation of Pedagogical Support Programs in Ukraine

N	Answer option	Number of expert votes (total 10)	Key comments of experts
1	Relevant ministries and government bodies	40%	Expert 1: As of today, the relevant ministries and other state authorities have the necessary powers to improve the psychological and pedagogical support for affected children, form appropriate strategies, and implement them.
2	Educational institutions	30%	Expert 3: In the current conditions, the initiators of changes should be educational and upbringing institutions. In practice, they encounter problems overcoming the negative consequences of military actions and, therefore, can develop independent initiatives to improve the overall situation.
3	International organisations	20%	Expert 5: International organisations, in particular with the participation of the Ukrainian diaspora, have every opportunity to offer ways to overcome the consequences of the full-scale Russian invasion for the psychological state of children. Therefore, cooperation with them can incentivise further changes in rehabilitating early and preschool-age children.
4	Civil organisations	10%	Expert 7: The public is little involved in decision-making, particularly regarding psychological work. At the same time, the experience gained allows public organisations to actively advocate for implementing effective international practices that will affect Ukrainian realities.

Source: Author’s development.

Experts hold a different view compared to the surveyed educators. It is argued that government bodies should not be the only initiators of changes in developing pedagogical support models for children affected by crises. Experts highlight the experience of educational and care institutions, which can initiate relevant initiatives themselves, significantly complementing (or even replacing) the decisions of government bodies in this area. It is important to note that such a perspective requires a consolidated position from the management of educational and care institutions, which, in the current realities, is not easy to achieve. International and non-governmental organisations will also play a role in implementing reforms to improve the execution of pedagogical support programmes for affected children.

#### 4. Discussion

The modern world is not safeguarded against potential catastrophes of both natural and artificial origin. Social cataclysms are also significant, including full-scale wars previously considered impossible in the new 21st century. Children of early and preschool age under such circumstances belong to a particularly high-risk group, as even in the absence of direct danger, they find it challenging to adapt to new life conditions, including peaceful and safe environments. Accordingly, the primary goal of the proposed study is to characterise the key aspects of educator's support for early childhood and preschool-aged children affected by emergencies through the lens of Ukrainian realities and international experience. Achieving the proposed goal involves addressing the following key questions: identifying models of educator's support for early childhood and preschool-aged children affected by emergencies, as applied in Ukrainian and international practice; examining factors that determine the effectiveness of support for children; and identifying conditions for implementing innovative forms of educator's support for early and preschool-aged children in Ukraine.

The proposed findings reveal that the most significant challenges are the peculiarities of the psycho-emotional state of affected children, the lack of proper training for teaching teams, insufficient material resources, and the inadequate application of individual approaches in working with children. This sequence has its logic, as the challenge of the Russian invasion has created unprecedented difficulties for rehabilitation. Similar views are shared by the interviewed experts, who pointed out that Russian aggression has exposed all the shortcomings and problems in the educator support system. At the same time, the experts do not consider the absence of an individual approach to working with children a problem. On the one hand, these results confirm the conclusions of other researchers who identify challenges in a similar sequence (Bulavko et al., 2015; Aydin & Kaya, 2017; Issabayeva et al., 2024). Among these, the psychological state of children is one of the most significant difficulties, as every child faces individual problems that are only exacerbated by adverse factors. This somewhat undermines the argument about the lack of a global need for personal work with children. However, researchers claim that for emergency assistance in complex situations, group therapy is more effective, while individual sessions and support can accompany the patient further for as long as required for rehabilitation (Enwere & Afunugo, 2024; Essomba, 2017; Fergusson et al., 2015). The Ukrainian example is unique, as European and American researchers have not encountered social crises of this scale in recent decades.

The findings indicate that educators in the survey noted that international methods of educator support for children traumatised by emergencies include play therapy, art therapy, family support, and social-emotional learning. The interviewed experts prioritise involving family members in relevant rehabilitation and psycho-correction programmes, followed by play therapy, art therapy, and social-emotional learning. These results confirm the conclusions of other researchers on the importance of family therapy for child rehabilitation, meaning the experts' opinions align more closely with those of other scholars (Asqool et al., 2023; Budnyk & Sajdak-Burska, 2023). At the same time, the importance of social-emotional learning, where children learn to cope with psychological challenges and develop resilience, is increasingly recognised today (Bulavko et al., 2013; Orlova et al., 2024; Tomczyk & Walker, 2021). Reuge et al. (2021) established that prolonged restrictions, isolation from peers, and changes in routine might result in emotional difficulties among young school-aged children. Recent studies also emphasise the importance of pedagogical support for children affected by extraordinary events, as it significantly influences their emotional and cognitive development (Ford et al., 2021). According to Bartlett and Smith (2019), children at this age are especially vulnerable to stress and trauma, necessitating that educators and caregivers possess the requisite knowledge and skills to provide adequate support. Majd et al. (2019), who evaluated the role of pedagogical support in challenging circumstances, argued that contemporary educators should create a comfortable and safe environment where children can express their feelings and feel secure. Proulx and Aboud (2019) highlighted that under adverse conditions, children might experience anxiety and confusion, making it imperative for educators to establish a safe learning environment. Recent works also demonstrate children's challenges adapting to new

conditions (Safarli et al., 2024). Given that many children have become internally displaced persons during the war, the urgent problem of their adaptation to new environments, including educational ones, has emerged. Researchers such as Kaiper-Marquez et al. (2020) and Hong et al. (2021) highlight the complexities of adapting to new conditions. Seabra et al. (2021) also focused on children's difficulties adjusting to new educational settings. The results support the study's central hypothesis that adapting modern models of educator support (integrated approach, therapeutic games, art therapy, social-emotional learning) for early childhood and preschool-aged children affected by emergencies contributes to effectively restoring their psycho-emotional state and cognitive development. It is also proven that forming an interdisciplinary support system (involving educators, psychologists, and social workers) allows for the development of a systemic approach to supporting early and preschool-aged children.

The proposed survey results indicate that for educators, the priority vector for incorporating international experience lies in teacher training. Integration with foreign socio-psychological support programmes is also relevant. At the same time, respondents paid less attention to establishing additional psychological support centres and organising specialised events to share practical experiences. The experts' opinions align with those of the educators; however, the experts advocate for the broad application of existing practices, which require integrated use. This supports the views of specialists on the importance of simultaneously combining several vectors of educator support development (Bobro, 2024; Burman, 2018; Halachev, 2024). Conversely, some researchers emphasise the importance of additional psychological support centres, highlighting this not only due to the need for child assistance but also the necessity of providing support to educators. Meanwhile, the opinion of other researchers appears more substantiated, as they argue that these perspectives currently lack sufficient empirical evidence and will, therefore, require clarification (Harrison et al., 2020; Lewis & Danese, 2023; Williamson et al., 2020). The obtained results also do not support such conclusions.

The results determined that the most optimal conditions for the further development of models of educator support for children of early and preschool age affected by emergencies are the active participation of government structures (relevant ministries, executive authorities, legislative authorities, etc.). An equally important vector is the establishment of contacts with international structures, the permanent training of teachers to improve their skills, and the involvement of international experts for reforms in the support field. Experts surveyed agreed that further initiative in educator support belongs to state authorities, while the support of international organisations is recognised as the second most crucial factor. These results are consistent with the research of other scholars, who note the importance of transformations in the field of psychological support for children of early and preschool age affected by various disasters (Devterov et al., 2024; Issabayeva et al., 2024; Lavrov et al., 2022). However, researchers do not place state authorities' work level as a condition for implementing innovative forms of educator support for children of early and preschool age (Issabayeva et al., 2024; Krap et al., 2024). Evidently, in democratic countries, the influence of relevant state structures is reduced, and they are more inclined to listen to educational institutions' decisions. However, for Ukrainian realities, such survey data are entirely relevant, as indicated by scholars. The importance of state structures in conducting reforms remains a relevant Ukrainian feature.

As a development of the subject of further transformations, the proposed results indicate that lecturer respondents primarily point to the initiative of state authorities as leaders in future transformations. International organisations, Ukrainian public organisations, and educational and upbringing institutions may contribute. The proposed expert survey showed that educational and upbringing institutions can put forward relevant initiatives that will significantly complement (or replace) the decisions of state authorities. International and public organisations will also play a specific role, as their involvement in implementing reforms to improve the situation by implementing educator support programmes for affected children is significant. This expert perspective aligns with individual researchers' views, who consider the initiative of educational and upbringing institution teams to be the basis for the successful rehabilitation of children (Issabayeva et al., 2024; Korkh, 2024). At the same time, such views are less prevalent in Ukrainian realities – the initiative is mainly seen as belonging to state authorities as the drivers of future changes.

The proposed methodology has limitations that should be considered when interpreting and working with the proposed results. Firstly, this concerns the imperfection of the survey method using closed questions. It is possible that respondents could not choose a more relevant answer because it was not included in the list. Although this does not diminish the importance of the obtained research results, minor statistical errors are likely, which should be considered when further working with the article's materials. Moreover, self-collected data may contain various biases that may affect the accuracy and reliability of the study. Respondents may have written socially desirable or expected answers rather than reflecting their views.

## 5. Conclusions

Children of early and preschool age in the circumstances of modern social and political instability are in a special risk group, as they, even under conditions of avoiding danger, find it challenging to adapt to new lives, including in peaceful and safe environments. It has been established that the leading international methods of pedagogical support for children include using models of play therapy, art therapy, family support, and social-emotional learning. The surveyed experts determined that the most effective model is the involvement of family members in relevant rehabilitation and psycho-correction programmes, followed by tools of play therapy, art therapy, and social-emotional learning. The functioning of such models, meanwhile, faces several obstacles. The most significant challenges include the features of the psycho-emotional state of affected children, the lack of necessary training for pedagogical teams, insufficient material resources, and the lack of individual approaches for working with children. Such results were equally identified by teachers and surveyed experts.

The survey established that the priority vector for involving international experience to improve efficiency in teacher training is the ability to respond to modern challenges and to be flexible both in the use of pedagogical models and in the formation of individual trajectories of assistance. Integration with foreign programmes of socio-psychological support is also recognised as relevant.

It has been established that for teachers, the priority vector for involving international experience is the field of teacher training; integration with foreign programmes of socio-psychological support is also relevant, while less attention is paid to the establishment of additional psychological support centres and the organisation of special events for the exchange of practical experience. The results determined that the most optimal conditions for the further development and effectiveness of models of pedagogical support for children of early and preschool age are the active participation of government structures and international structures, the permanent training of teachers to improve their skills, and the involvement of international experts. This primarily concerns the initiative of state authorities as leaders in future transformations, international organisations, Ukrainian public organisations, and educational and upbringing institutions. Although the position of academic and upbringing institutions is also significant, in Ukrainian realities, it primarily concerns decisions made at the state level.

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## Appendix 1

### Survey questions

Key data	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is your education?</li> <li>2. What is your specialization</li> <li>3. What institution do you work in?</li> <li>4. Please indicate your work experience?</li> <li>5. How many children do you work with?</li> <li>6. Do you have experience working in specialized programs to support children affected by extraordinary events?</li> </ol>
Identification of challenges	<p>Indicate the most pressing challenges in working with affected children:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A) Difficulties with psycho-emotional state</li> <li>B) Lack of proper training of teachers</li> <li>C) Lack of material resources</li> <li>D) Lack of individual approach</li> </ol>
Highlighting effective methods	<p>What methods do you consider the most effective:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A) Art therapy or other creative forms of interaction</li> <li>B) Social-emotional learning</li> <li>C) Implementation of integrated learning, game forms</li> <li>D) Involving families in educational programs</li> </ol>
Priority tools of international experience	<p>Indicate the most priority tools of international experience:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A) Qualified special training of teachers</li> <li>B) Integration of national programs of socio-psychological support</li> </ol>

	<p>C) Formation of additional support centers</p> <p>D) Conducting seminars for the exchange of experience</p>
Conditions relevant for effective pedagogical support	<p>Indicate the most relevant conditions for effective pedagogical support:</p> <p>A) Support from state structures</p> <p>B) Establishment of international support</p> <p>C) Improving the qualifications of teachers</p> <p>D) Changes in the education system through the introduction of innovations and international experts</p>
Definition of the Leader Organization, which will continue the transformation in the preschool education system	<p>What priority direction should be determined for the Leader Organization, which will continue the transformation of the preschool education system?</p> <p>A) Relevant ministries and state authorities</p> <p>B) Educational and upbringing institutions</p> <p>D) International organizations</p> <p>E) Public organizations</p>

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**Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

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