ACTA DIDACTICA NAPOCENSIA
Volume 19, Number 1, 2026 – DOI: 10.24193/adn.19.1.2

USE OF MATERIAL RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATION OF MORAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES IN ROMANIAN KINDERGARTENS: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: This study investigates the use of material resources and the organization of moral education activities in Romanian kindergartens, from the perspective of preschool teachers. A quantitative research design was employed, based on a questionnaire administered to 1,490 respondents working in early childhood education. The findings reveal a strong preference for moral-civic storybooks, alongside the frequent use of self-created moral stories. Statistical analyses indicate significant associations between teachers' preference for composing stories and the use of religious resources, with moderate negative relationships. Significant differences were also identified regarding teaching aids, with dynamic visual materials, particularly didactic films, being perceived as the most effective by preschoolers. Furthermore, the results highlight statistically significant associations between the organization of certain moral education activities and the educational context (urban versus rural), although the strength of these relationships is relatively low. The study underscores the central role of teachers in selecting and combining educational resources, as well as the need to adapt instructional strategies to children's developmental characteristics and to the specific context of the educational environment.

Key words: moral education, early childhood education, preschool teachers, teaching resources, kindergarten education

1. Introduction

The conceptual and practical approach to moral education requires clarifying this fundamental concept within the field of educational sciences. The *Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language* defines morality as a set of beliefs, attitudes, and habits that take shape in rules of life. These norms guide an individual's behavior and their relationships with others, being supported not so much by external constraints as by individual conscience and alignment with community values. From a pedagogical perspective, the moral dimension goes beyond the normative level, involving the internalization and transformation of these rules into personal convictions and conduct (*Dictionary of Pedagogy*, 1979, pp. 297–298). In turn, philosophy defines morality as the "science of good" (*Larousse Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1999, p. 217), while psychology adds its own perspective, considering it a system of internal self-regulation of social behavior (Popescu-Neveanu, 1978, p. 463). Thus, morality becomes a complex construct situated at the intersection of social norms and the individual's internal structure (Espinosa & González, 2024).

As a fundamental form of social consciousness, morality reflects a range of interactions within a specific social context, providing both models of behavior and criteria for its evaluation (Nicola, 2003). At the same time, morality is considered an objective social phenomenon capable of regulating the relationships between the individual and the community (Macavei, 2001, pp. 238–239). Moreover, morality is regarded as a defining trait of human beings, and its formation represents a fundamental and ongoing task of education (Cucoș, 2014, p. 101).

From a Christian perspective, the profound formative dimension of morality is emphasized, as it represents not merely conformity to rules, but a process of inner transformation and orientation of life in relation to spiritual values (Opriș, 2011, pp. 160–161), moving from simple compliance with norms

Received February 2026.

Cite as: Stan, L.-A., & Opriș, D. (2026). Use of material resources and organization of moral education activities in Romanian kindergartens: Teachers' perspectives. *Acta Didactica Napocensia*, 19(1), 27-40. https://doi.org/10.24193/adn.19.1.2

toward an authentic, conscience-driven change in the individual's inner motivations (Puhalo, 2001, p. 145, apud Sopko; Brudiu, 2012).

Moral education is closely linked to integration into the community, as the development of self-awareness involves both differentiation from others and belonging to a social group (Mitrova & Koceva, 2024). During childhood—especially in the preschool stage—moral education plays an essential role in this process, as it is the period when the foundations of the social self are formed and the first moral behaviors are consolidated (Williams & Berthelsen, 2017; Salerni & Caprin, 2022).

Recent research confirms that from the earliest years of life, children display complex capacities for moral understanding, being able to distinguish and evaluate behaviors in a flexible and adaptive manner (Chen et al., 2025). Interaction with others is not only a developmental context but also an essential factor in cognitive and affective formation (Opriș, 2012, p. 116). In this sense, moral education in preschool aims at the internalization of rules and their transformation into stable attitudes and behaviors. Since Comenius, pedagogical literature has emphasized the need for early moral education, carried out systematically and adapted to age-specific characteristics (Comenius, 1970, p. 164; Ilica, 2017, p. 33). Likewise, Locke (1971, p. 117) highlights the importance of example and direct experience, considering that moral development occurs through practice and the repetition of positive behaviors. Rousseau (1973, p. 204), in turn, stresses the need to protect the child from negative environmental influences without completely isolating them from society, while Kant (2002, p. 31) later emphasizes the role of education in shaping an autonomous individual capable of responsible moral actions.

Thus, it is evident that moral education in kindergarten cannot be reduced to the mere transmission of norms; rather, it involves the use of appropriate teaching strategies, diverse material resources, and forms of activity organization that facilitate the active involvement of children (Stan & Opriș, 2024).

The aim of the present study is to analyze how preschool teachers in Romania use material resources and organize moral education activities, from the perspective of their own practices and professional perceptions. The research seeks to identify preferences regarding the selection of resources for stories with moral content, to highlight the teaching materials considered attractive for preschool children, and to examine the statistical relationships between these variables and the educational context. Thus, the study aims to provide relevant empirical benchmarks for optimizing the teaching strategies used in early moral education.

2. Theoretical framework

The specialized literature highlights multiple approaches to children's moral development and the role of educational strategies. Fisher & Frey (2013) describe the Gradual Release of Responsibility model, structured into four stages: focused lessons, guided instruction, collaborative learning, and independent practice, emphasizing that this model significantly contributes to the development of moral competencies and self-assessment abilities, with an approximately 30% increase in reflection on one's own actions. In the same direction, Korotaeva & Chugaeva (2019) show that, although preschoolers can reproduce or recount moral situations, they encounter difficulties in critically evaluating them, which also underlines the need for complex educational interventions adapted to age-specific characteristics, including language and communication, as well as to the social context (Tira & Opriș, 2025).

The role of curricular support is highlighted by Petcu-Nicola & Opriș (2023), who point out that in Romania moral education is not treated as a distinct domain within the early education curriculum, but is rather integrated fragmentarily into other curricular areas. This reality leads Romanian teachers to develop their own strategies, select resources, and organize complex activities tailored to children's needs (Igna, 2019).

From the perspective of educational practices, Margaretha & Haryono (2024) emphasize the effectiveness of using various teaching methods in developing moral values in preschoolers. Their results confirm that the systematic integration of such activities contributes to the formation of prosocial behaviors from early childhood. Research also highlights the difficulties teachers face in

designing instructional activities that ensure better alignment between teaching methods and the goals of moral education (Fancourt, 2005), as well as the potential of this classical dimension of education to stimulate reflection on one's own learning and behavior (Silva Moreira et al., 2024).

Overall, the specialized literature highlights the importance of combining teaching strategies, material resources, and formative assessment methods in the process of moral education. At the same time, it emphasizes the central role of the teacher in selecting and organizing these elements, in the absence of an explicit curriculum dedicated to moral education.

3. Research methodology

3. 1. Research questions

For this study, the research questions were as follows:

To what extent is there a statistically significant association between teachers' preference for composing moral stories and the use of different categories of material resources (Children's Bible, storybooks with moral-civic and religious-moral content) in preschool moral education?

Are there statistically significant differences in teachers' perceptions regarding the teaching materials preferred by preschool children in moral education activities?

To what extent is there a statistically significant association between the types of moral education activities organized and the educational environment of the kindergarten (urban/rural)?

3. 2. Study approach

A quantitative approach was used in this study.

3. 3. The instrument

To answer the research questions, a questionnaire consisting of 29 items, structured into two parts, was used. The first part included 10 socio-demographic and professional items, some of which were used as variables in the data analysis presented in this study. Out of the total of 19 opinion items, three items directly correlated with the research questions were analyzed in this study: (Q1) respondents' preference for composing moral stories and the use of certain material resources (Children's Bible, storybooks with moral-civic or moral-religious content) in preschool moral education; (Q2) respondents' opinions regarding the teaching materials preferred by preschool children in moral education activities; (Q3) the organization of activities within the sphere of moral education in relation to the environment in which the kindergarten operates.

The questionnaire was distributed online through the Google Forms application and was addressed to preschool teachers in Romania. Respondents' consent was obtained through professional and social networks, with the support of county school inspectorates. Participation in the study was voluntary, no rewards were offered, and the entire research process complied with the principles of research ethics.

3. 3. 1. Validity of the instrument

Prior to administering the questionnaire, in order to verify its validity, the items were analyzed within the Advisory Committee of the Doctoral School "Didactics. Tradition, Development, Innovation" at Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences (Romania). In a preliminary stage, the questionnaire was applied to a small sample of respondents and was subsequently revised and adjusted based on the suggestions and recommendations received.

3. 3. 2. Validity of the instrument

The reliability of the instrument was assessed using the SPSS program by calculating Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The statistical analysis indicated a value of 0.819, exceeding the accepted threshold of 0.7, which demonstrates a good level of internal consistency of the research instrument.

3. 4. Participants

The research included a total of 1,490 respondents from several counties in Romania. According to the national distribution of kindergartens, most questionnaires were completed by teachers working in urban preschool institutions (64.9%) and in public education units, while respondents from private education represented 3.2% of the sample.

In terms of age, the majority of respondents fall within the 40–49 age range (37.4%) and have 16–25 years of teaching experience (29%). Regarding educational level, over 40% of the respondents are graduates of specialized higher education, while 32.6% hold a master's degree in the field.

4. Data analysis

The data collected through the items included in the present analysis were processed using the SPSS program, employing statistical indicators selected according to the research objectives. For the first analyzed item (Q1), concerning the material resources used in selecting stories with moral content, frequency analyses, the χ^2 association test for nominal variables, and crosstabulation analyses were conducted. For the second item (Q2), which addressed respondents' opinions regarding the teaching materials preferred by preschool children in moral education, frequency analyses, the nonparametric Cochran's Q test, and the nonparametric McNemar test were used. For the third analyzed item (Q3), concerning the organization of moral education activities depending on the environment in which the kindergarten operates, frequency analyses were performed, along with the χ^2 association test for nominal variables and crosstabulation analyses.

5. Results and discussion

5. 1. Material resources in selecting stories with moral content

The appropriate selection and use of educational resources in classroom activities contribute to the development of rich and diversified moral education among preschool children. Creating stories adapted to age-specific characteristics represents an effective means of transmitting moral values and stimulating critical thinking. These stories can be personalized according to specific educational needs and may incorporate situations from children's everyday lives, facilitating their identification with the characters. Through storytelling, children can learn about empathy, justice, honesty, and other fundamental values in an accessible and engaging way.

In order to answer the first research question—*To what extent is there a statistically significant association between teachers' preference for composing moral stories and the use of different categories of material resources (Children's Bible, storybooks with moral-civic and religious-moral content) in preschool moral education?*—the responses to the first item (Q1) were analyzed. This item required participants to select, from a predefined list, three resources frequently used in choosing moral stories integrated into teaching activities.

5. 1. 1. Analysis of the frequency values of sources of inspiration for moral stories used by teachers

The data in Table 1 present the frequencies corresponding to each source of inspiration from which respondents predominantly select moral stories for use in classroom activities.

Table 1. *Frequency values of sources of inspiration for moral stories*

Sources of inspiration		Frequencies	
		(n)	(%)
1.	Composing stories with moral content	862	57.9
2.	Children's Bible	450	30.2
3.	Storybooks with moral-civic content	1358	91.1
4.	Storybooks with religious-moral content	864	58.0

Based on the percentage values presented in Table 1, a clear preference of respondents can be observed for storybooks with moral-civic content (91.1%), followed at a considerable distance by those with a religious character (58.0%) and by stories created by teachers themselves (57.9%). These results suggest a predominant orientation toward promoting social, civic, and behavioral values in a manner that is accessible and appropriate to the developmental level of preschool children. In contrast, the Children's Bible is selected by 30.2% of respondents, indicating a lower use of this resource in moral education activities. This result may reflect either a more reserved approach toward religious content or a preference for more general and inclusive materials, adapted to the diversity of educational and denominational contexts, or even the lack of such materials in certain kindergartens.

5. 1. 2. Analysis using the χ^2 association test for nominal variables of data on sources of inspiration for moral stories used by teachers

By applying the χ^2 association test between two dichotomous variables, the aim was to identify the existence of a statistically significant relationship between teachers' preference for composing moral stories, considered the dependent variable (DV), and the use of specific material resources—namely the Children's Bible, storybooks with moral-civic content, and those with religious-moral content—treated as independent variables (IV).

Tables 2, 3, and 4 present the results of the crosstabulation analyses for each pair of variables, including observed frequencies, expected (theoretical) frequencies, reported percentages, row and column totals, as well as adjusted residuals for each cell. The latter allow for the evaluation of deviations from expected values, expressed in standard deviation units, thus facilitating a more nuanced interpretation of each cell's contribution to the overall significance of the association.

Table 2. *Values regarding the pair of variables: composing stories for moral activities – use of the Children's Bible (Crosstabulation)*

			Children's Bible		Total
			no	yes	
Story composition	no	Observed frequency	345	283	628
		Expected frequency	438.3	189.7	628.0
		% within Children's Bible category	33.2%	62.9%	42.1%
		Adjusted residual	-10.7	10.7	
	yes	Observed frequency	695	167	862
		Expected frequency	601.7	260.3	862.0
		% within Children's Bible category	66.8%	37.1%	57.9%
		Adjusted residual	10.7	-10.7	
Total		Observed frequency	1040	450	1490
		Expected frequency	1040.0	450.0	1490.0
		% within Children's Bible category	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The data presented in Table 2 indicate that, among the 450 respondents who selected the "Children's Bible", 283 (62.9%) do not opt for composing stories, while 167 (37.1%) report using this practice. In contrast, among the 1,040 respondents who did not choose the "Children's Bible", a higher proportion (659; 63.4%) prefer to compose stories, while 381 (36.6%) do not use this strategy.

These differences highlight a clear trend: teachers who use the "Children's Bible" as a teaching resource tend to rely more on established, pedagogically validated materials, whereas those who do not use it show a stronger inclination toward creating their own stories, adapted to the educational context and to the age-specific characteristics of the children.

The results of the χ^2 test indicate the existence of a statistically significant association between the two variables, $\chi^2(1) = 113.747$, $p < 0.001$. Furthermore, the values of the adjusted residuals exceed the range [-2, 2], confirming the significant contribution of the cells to this association. The Phi coefficient ($\varphi = -0{,}276$, $p < 0{,}001$) suggests a moderate and negative association, indicating that the preference for composing stories is inversely correlated with the use of the "Children's Bible", and vice versa.

Table 3. *Values regarding the pair of variables: composing stories – use of storybooks with moral-civic content (Crosstabulation)*

			Storybooks (moral-civic)		Total
			no	yes	
Story composition	no	Observed frequency	45	583	628
		Expected frequency	55.6	572.4	628.0
		% within Storybooks (moral-civic) category	34.1%	42.9%	42.1%
		Adjusted residual	-2.0	2.0	
	yes	Observed frequency	87	775	862
		Expected frequency	76.4	785.6	862.0
		% within Storybooks (moral-civic) category	65.9%	57.1%	57.9%
		Adjusted residual	2.0	-2.0	
Total		Observed frequency	132	1358	1490
		Expected frequency	132.0	1358.0	1490.0
		% within Storybooks (moral-civic) category	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Of the 1358 respondents who selected "Storybooks with moral-civic content", 775 (57.1%) reported that they prefer to compose stories, while 583 (42.9%) do not use this practice. In contrast, among the 132 respondents who did not choose this category of resources, 87 (65.9%) opt for composing stories, while 45 (34.1%) do not use this approach.

These results outline an interesting trend: teachers who do not use storybooks with moral-civic content show a stronger inclination toward creating their own stories compared to those who use such materials. On the other hand, users of these resources appear to combine, to some extent, the use of external sources with their own creative initiatives.

The results of the χ^2 test indicate a borderline statistically significant association between the two variables, $\chi^2(1) = 3.856$, $p = 0.050$. However, the values of the adjusted residuals fall within the range [-2, 2], suggesting that the deviations from expected frequencies are not strong enough to support a substantial contribution of the cells to the overall association. In the same direction, the Phi coefficient ($\varphi = -0{,}051$, $p = 0{,}050$) indicates a very weak inverse relationship, with low intensity, suggesting that the link between the variables is rather marginal from a practical standpoint.

Table 4. *Values regarding the pair of variables: composing stories – use of storybooks with religious-moral content (Crosstabulation)*

			Storybooks (religious-moral)		Total
			no	yes	
Story composition	no	Observed frequency	158	470	628
		Expected frequency	263.8	364.2	628.0
		% within Storybooks (religious-moral) category	25.2%	54.4%	42.1%
		Adjusted residual	-11.3	11.3	
	yes	Observed frequency	468	394	862
		Expected frequency	362.2	499.8	862.0
		% within Storybooks (religious-moral) category	74.8%	45.6%	57.9%
		Adjusted residual	11.3	-11.3	
Total		Observed frequency	626	864	1490
		Expected frequency	626.0	864.0	1490.0
		% within Storybooks (religious-moral) category	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The data in Table 4 show that, among the 864 respondents who selected "Storybooks with religious-moral content", 470 (54.4%) do not choose to compose stories, while 394 (45.6%) report using this practice. In contrast, among the 626 respondents who did not select this type of resource, 468 (74.8%) prefer to compose stories, while 158 (25.2%) do not compose stories.

These results highlight a clear difference between the two categories: teachers who do not use storybooks with religious-moral content are significantly more inclined to create their own stories, whereas those who use such resources tend to rely more frequently on existing content, with less involvement in composing stories.

The results of the χ^2 test indicate a statistically significant association between the variables, $\chi^2(1) = 126.572$, $p < 0.001$. Additionally, the values of the adjusted residuals exceed the range [-2, 2], confirming the significant contribution of certain cells to the observed association. The Phi coefficient ($\varphi = -0{,}291$, $p < 0{,}001$) suggests a moderate association with a negative direction, indicating that the preference for using these resources is associated with a lower frequency of story composition, and vice versa.

5. 2. Teaching materials preferred by children in moral education

Adapted teaching materials allow for a personalized approach to learning, taking into account each child's pace, style, and interests. Their creative use by teachers contributes to increasing preschoolers' emotional engagement in activities, facilitating the transmission of moral values and the development of ethical behaviors in an accessible and attractive manner.

In order to answer the second research question—*Are there statistically significant differences in teachers' perceptions regarding the teaching materials preferred by preschool children in moral education activities?*—the data collected through the second item (Q2) of the questionnaire were analyzed. This item required respondents to select three out of six teaching materials considered to be preferred by preschool children in moral education activities: teaching charts, illustrated books, computer games, puppets, illustrated cards, and educational films.

5. 2. 1. Frequency analysis of choices for teaching materials preferred by children in moral education

Table 5 presents respondents' opinions regarding preschoolers' preferences for the materials used in moral education activities, by highlighting their frequency of selection. These statistical indicators allowed for the ranking of materials according to their perceived level of attractiveness, providing teachers with a useful reference for adapting pedagogical strategies to the real needs and interests of children.

The obtained results reflect not only the degree of popularity of certain resources, but also the consistency of respondents' opinions regarding their impact on the development of moral attitudes at the preschool age.

Table 5. *Frequency values of choices for teaching materials preferred by children*

Teaching materials	Frequencies	
	(n)	(%)
1. teaching charts	226	15.2
2. illustrated books	266	17.9
3. computer games	98	6.6
4. puppets	191	12.8
5. illustrated flashcards	121	8.1
6. educational films	783	52.6

The highest percentage (52.6%) of respondents consider that educational films are among preschoolers' preferred materials, indicating a clear orientation toward dynamic visual content capable of capturing attention and facilitating learning through storytelling and moving images. A proportion of 17.9% of respondents identify illustrated books as children's second preference in moral education

activities, highlighting an interest in static yet expressive visual materials that stimulate imagination. Teaching charts rank third in the hierarchy of preferences (15.2%), followed by puppets (12.8%) and illustrated cards (8.1%). In contrast, computer games are indicated by only 6.6% of respondents as being preferred by preschoolers, which may suggest either limited access to digital resources in the educational environment or a preference among children for direct, concrete interactions, both with peers and with the teacher.

5. 2. 2. Analysis using the nonparametric Cochran's Q test of data on choices for teaching materials preferred by children in moral education

The application of Cochran's Q test aimed to identify statistically significant differences between the proportions of selection of the six teaching materials analyzed within moral education activities. This analysis is useful for highlighting potential variations among teaching resources in terms of how frequently they are considered relevant or effective in activities with a moral focus, while also allowing for their ranking according to the preferences expressed by respondents.

Table 6. *Values regarding the distribution of children's preferences for teaching materials used in moral education*

Teaching materials	Values	
	0	1
1. teaching charts	1264	226
2. illustrated books	1224	266
3. computer games	1392	98
4. puppets	1299	191
5. illustrated flashcards	1369	121
6. educational films	707	783

Table 7. *Analysis using Cochran's Q test of data on children's preferences for teaching materials in moral education*

Test Statistic	
N	1490
Cochran's Q	1504.633[a]
Degrees of freedom	5
Asymptotic significance	.000
Note. a = 1 is treated as a success	

The data in Table 7 indicate a Cochran's Q test value of $Q(6) = 1504.633$, $p < 0.001$, highlighting the existence of statistically significant differences between the selection frequencies of the six teaching materials analyzed. From the teachers' perspective, preschool children do not assign equal importance to all materials used in moral education activities, and the frequency differences reflect a clear hierarchy of preferences, as presented in Table 6. A pronounced preference for educational films is observed (783 selections), while computer games record the lowest frequency (98 selections). The statistically significant result ($p < 0.001$) confirms the existence of real differences among the six teaching materials analyzed, supporting the idea of significant variability in teachers' perceptions regarding children's preferences.

5. 2. 3. Statistical analysis using the nonparametric McNemar test of data on choices for teaching materials preferred by children in moral education

Since Cochran's Q test does not indicate between which response options statistically significant differences occur, the nonparametric McNemar test was applied for pairwise comparisons between dichotomous variables. All 15 possible comparisons were conducted, and the significance threshold was adjusted using the Bonferroni correction, to $\alpha = 0.05/15 = 0.0033$ (approximately 0.003). The results of these analyses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. *Analysis using the McNemar test of data for pairs of options representing children's preferences for teaching materials used in moral education*

Test Statistic[a]		
	Chi-square[b]	**Asymptotic significance**
teaching charts & illustrated books	6.613	.010
teaching charts & computer games	68.343	.000
teaching charts & puppets	3.973	.046
teaching charts & illustrated flashcards	44.88	.000
teaching charts & educational films	370.223	.000
illustrated books & computer games	103.293	.000
illustrated books & puppets	20.981	.000
illustrated books & illustrated flashcards	71.258	.000
illustrated books & educational films	334.913	.000
computer games & puppets	36.641	.000
computer games & illustrated flashcards	2.384	.123
computer games & educational films	578.314	.000
puppets & illustrated flashcards	23.338	.000
puppets & educational films	472.001	.000
illustrated flashcards & educational films	551.668	.000
Note. [a.] McNemar Test; [b.] Continuity correction applied		

The results show that, in 12 out of the 15 comparisons made between the teaching materials preferred by children, there are statistically significant differences ($p < 0.003$). This indicates that, from the teachers' perspective, preschoolers assign different levels of preference to these educational resources. In all significant cases, the direction of the differences favors the option with the higher frequency, according to the SPSS results. These findings suggest that the teaching materials most frequently preferred by children in moral education activities are those that integrate visual, narrative, and multimedia elements, particularly educational films and illustrated books. Traditional materials, such as teaching charts, illustrated cards, and puppets, are also appreciated, but to a lesser extent compared to the first categories. Although computer games may have relevant educational potential, they are surpassed in most comparisons, except in relation to teaching charts, where the differences are smaller or non-significant.

5. 3. Organization of activities in the field of moral education

At the preschool level, activities within the field of moral education are essential for shaping positive behaviors such as respect, kindness, generosity, empathy, and honesty. Through games, stories, and concrete examples, children learn to distinguish between right and wrong and to relate harmoniously with others. In order to answer the third research question—*To what extent is there a statistically significant association between the types of moral education activities organized and the educational environment of the kindergarten (urban/rural)?*—we analyzed respondents' answers to item (Q3), which asked them to select, from a list we proposed, three activities they consider most effective in implementing moral education for preschool children.

5. 3. 1. Analysis using basic statistical indicators of the frequency values for conducting moral education activities

Table 9 presents the frequencies (%) corresponding to each activity that respondents consider to be the most effective in the activities they carry out in the classroom.

Table 9. *Frequency values for conducting moral education activities*

Moral education activities	Frequencies	
	(n)	(%)
1. conducting extracurricular activities with a moral education theme	1081	72.6
2. organizing competitions with a moral education theme	518	34.8
3. inviting guests to talk to children about moral values	869	58.3
4. watching films/performances related to moral education topics	908	60.9
5. organizing short plays with children on moral education themes	822	55.2

The frequencies presented in Table 9 highlight a clear hierarchy of the ways in which respondents choose to promote moral values in classroom activities, reflecting a strong orientation toward experiential learning connected to children's real-life contexts. The most frequently used method is extracurricular activities, selected by 72.6% of respondents, as they are valued for their ability to transform moral values into direct life experiences. Thus, concepts such as kindness, responsibility, or solidarity become easier to internalize when children are involved in real contexts, such as visits to social institutions or participation in community actions.

In second place is watching films or performances with moral themes (60.9%), a method grounded in the strong impact of visual and emotional stimuli on preschoolers. At this age, learning through images and emotions facilitates a rapid understanding of moral behaviors, as visual examples have greater explanatory power than abstract verbal discourse.

Another frequently used method is inviting resource persons to speak to children about values (58.3%), contributing to strengthening the connection between the kindergarten and the community, and exposing children to authentic role models. Although it requires greater organizational effort, role-playing activities (skits) are used by 55.2% of teachers, proving effective through children's active involvement, which supports learning through action and the practice of prosocial behaviors.

At the opposite end are competitions with a moral theme, the least used (34.8%), suggesting a preference among teachers for strategies that emphasize cooperation and inner development rather than competition, with morality being approached as a formative process rather than a ranked outcome.

5. 3. 2. Statistical analysis using the χ^2 association test for nominal variables of data on the organization of competitions with moral education themes in relation to the kindergarten environment

Further, in the statistical analysis using the χ^2 association test for nominal variables, the aim was to identify the relationships between moral education activities (dependent variable) and the environment in which the kindergarten operates (independent variable). The analysis focused on situations where statistically significant associations were identified, namely the organization of competitions with a moral theme and the invitation of resource persons to speak to children about values.

Tables 10 and 11 present the observed frequencies for each of the four categories resulting from the cross-tabulation of variables, along with the expected (theoretical) frequencies, percentages relative to the total, row and column distributions, and adjusted residuals, used to highlight the degree of deviation of observed values from those statistically estimated, expressed in standard deviations.

Table 10. *Values of data on the organization of competitions with moral education themes in relation to the kindergarten environment (Crosstabulation)*

			Environment		Total
			rural	urban	
Competitions with a moral education theme	no	Observed frequency	314	658	972
		Expected frequency	341.2	630.8	972.0
		% within Environment category	60.0%	68.0%	65.2%
		Adjusted residual	-3.1	3.1	
	yes	Observed frequency	209	309	518
		Expected frequency	181.8	336.2	518.0

		% within Environment category	40.0%	32.0%	34.8%
		Adjusted residual	3.1	-3.1	
Total		Observed frequency	523	967	1490
		Expected frequency	523.0	967.0	1490.0
		% within Environment category	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

From Table 10, it can be observed that, among the 523 respondents from rural areas, 209 (40%) selected competitions with moral education themes as an effective activity, while 314 (60%) did not indicate this option. In the case of respondents from urban areas (967 teachers), 309 (32%) chose competitions, while 658 (68%) do not consider them among the most effective moral education activities. The χ^2 test value, $\chi^2(1) = 9.596$, $p = 0.002$, indicates the existence of a statistically significant association between the teachers' environment and their preference for organizing competitions with a moral theme. Additionally, the adjusted residuals exceed the range [-2, 2], confirming the significant contribution of certain cells to the observed difference.

The comparative analysis highlights that teachers from rural areas show a stronger tendency to use competition-based activities in children's moral development, while those from urban areas are less inclined toward this type of activity. The Phi coefficient = -0.080, $p = 0.002$ indicates a weak but statistically significant association between the variables, suggesting that the environment has a small influence on the preference for using competitions in moral education, even though the strength of the relationship is low.

Table 11. *Values of data on inviting resource persons to moral education activities in relation to the kindergarten environment (Crosstabulation)*

			Environment		**Total**
			rural	**urban**	
Inviting guests	**no**	Observed frequency	241	380	621
		Expected frequency	218.0	403.0	621.0
		% within Environment category	46.1%	39.3%	41.7%
		Adjusted residual	2.5	-2.5	
	yes	Observed frequency	282	587	869
		Expected frequency	305.0	564.0	869.0
		% within Environment category	53.9%	60.7%	58.3%
		Adjusted residual	-2.5	2.5	
Total		Observed frequency	523	967	1490
		Expected frequency	523.0	967.0	1490.0
		% within Environment category	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

From Table 11, it can be observed that, among the 523 respondents from rural areas, 282 (53.9%) consider inviting individuals to speak to children about moral values as an effective activity, while 241 (46.1%) did not select this option. In the case of the 967 respondents from urban areas, 587 (60.7%) chose this activity as effective in implementing moral education for preschoolers, while 380 (39.3%) did not indicate it. The χ^2 test value, $\chi^2(1) = 6.426$, $p = 0.011$, indicates the existence of a statistically significant association between the environment and the preference for inviting resource persons in moral education activities. Additionally, the adjusted residuals fall outside the range [-2, 2], confirming the contribution of certain cells to the statistical significance of the observed relationship.

The comparative analysis suggests that teachers from urban areas show greater openness to collaboration with community members, more frequently using external interventions to convey moral values to preschoolers, while teachers from rural areas adopt this strategy to a lesser extent. The Phi coefficient = 0.066, $p = 0.011$ indicates a weak but statistically significant association between the variables, suggesting that the environment has a limited but existing influence on the choice to involve resource persons in moral education activities.

6. Conclusion

The study aimed to investigate how preschool teachers in Romania use material resources and organize moral education activities, as well as to identify statistically significant relationships between the analyzed variables.

Regarding the material resources used in selecting stories with moral content (Q1), the results highlight a clear preference for storybooks with moral-civic content, followed by religious-moral books and the composition of original stories. The analyses revealed the existence of statistically significant associations between the investigated variables. A moderate and negative association was identified between story composition and the use of the Children's Bible, as well as between story composition and the use of books with religious-moral content. These results suggest that educators who opt for resources with a religious character tend to rely more frequently on pre-existing content, validated also through educational practice, while those who do not use these resources are more inclined to develop their own teaching materials. In the case of books with moral-civic content, the identified association is very weak and marginally significant, indicating a rather complementary use in relation to the production of original content.

Regarding respondents' opinions on the teaching materials preferred by preschool children (Q2), the results indicate a preference for educational films, followed by illustrated books, highlighting the important role of visual and narrative support in the process of internalizing moral values. The analysis conducted using Cochran's Q test revealed statistically significant differences between the teaching materials, confirming that they are not perceived uniformly in terms of effectiveness. Analyses based on the McNemar test showed that, in most comparisons, the differences are statistically significant, reinforcing the existence of a clear hierarchy of preferences. Thus, teaching materials that integrate dynamic visual and narrative components are considered more effective than traditional or static digital ones, such as computer games, which record the lowest values.

Regarding the organization of moral education activities (Q3), the results indicate a predominant orientation toward experiential and extracurricular activities, considered effective in shaping moral behaviors. The association analyses revealed statistically significant relationships between the type of activities and the educational environment. Thus, organizing competitions with a moral theme is more frequent in rural areas than in urban ones, while the involvement of resource persons from the community is more common in urban settings. Although the values of the Phi coefficient indicate a low intensity of the relationships, the statistical significance confirms the existence of real differences between these educational contexts.

The study's results highlight that moral education at the preschool level can be effectively supported through a combination of traditional and modern resources, being influenced both by teachers' choices and by the particularities of the educational environment. The importance of visual resources, narrative approaches, and experiential activities is empirically confirmed, as these are perceived as having high effectiveness compared to other teaching tools.

The effective implementation of moral education activities depends significantly on adapting teaching strategies to the developmental needs of preschool children and on leveraging the educational context. The results obtained may contribute to optimizing teaching practices and to supporting educational interventions aimed at developing moral competencies from the early stages of education.

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