

# THE PROBLEM OF ADAPTATION OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN FOR A PRESCHOOL INSTITUTION

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**Abstract.** *The problem of adaptation of the child in kindergarten is still rather relevant. Despite the fact that the issue was raised by the classics of preschool pedagogy and psychology (Rubinshtein, 1957; Aksarina, 1977; Bure, 2014; Bozhovich, 1967), there are currently no answers to several important questions related to adaptation in general and to the adaptation of children. This is due to the complexity and diversity of the adaptation mechanism inherent in all living beings. The process of adaptation studied by different sciences affects different levels of adaptation to changing environmental conditions: from cells to society.*

*In relation to a preschool child, it is important to determine the structure of the adaptation process, including such diverse phenomena as the nature of sleep, nutrition, health indicators, emotional state, as well as attitudes towards relatives and alien adults and children, the ability to actively act in a new social environment. The idea of this study grew out of the need to hierarchize the child's individual ways of responding to a new environment and to determine the sequence and timing of normative adaptation. Currently, there are very different assessments of the ability of a preschool child to be included in a social environment that is conditionally unfamiliar to him.*

*Firstly, most authors consider the adaptation period to be extremely painful and difficult for a child, in which he is able to receive a load of difficult experiences and health disorders. The severity of the process is often estimated by the level of morbidity in children during the period of adaptation. Secondly, the course of the adaptation process itself is determined from 2 weeks to six months. Also, the specifics of children of different ages getting used to kindergarten, as well as the time when the beginning of his attending is the most favorable, has not been studied.*

*The aim of the study is to determine the structure of the process of adaptation of children of primary preschool age in a kindergarten.*

**Keywords:** *adaptation, adaptation structure, indicators of adaptation, preschool children.*

## Introduction

More and more young children are starting to attend kindergarten. In 2021 in Latvian preschool institutions there were 3,360 children at the age of one, 14,489 children at the age of two and 17,669 children at the age of three (Official statistics of Latvia, 2021). The relevance of the study is due to the need to answer many questions related to the adaptation of children to a new social environment. First of all, we are talking about the teacher's understanding of the standard course of the adaptation

process. In our opinion, the adaptation model is formed for the first time when a child enters a new social environment. The first alien adult the child meets is the teacher. The nature of the adaptation of the children, their emotional well-being depends on their sensitivity and competence.

It is also important to be able to evaluate the various components of children's adaptation, taking into account their individual characteristics, to find ways to cooperate with children, to form a sense of security and optimism. The ability to assess the nature of behavioral and psychophysiological manifestations will allow the teacher to find the best ways to respond in problem situations, to improve his/her competence.

The aim of the study is to determine the structure of the process of adaptation of children of primary preschool age in a kindergarten.

The object of the study is the features of the process of adaptation of preschool children.

The subject of the study is the sequence of components of the process of adaptation of young children.

## **Methods**

The research methods included observation of certain indicators named below, a survey of educators, methods for determining the self-esteem of children, and statistical processing of data.

Since the study of the process of adaptation in the curricula of training programs for students of pedagogical specialties occupies a large place, it was necessary to choose indicators that would correspond to the developmental characteristics and the specifics of the process of adaptation of young children. The development of speech at the age of one to two and a half years did not allow, for example, the self-esteem of the child when talking with him. Therefore, both self-esteem and emotional state were determined by visually observed emotions, positive attitude, willingness to cooperate with adults and children.

The very activity of the child in different types of activity is closely related to the process of adaptation and the stages of affective regulation of activity (Lebedinsky et al., 1990).

At the first stage, indicators of observation of children were determined. including the nature of parting and meeting with parents, features of attitude towards an adult (teacher), attitude towards peers, activity (participation in classes and games), understanding and acceptance of the rules of the hostel in kindergarten, self-service skills, mood and emotional reactions during the day (positive mood, optimism), sleep, appetite, personality traits. Since other educators also worked in the groups, the indicators were refined taking into account the observations of other adults in the

process of their questioning. The level of adaptability of each child was determined at the beginning of the study, its characteristics were compiled, and the teacher planned work to optimize the adaptation process on their basis.

At the second stage, the assessment of the level of adaptability was determined again at the end of the study and indicators that determined one or another nature of adaptation were identified. The qualitative nature of the obtained data was determined as well.

The study involved working students of pedagogical specialties of PPMF LU and 119 children aged 1.1 to 2.6 years attending kindergarten from August to November 2022. When structuring the adaptation model, the data obtained by the author of the article from the study of children's adaptation in a mixed group conducted in 2007, were taken into account.

### **Definition of Problem**

Although adaptation is recognized as a permanent mechanism for integrating into the world, in which the subjects either change themselves or change the environment, many authors believe that at an early age the child is still too dependent on the mother and new conditions are not always useful. Nearly every article on this topic highlights the traumatic experience, trauma, regression in a child's behavior and skills, as well as illnesses and long-term negative consequences for the development of the personality of children who are forced to attend kindergarten (Wall et al., 2016; Brown, 2020).

On the other hand, the development of communication skills, full-fledged socialization have a very positive effect on the development of the child's personality, the level of development of his/her self-awareness, activity and success in activities, future school performance, etc.

The adaptation period of children aged from 2-3 weeks to 6 months to kindergarten is also ambiguous (Tonkova-Yampolskaya, Chertok, & Alferova, 1993; Puškarevs, 2001; Gailuma, 2002; Alsberga, Antīņa, Dortāne et al., 2012), as well as the classification of the process of adaptation according to the period of normalization of all psychophysiological parameters, normalization of the child's behavior, the absence of diseases and neurotic reactions, etc. It is considered that the longer the child adapts, the more difficult the process itself is. The type of severe adaptation, according to the authors, occurs precisely in children aged 1.5-2 years. Thus, it is believed that the younger the children of early age, the easier it is for them to adapt (Tonkova-Yampolskaya, Chertok, & Alferova, 1993). One of the objectives of the study is to verify this statement.

In the work of other authors, the optimal age for entering kindergarten is 5 years (Puškarevs, 2001). Such different assessments, in our opinion, are associated with

different disciplines, within which adaptability was assessed, resulted in the process of adaptation to a new environment, including social, as well as with different theoretical positions of the authors.

L. Dikaya (2007), in her analysis of methodological problems and main directions of research, notes the prospects for a systematic approach to the study of adaptation, which would allow combining all data in a multi-level system. concerning the psychophysiological, psychological and socio-psychological levels of adaptation. These are mental states and the attitude of a person to the surrounding reality, to himself, etc. at every moment of time.

According to the author, a person's attitude is the central, system-forming characteristic of the entire component composition of mental adaptation. "From the point of view of a systematic approach, human mental adaptation is understood as a complex, holistic, polyfunctional and polystructural phenomenon, which allows studying adaptation at various levels of generalization: from the most general descriptions to descriptions of certain forms of mental adaptation of a particular subject" (Dikaya, 2007).

The idea is based on the theory of relations by V. N. Myasishchev. L. Dikaya believes that such an approach will allow "to call the holistic state of a person, covering all the structural levels of his organization, namely mental adaptation." The author proposed a block diagram of a systematic approach to the study of adaptation with such characteristics of adaptation as level-based, coinciding with the level-based organization of a person, subjectivity - objectivity and a degree of generalization (Dikaya, 2007).

In the study of the process of adaptation of young children, the structuring of indicators of adaptation and their integrity are seen as valuable. Since many young children do not yet speak, their psychophysiological characteristics that can be significant in assessing the level of adaptation.

Observation of the emotional state of the child made it possible to identify the features of the emotional regulation of activity, the normativity of the child's reactions to the new environment. V. V. Lebedinsky (Lebedinsky et al., 1990), the creator of the original classification of disorders in the mental development of children, determined the levels of affective regulation, linking them with the expansion of objects that the child learns in the process of adaptation to the environment and with the nature of internal and external reactions.

Valuable for our study is that the author defines both pathological and normative emotional manifestations. At first, the child reacts affectively to the assessment of the quantitative effects of the environment (temperature, illumination, sounds). Then he forms affective stereotypes, choosing them on the basis of an affective assessment

(comfortable-uncomfortable, pleasant-unpleasant) and individualizes the circle of his preferences, forming a prototype of integral sensory perception of the world based on communication with his mother, in which various sensory impressions are combined on the basis of a single strong positive effect (Lebedinsky et al., 1990).

The appearance of stereotypes in motor skills, in behavior, in play, in speech is important, which helps to calm the child in a stressful situation. At the level of affective expansion, the child, overcoming obstacles, masters new objects and space. The activity of a certain type develops in the child at this stage. If the familiar environment changes, as in the case when the child starts visiting a kindergarten, activity is observed only if the child is oriented towards an adult. Children can play or study with an adult individually. Therefore, participation in group sessions appears later, when the adaptation process is completed. The appearance of positive emotions is associated with communication, with the expansion of the social environment. There is an establishment of affective communications with another person. The level of symbolic regulation is observed in older preschoolers. At the same time, the system of preschool education assumes that a child's visit to a children's institution, the development of communication skills, full-fledged socialization have a very positive effect on the development of the child's personality, the level of development of his self-awareness, activity and success in activities, future school performance, etc.

Therefore, as indicators of observation in our study, we also chose features of mood, daytime sleep, and appetite, which could indicate the course of adaptation.

### **Presentation of the material Results**

The study observed children who were between 1.1 and 2.6 years old, therefore, at the end - three months older. At the start of the study, most of the children could not speak.

*Table 1 Distribution of children by age and gender (made by author)*

Age	Girls	Boys	Total
Up to 2 years	22	25	47
Up to 3 years	35	37	72

At the first stage of the study, the indicators of observations and the degree of their severity were determined.

*Table 2 Criteria and indicators for evaluating adaptation (Vorobjova, 2022)*

Criterion	3 points	2 points	1 point
Saying goodbye to parents	Says goodbye to parents easily and quickly, immediately finds something to do	Does not come to the group independently, only with a parent. Saying goodbye to parents shows sadness	Saying goodbye to parents with difficulty. Cries, screams, doesn't let the parent go.
Building a relationship with a teacher	Easy, likes to communicate, participates in activities organized by an adult	Insecure, watching, needs extra encouragement	Negative, difficult to make contact
Child's emotional state	Happy, cheerful and active	Calm, sometimes thoughtful	Dominated by negative emotions, worried, often cries
Working with toys	Active, goes and picks up toys, plays with them independently, feels safe	Waiting for an adult to show, to give	Mainly plays with his/her favourite toy
Attitude towards organized activities	Active and cooperative	Attitude is variable, cooperates in some activities	Does not participate in activities, avoids them
Child's daytime sleep	Sleep is calm, falls asleep quickly	Does not fall asleep for a long time, sleeps peacefully	Fall asleep with crying, can't fall asleep for a long time, restless in sleep
A child eats in a preschool educational institution	The child has a good appetite	The child does not have much difficulty with eating	The child eats poorly, sometimes refuses food

Important for understanding the mechanism of adaptation was the definition of relationships with adults, especially with the mother. The nature of communication and parting of the child with a close adult in the initial period of attending kindergarten was recorded. Communication with a close adult is a prerequisite for the formation of the ability to communicate with someone else's adult, and then with peers, which determines the nature of the adaptation process. Not all children have formed a secure attachment to an adult by the time they enter kindergarten. Consequently, a sense of security, methods of communication with an adult were not formed, the child did not acquire subjectivity. Therefore, the most dramatic picture of parting was among those

children who did not learn to communicate with their mother, but were used to being around. They, on the other hand, could not get used to the educator for quite a long time and did not show interest in their peers until the end of the observations.

*O...rs (1.5 years). O... has the most difficult adaptation. The boy started visiting the garden from September, and at first stays in the kindergarten until noon. It is very difficult for a child to part with his parents. Entering the group, the boy shouts at the door, then looks for a place to hide, refuses breakfast. Such behavior repeats every day, he does not come to the teacher's lap, does not allow himself to be petted. The child does not participate in activities organized by an adult, only cries (from the observation protocol).*

*Gradually he has begun to stay near the teacher, not communicating, but not going far. Sometimes he responds to offers to play with an adult. In November, he has begun to sleep during the daytime hours. He doesn't wake up. Parting with parents is almost always calm. He does not play with his peers, he keeps around an adult.*

It should be noted that the child usually establishes contact with the teacher who first met him.

During the child's passive presence next to the teacher, which many people consider "bad adaptation", the child ceases to be afraid of other rooms, closed closets, the need to dress, wash, begins to understand the requirements and changes in the group throughout the day. He studies the attitude towards children from the outside, from the educator, i.e. begins to navigate in a new environment.

It is difficult to say for what reason there may be difficulties in mutual understanding between a child and close adults. Perhaps it has to do with the parenting style.

*G...vs, 1;3. Does not want to let his mom or dad go in the morning, cries for a long time after parents leave, often refuses food. Language and self-service skills are poorly developed. Avoids contact with other children, is more self-centered and withdrawn.*

*It is mostly the dad who takes him to the kindergarten, who seems very nervous, emphasizes that the boy is already big enough (1;3) to dress himself, etc. He is ashamed on the fact that the boy cries in the morning. Gustavs seems to be a little afraid of his father (from the observation protocol).*

If the interaction with parents has developed, the child quite easily begins to focus on someone else's adult, and adaptation is successful.

*Anna 1; 3. When she arrives at the pre-school educational institution, the girl cries, but soon she is able to calm down on her own. Language skills are well developed for the age. Prefers communication with adults, does not pay attention to other children.*

*The relationship between the girl and her parents seems to be good. The girl is the only child in the family, maybe a little spoiled. Parents never rush the girl, they listen if she has something to tell about the day in kindergarten (from the observation protocol).*

Already at the beginning of the observations, important facts for understanding the patterns of the adaptation process in young children were revealed. First, successful adaptation did not depend on age. Secondly, the duration of the adaptation process did not mean its destructiveness, severity for the child. Some children got used to it faster, and some more slowly.

This was manifested in the study and establishment of cooperation with someone else's adult, i.e. with the teacher. Children who got used to the situation quickly established contact with an adult after 5 weeks, and children who got used to it for a long time established the contact after 12–13 weeks. *Thus, the ability to communicate, trust in the teacher is the first in the structure of the child's adaptation to kindergarten.*

Children who have gained this experience with their parents very quickly accept the caregiver and move on to play alongside peers at an early age, or begin to build relationships with peers if they are over 3 years old. Many researchers considered this model of adaptation to be normative and easy. As a rule, in older children, the period of inclusion in the group of a new child is accompanied by conflicts. This, in our opinion, means *the next stage of adaptation*.

Children who have not developed attachment with close adults, provided that the caregiver is sufficiently empathic, actually form an attachment model for the first time, namely with an alien adult. This takes time and effort and prolongs the adaptation period.

Given the impossibility of creating mutual understanding with the teacher and the absence of such with the parents, the child experiences disadaptation. Those children who "are getting adapted" for half a year do not have a primary structural element - an orientation towards an adult. Therefore, after a short visit to a children's institution, the child begins to get sick. With each new visit, this model is reproduced again. The older the child, the more difficult it is for him to find an adult with whom he could establish a full-fledged confidential communication. Therefore, in our opinion, adaptation is more calm and natural in children before the crisis of three years, and is the most difficult at 5 years (Romenkova, 2008).

## **Conclusions**

The study confirmed that the main factor in successful adaptation in young children is the relationship between close adults and the child, which allows the formation of a secure attachment.



1) Successful adaptation includes 1) the orientation of the child to an adult (interest, friendly attitude, ability to establish contact); 2) successful assimilation of the norms and values of the group; 3) mastering the rules of relationships with the children of the group; 4) good indicators of the emotional state (joy and optimistic mood, openness of emotions); 5) good indicators of health and physical condition; 6) easy transition from one social environment to another, joy and politeness towards parents, preservation of the old means of communication).

2) Relationships and trust in the world are formed in a child of an early age before the opportunity to verbalize their states.

- 3) The task of the educator is to determine the methods and techniques that
- a) encourage the child's desire to communicate with adults and children
  - b) maintain children's positive mood,
  - c) help the child calm down after the parents leave,
  - d) develop children's understanding of rules in preschool,
  - e) promote involvement in daily activities in games,
  - f) provide attitude building,
  - g) help the child fall asleep independently in a preschool educational institution.

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