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**EDUCATIONAL COUNSELLING OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN  
FOR ADAPTATION TO THE KINDERGARTEN ENVIRONMENT**

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*Abstract*

At the onset of kindergarten attendance, we identify children who are experiencing difficulties in adjusting to this new environment, difficulties which can be extended and may interfere with their cognitive, emotional and social development. Taking into account the particularities of the specific status of kindergarten age (2-3 years), we set out to identify the factors involved in the pre-school child adaptation to the kindergarten environment as well as the optimal strategies to support the adaptation of these children.

The hypotheses we formulated were the following: pre-school children who come from a highly protective family system, and were deprived of any experiences of physical, emotional and/or familial discomfort (in the sense of parental hyper protection) go through a prolonged period of adjustment; children whose parents have a reserved, reticent attitude towards the kindergarten environment also have difficulties of adaptation. The study included 30 children of pre-school age (2-3 years), enrolled in the kindergarten and going through a process of adaptation, as well as the parents of these children. The research methods used were the survey interview on the parents, the direct participatory observation and the recording of the children's behaviour and reactions within the institution of pre-primary education.

The children's adaptation to the kindergarten environment depends on factors such as: their previous experience of socialization; their parents' confidence attitude towards the pre-school educational institution; the secure attachment of the child in relation to the parent; the teacher's focus on the child and the building of a trustworthy educator – child relationship. In the case of hyper-protected children, deprived of previous socializing experiences, the gradual adaptation strategies to the kindergarten environment include: visiting the kindergarten on the first day; integration activities, in the first week, over short periods; emotional support to parents experiencing concern and distrust towards the kindergarten environment.

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**Keywords:** Pre-school child, kindergarten, adaptation, socializing, adaptation strategies.



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## 1. Introduction

Kindergarten enrollment and attendance are synonymous with the beginning of an important stage in the psychological and social evolution of a child. As a new environment, much more complex than that of the family in terms of composition, and social situations, kindergarten is an emotional and relational challenge, which the young child learns to manage as he or she is included into a structured group of children.

1.1 The educational system from Romania is organized starting with pre-school kindergarten level, for the age range 3-5 years (National Education Law, 2011). Children are involved in educational activities according to their age group: younger / starter group (2/3 years-4 years), intermediate group (4-5 years), and older group (5-6 years), under the coordination of a pre-school teacher / educator. After the age of 6 years, children are enrolled in primary school, in the preparatory class (National Education Law, 2011).

The teaching activity of the kindergarten is carried out having as a foundation the Curriculum for Early Education (2008) - an important national document which sets out the goals of education at this level:

- free, harmonious and full development of personality, depending on the child's own pace and needs, supporting the formation of autonomy and creativity;
- developing the capacity for interaction with other children, with adults and with the environment in order to acquire new knowledge, skill, attitudes and behaviours. Encouragement of exploration, practice and experiments, as autonomous learning experiences;
- discovery, by every child, of his / her own identity, autonomy and the development of a positive self-image;
- supporting the child in the acquisition of knowledge, skills, habits and attitudes necessary for future school years and throughout life.

Pre-school activities are organised by areas of learning / experiential areas, in the form of games and personal development activities, transitions, and optional activities, all set on the basis of the principle of participatory, active child-centered learning (Curriculum for Early Education, 2008). For the preschool level, there are public and private educational institutions. Private institutions are subject to the same National Education Law, but present a number of advantages that we have been able to ascertain directly, in professional practice, complementary to the academic one:

- A small number of children in a group (maximum 15, compared to 20 or even 30 in state establishments);
- Endowment with modern means of education and materials, suitable for each age level, made available to the children in the pre-school institution, without involving parents' resources;
- Educational offer rich in personal and vocational development activities;
- Teaching and non-teaching human resources correctly adapted to the number of children.

1.2. Around the age of 2-3 years, depending on the pace of development, the experiences of previous social interaction and temperamental reactivity, the child can make the transition to a new stage of psycho-social development. Incorporating J. Piaget's theory of the child's intellectual development, Shaffer and Kipp (2014) discuss about the transition from the sensory-motor stage to the pre-operational

one, when self-centeredness gradually decreases, and the child begins to understand that he/ she is only one part of the universe and not its center, that the others have needs, demand attention or want to be heard as well. The correctness of this early understanding of the social space is directly connected to the child's relational experiences with the parents, experiences which should be shaped by unconditional acceptance (Medina, 2014), feelings of safety (Templar, 2012) and secure attachment (Wubbels et al., eds, 2012). From this point of view, the relationship with his/ her mother and the social model provided by her, during the first years of the child's life, represent an important predictor for the future social competences of the child, and also for his / her capacity of emotional self-regulation (Diener, KimDo-Yeong, 2004).

This kind of experiences are part of the child's social contacts background which he/ she possesses at the moment of inclusion in the broader social group of kindergarten. In the specialised literature, success at pre-school level as well as at school level is frequently associated with the cognitive and social skills that the child owns at the time of commencement of the kindergarten/school. The degree to which the child has an appropriate level of preparation for the cognitive and social environment of the kindergarten (readiness for preschool) represents a major concern of parents and teachers (Sahin et al., 2013), because it involves all the areas of child development. Some authors (Yair, 2013) emphasize the relationship between a pre-school child's social competences and his / her ability to process social information: mental processes are translated into social skills and, consecutively, in readiness for integration into the kindergarten and school social environment. Moreover, other authors (Arnold et al., 2012) have come to the conclusion that a good social functioning of the child constitutes a solid foundation for integration and success in the educational system, adding to this framework the positive feelings of the child in relation to the social environment of the preschool institution or school.

Getting used to the social group represented by the pre-school / school institution is associated with the child's social-emotional profile (Denham et al., 2012), defined as the ability of socio-emotional learning, awareness of one's own emotions, social behaviors and emotional self-regulation. Such non-cognitive abilities (Lipnevich, Roberts, 2012), including emotions, impulses and relationships with others, appear to be linked to the early experiences of the child, which draws attention to the importance of the emotional state of the pre-school child when we refer to his/ her ability to adapt to the pre-school environment (Knitzer, Raver, 2002). The child's social competences are also supported and shaped by his / her type of temperament as well as by the strategies that the child holds in order to manage one's own emotions (Blair et al., 2004).

Given the multitude of levels involved in the child's social adaptation at pre-school age, it is noted that the family and kindergarten represent the two contexts with the greatest influence on the development and learning of the pre-school child, and the relationship between these two factors is essential to the success of the child from a social and cognitive point of view (Galindo, Sheldon, 2012).

## **2. Problem Statement**

As the child leaves behind the self-centeredness stage, stimulation by means of new cognitive and social learning opportunities, in the company of other children, acquires an increasing importance. From this point of view, kindergarten provides openness to novelty and diversity, responds to the child's

expanding curiosity and cognitive interests and provides an organized, stable programme, marked by rituals (morning meeting, meals or rest, transitions between activities and didactic games) and opportunities to acquire and develop autonomy skills, independence and self-confidence beyond the family circle. More than anything else, kindergarten provides the child with the opportunity to meet other children of the same age, constituting the catalyst for the development of verbal communication and building of relationships.

Adaptation, we believe, presupposes experiencing physical comfort, emotional sense of safety and acceptance of the social environment of kindergarten. The child's effort to adapt to the new environment of the kindergarten is doubled by the first conflicting feelings which accompany the transition from dependence and independence in relation to the family environment and, especially to the mother.

Practical experience has shown us that some children at the onset of kindergarten attendance, have difficulties in adjusting to the kindergarten environment: separation from parents takes a long time at the beginning of the day and is difficult; children do not engage in teaching activities and games, refuse to eat throughout the day and do not interact with other children.

### **3. Research Questions**

Starting from the specialized literature, and from our own professional experience, complementary to the academic one, we formulated the following assumptions in order to approach the research issue :

3.1. Pre-school children who come from a highly protective family system and were deprived of any experiences of physical, emotional and/or familial discomfort (in the sense of hyper-protection) go through a prolonged period of adaptation.

3.2. Children whose parents have a reserved, reticent attitude towards the kindergarten environment having difficulties of adaptation.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the issue of pre-school children's adaptation to the kindergarten environment and demands, setting the following objectives:

4.1. Identification of the factors involved in the children's getting used to the kindergarten environment.

4.2. Identification of the optimal strategies that may be adopted within the kindergarten as well as within the family-kindergarten relationship, so that the difficulties of adaptation of the children at the kindergarten environment to be alleviated or even eliminated.

### **5. Research Methods**

5.1. For checking the truth value of the hypotheses formulated, we included in the present study 30 pre-school age children (2-3 years), enrolled in "My Friends" Kindergarten, a pre-school educational institution with extended programme from Bucharest, Romania, as well as their parents. We included in the study one parent of each of the 30 children. The study took place during the first semester of the school year 2016-2017, respectively in the period September 2016 – January 2017. The children included

in the study had no previous experience of socialization in a social group, other than the primary group of the family at the time of their inclusion in the sample group, in the sense that they had not attended any other kindergarten/nursery previously. Also, all children included in the study are the only children of the family and until the inclusion in the kindergarten had been solely in the care of their mother and father and, occasionally, grandparents.

5.2. The methods and research techniques used were the interview based survey, based on an interview guide and direct, participatory observation by means of which behavioural indices of the child were studied in the context of the group of children in the kindergarten. Also, weekly talks with the parents were organized.

▪ *The interview-based survey* was carried out at the time of the child's enrollment in kindergarten, based on an interview guide for parents. It was aimed at collecting data on the following indices: the child's attachment type (secure/anxious), social behavior of the child within the family or outside the family (uses verbal / non-verbal greetings; initiates verbal / non-verbal communication with family members, or other less known people and children of the same age; shows interest for new, unknown games and toys.). We also took into account the behavior model provided by the parent, the parent's attitude towards the exploratory behaviors of the child (encourages exploratory behaviors; does not sanction the exploration of the more distant physical environment of course, within certain safety limits); transmits verbal and non-verbal messages of safety, trust / unsafety, mistrust in new situations for the child; manifest hyper-criticism /hyper-protection towards the child; manifest excessive authority / a careless attitude towards the negative behaviors of the child) and not ultimately the parent's attitude towards the kindergarten (degree of trust/mistrust expressed in relation to the kindergarten staff; excessive focus on the activities carried out by the child in the kindergarten or on the contrary, lack of interest regarding the child's activities in the kindergarten).

Observation of the children included in the survey took place daily, during the morning programme of the first two weeks spent in kindergarten, within the framework of structured teaching activities, games and freely chosen activities. We recorded the variation of certain behaviour indices of the children in the sample group: behaviour at the moment of entry into the kindergarten, at the moment of separation from the parent, duration of the separation process; verbal / non-verbal response behaviors at the teacher's initiative; verbal/non-verbal response behaviour at the initiative of other children; verbal/non-verbal communication initiation with the teacher; verbal/nonverbal communication initiation with other children; interest in relation to toys and activities; the degree of involvement in the games and the activities; the presence of tantrum crises in frustrating situations / situations perceived as frustrating by the child; responsiveness to the rules; responsiveness to the explanations given by an adult; behaviour at the moment of reunion with the parent, at the end of the day spent in the kindergarten.

*Discussions* with the parents were held three times a week at the end of the programme, during the two weeks when the children were observed. They were conducted by the authors of the present study as manager-coordinator of the kindergarten (a) and respectively psycho-pedagogue of the kindergarten (b). These talks had the role of investigating qualitatively the parent's attitude towards the progress made by the child in the process of habituation with the kindergarten environment. They also had the role to support the parent's correct attitude towards the child's progress in the process of

adaptation to the kindergarten environment, manifested as trust in the child's adaptive capacities, trust in relation to the kindergarten staff and the activities carried out by them in the framework of an educational programme, the balance of firmness and gentleness in the event of a possible failure of the child initial adaptive capacity and the possible manifestations of refusal to come to kindergarten.

## 6. Findings

In order to interpret the data collected using the methods and techniques of research presented and to design the appropriate adaptive strategies of the children to the kindergarten environment, it is important to make reference to the characteristics of the kindergarten in which we conducted the study, and to specify that that it offers the framework supporting the initiation and carrying out of the suggested strategies. The kindergarten in which the present study was carried out is a private pre-school institution, competitive at international standards, in which we follow the development of affective-motivational factors and creative attitudes, related to the development potential of each child. The didactic activities carried out in the kindergarten comply with the documents adopted by national authorities; in addition, in this kindergarten the educational process observes the principles of focusing on the child and his/ her interests and respects the individual rhythm of development of each child. Children are therefore included into a friendly environment, which is also trustworthy for parents and which offers permanent professional development for its staff. Smart play is the essence of our approach and we teach the little ones to enjoy every moment of the play and to play at every step of learning.

Each group of children carries out learning and playing activities under the coordination of a teacher, assisted by two permanent caregivers; the non-teaching staff is carefully selected according to the criteria of professional qualification and pedagogical abilities. Each group has its own space consisting of an activity room, bedroom and bathroom. In addition, the kindergarten has other numerous spaces for optional activities: gym halls and indoor swimming pool, indoor and outdoor playgrounds, cafeteria, laboratories and classrooms with distinct destinations as well as a documentation and information centre and library for parents. The building is equipped with modern furnishings and materials adapted to the age level and complying with the legal norms in force. All these facilities related to personnel, space and equipment are meant to support a wide range of educational activities such as individual and team sports, science clubs, performing arts, painting and modelling, computer science, foreign languages, photography, cookery, speech therapy and personal development etc. The kindergarten systematically organizes extracurricular activities, which focus on non-formal education, as well as on the child-family-kindergarten interaction.

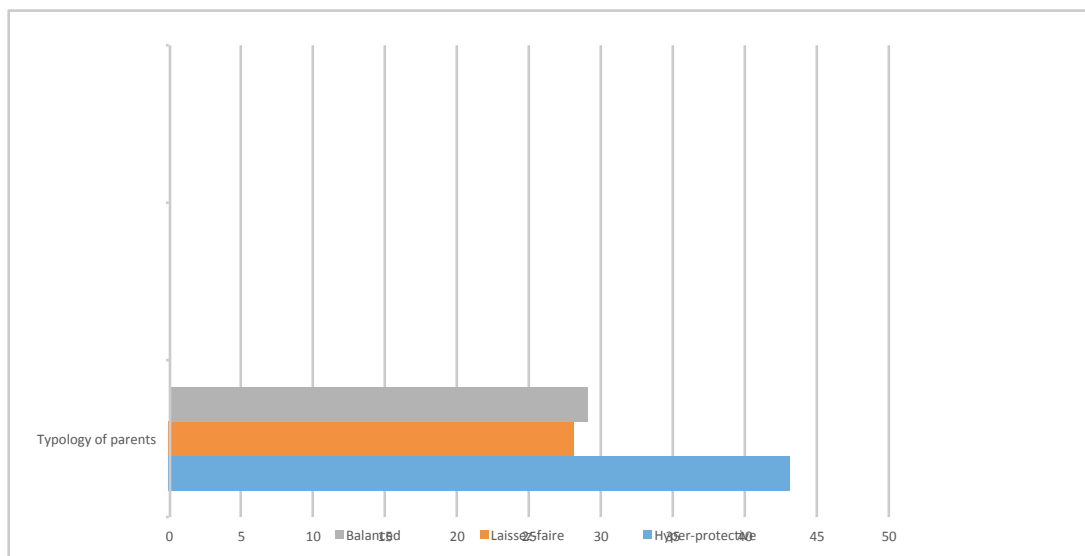
6.1. As regards the data collected by means of the interview with the parents, the results showed that 43% of the parents included in the study have built a dependence relationship with the child, with disorganized attachment, in which the child has not been given the freedom to experience new situations, to initiate behaviour and conduct; this type of parents have induced anxiety to the child in relation to new, unknown situations, the parents being hyper-protective and hyper-critical in relation to the child, although at the declarative level they want to protect the child from any kind of discomfort. In such cases, the children have only sporadically had the opportunity to experience playgrounds or educational centers

in the company of other children, parents being excessively cautious regarding the physical and emotional safety of the child.

Another category of parents resulting from the analysis and interpretation of data collected through the interview is that of parents with an excessively relaxed attitude towards the child -28%. These parents have not imposed any behaviour constraints to the child starting from the premises of a free development of the child's personality. They have not imposed their authority in any situation, not even in risky ones for the child. However, in situations when the child's social manifestations become obtrusive (tantrum crises, crying, anger crises, etc.) and are regarded as an attack to the image and status of the parents, they become excessively normative, authoritative and use the withdrawal of affection as a penalty for the child's behaviour. Children with such parents had the opportunity to experience different social situations, but without understanding the social limits of one's own behavior and not managing to overcome the initial self centeredness development stage.

The third category of parents identified by means of the interview - 29% - is the one of the emotionally and attitudinally balanced parents, who created the context for the formation of a secure attachment of the child. They gave the child the freedom to experience the environment in physical and emotional safety conditions, but at the same time, have imposed limits in the face of some physically or socially risky, respectively undesirable behaviors of the child. Children have experienced various situations, and parents encouraged them to explore different types of social groups. These children had the opportunity to interact with children of the same age, with children of different ages and with different adults, more or less known to the child. In addition, parents in this category have kept the balance of firmness and gentleness towards the child, correctly discriminating between needs and wants. Such parents don't use "tricking" mechanisms and keep their promises to the child.

Figure 01 exemplifies this distribution of patterns established within the group of parents included in the batch.



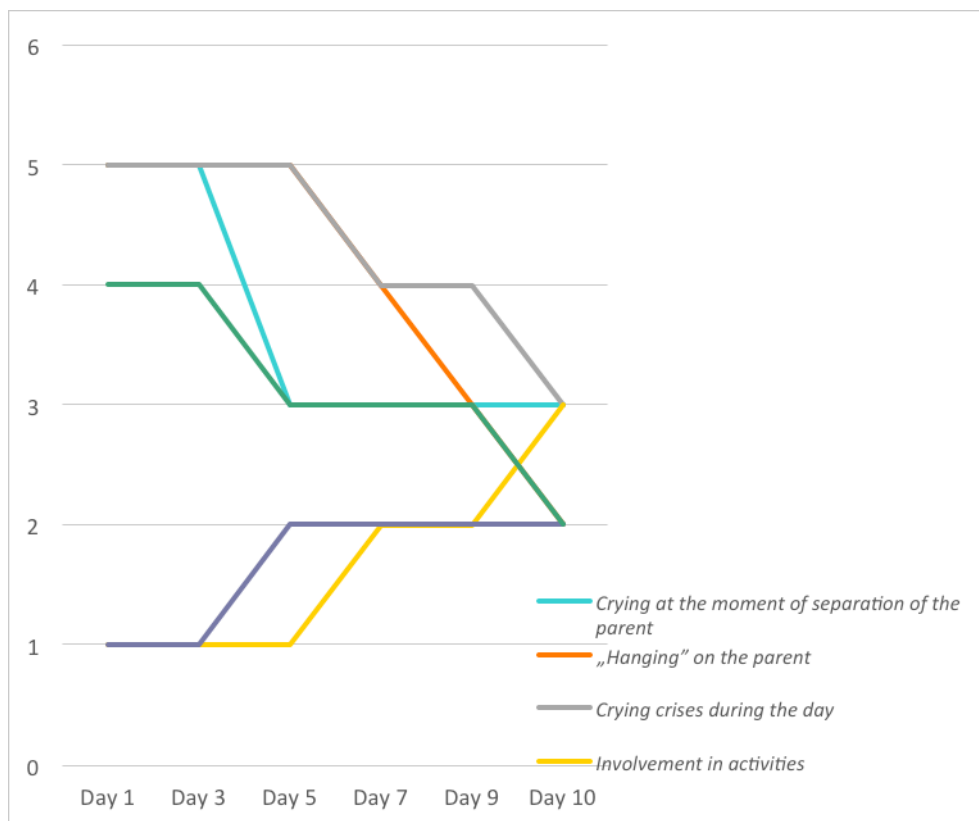
**Figure 01.** Typology of parents included in the study

6.2. During the first two weeks of kindergarten attendance of the children included in the study, we carried out direct-participatory observations and we recorded the reactions and manifestations of the children, classifying them according to intensity on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 represents the maximum intensity and 1 the minimum intensity. The reactions/ behaviours under observation were:

- crying at the moment of separation from the parent,
- "hanging" on the parent at the moment of the separation,
- the presence of crying crises throughout the day,
- degree of engagement in activities and games,
- complying with rules,
- crying at the moment of reunion with the parent.

We studied the way in which these manifestations / behaviours evolved during the period of the study, corroborating these data with the typology of parents as resulted from the survey interview conducted with the parents included in the present study.

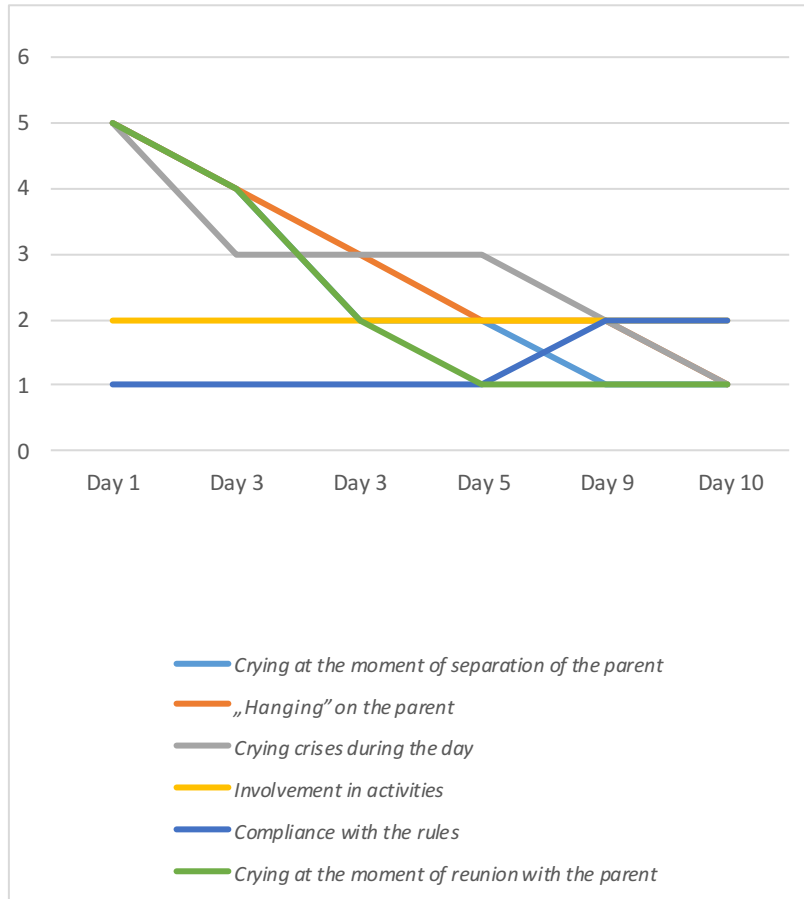
Figure. 02 presents the evolution of the negative manifestations of children whose parents, as resulting from the survey interview, manifest a hyper-protective attitude and have established an unsafe attachment type of relationship. We notice a maximum intensity of the negative manifestations in the early days of kindergarten attendance at the kindergarten, both at the moment of separation and of reunion with the parent. We also notice, the intensity of crisis of crying during the day, non-compliance with the rules and frequent lack of involvement (or sporadic involvement) in the activities and games. All these reactions and events gradually decreased in intensity, but they were still present on the last day of the interval of observation.



**Figure 02.** Evolution of the manifestations of children whose parents have a hyper-protective attitude

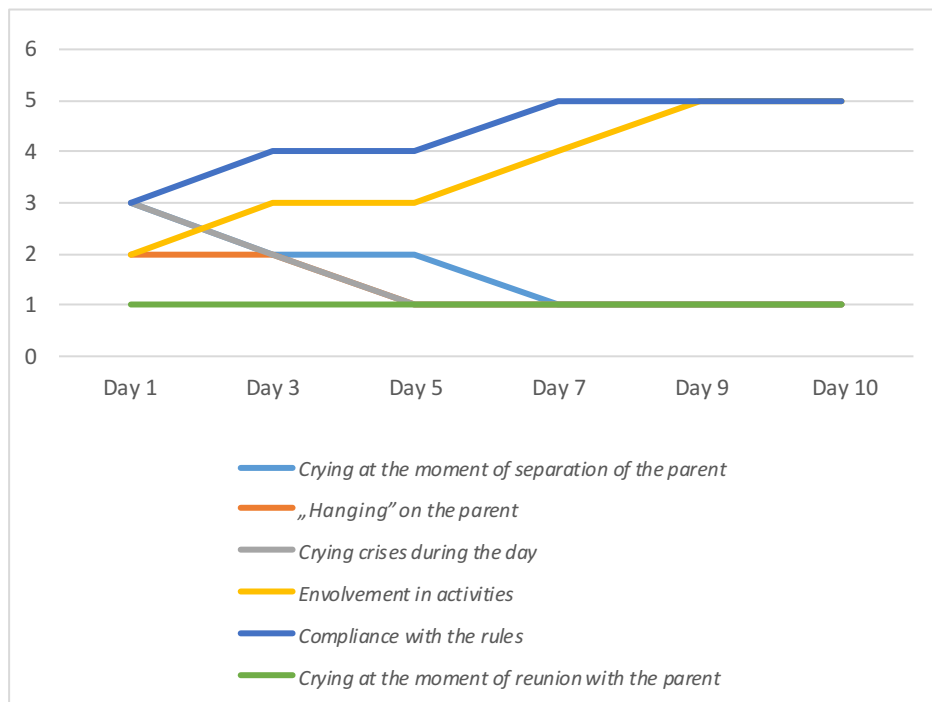


The evolution of the children whose parents have a *laissez faire* attitude, as resulting from the survey interview, is shown in Figure 03. The high intensity of certain manifestations recorded in the first days of kindergarten attendance decreased significantly – it is the case of crying or "hanging" on the parent at the moment of separation, while less progress was registered in the case of others: complying with the rules or engagement in activities.



**Figure 03.** Evolution of the manifestations of children whose parents have a *laissez-faire* attitude

The children whose parents have a balanced attitude, who have built safe attachment and have supported the development of exploring and socializing capacities, recorded significant decreases of the negative behaviours even from the first days of kindergarten attendance, while the positive manifestations, such as involvement in the proposed activities and compliance with the rules increased. Moreover, this category of children registered, even in the early days of the observation interval, low intensities of the negative manifestations, compared to the other two categories of children. They easily involved in activities and games, and compliance with rules rules did not create emotional discomfort to this category of children. This evolution is shown in Figure 04.



**Figure 04.** Evolution of the manifestations of children whose parents have a balanced attitude

The interpretation of these developments from a qualitative point of view, shows that the negative manifestations of the children whose parents have a balanced attitude have low intensity and significantly decrease in intensity as compared to children whose parents have a hyper-protective attitude, respectively those whose parents have a laissez faire attitude. The children whose parents have a hyper-protective attitude perceive the novelty and complexity of the kindergarten environment as potentially dangerous, aversive, and the separation from parents, in the morning, represents an extremely anxiogenic moment. The evolution in manifestations of children whose parents have a laissez faire attitude, show that these children perceive the kindergarten environment as being potentially aversive and, above all, extremely restrictive, which affects their adaptive mechanisms. We believe that the parents' attitude towards children is one of the key factors of the child's adaptation to the new environment represented by the kindergarten. This attitude influences the adaptive capacities social abilities of the child.

6.3. The discussions with the parents were held three times a week at the end of the programme, during the two weeks in which children were observed.

The parents characterized by a hyper-protective attitude have expressed deep fear related to the comfort the child and openly manifested their concerns related to the potential "trauma" that a child might experience at the beginning of kindergarten attendance and "exit" from the family environment. They also expressed their suspicions related to the child's physical comfort during the time spent in the kindergarten and their lack of confidence in the child's ability to adapt to this new environment. These parents were offered explanations related to the way their children perceive new environment at their age and were instilled with confidence about the progress made by the children.

The parents with a laissez faire attitude declared their dissatisfaction towards the negative manifestations of their child and tended to treat these manifestations toughly. They had an inconsistent

attitude, being inclined to scold the child for his / her behaviors in the kindergarten and to promise the child material rewards in exchange for good behaviour in the kindergarten. Within the discussions with these parents, we recommended giving up verbal punishment and material rewards, especially in the case of those rewards granted before any positive behaviour of the child. We also supported the parents in order to avoid punishment of the possible failures of the children adaptive efforts or their refusal to come to kindergarten. We also recommended consistency and firmness in bringing the child to kindergarten.

The parents with a balanced attitude accepted the difficulties their child may encounter in the adaptive process and admitted their own emotional difficulties that they experience at the same time with the child, but also their own capacity of coping with these states. Their overtly manifested confidence in the professionalism of the kindergarten staff was the basis of their openness towards our recommendations relating to the management of any emotional difficulties in respect of the child.

All the parents included in the study were recommended to collaborate with the staff of the kindergarten in order to overcome the difficulties encountered by children in the process of adapting to the kindergarten environment.

## **7. Conclusion**

Following the interpretation of the results obtained, we formulated conclusions related to the process of adaptation of the children to the kindergarten environment, and to the factors involved in this process as well as possible strategies to support adaptation.

7.1. As regards the first hypothesis formulated: pre-school children who come from a highly protective family system and were deprived of any experiences of physical, emotional and/ or familial discomfort (in the sense of hyper-protection) go through a prolonged period of adaptation - we believe that it has been confirmed. These children have experienced a maximum intensity of negative manifestations, both at the separation from and reunion with the parent. They also experienced episodes of intense crying during the day and lack of involvement (or sporadic involvement) in the activities and games, avoiding interaction with other children and interacting with difficulty with the adults in the kindergarten, including their teacher.

Children whose parents have a balanced attitude have been characterized by a sharp decrease of negative behaviours after the first two or three days spent in kindergarten, engaging in activities and interacting with other children and with the adults in the kindergarten.

Children whose parents have an attitude of laissez-faire have registered negative manifestations that decreased in intensity after the first week spent at the kindergarten; they interacted intensely only with their teacher and occasionally with other children, having a difficult adaptation to rules and to situations perceived as frustrating.

The second hypothesis formulated – the children whose parents have a reserved, reticent attitude, towards the kindergarten environment have difficulties of adaptation – was partly confirmed and we have planned a continuation of study in order to fully understand the way in which this type of parents influence their children's adaptation to new environments.

From the data collected through the study, it has been found out that the parents with a hyper-protective attitude towards their children have a reserved attitude towards the kindergarten environment

and to their child's adaptive capacity. As the study has revealed, these children were the ones that displayed the most intense and prolonged negative reactions towards the kindergarten environment.

7.2. The parents with a balanced attitude were the ones who showed an open attitude, confidence in the kindergarten's capacity to provide a comfortable physical and emotional environment for their children. The children of such parents have shown higher adaptive capacity to the kindergarten environment, proved by the low intensity and short duration of the negative manifestations.

7.3. Based on these findings, we believe that the parental attitudes towards their own child's adaptive capabilities, as well as towards the kindergarten, as a physically and emotionally safe environment are a determining factor for the characteristics of the child's adaptation process to the kindergarten environment.

Another factor that we consider of high importance is the kindergarten staff's attitude in relation to the child and also in relation to his / her parents. Focusing on the child, respecting the individual rhythm of adaptation, understanding the child's previous socializing experiences outside the family are elements supporting the child during the process of adaptation. From this perspective, we believe that kindergarten, through all the human and material resources at its disposal, has a major role in shaping the adaptive capacities of the child and, for that matter, in the entire process of socialization of the child.

7.4. Based on the interpretation of the data collected in the present study and on the findings, we have developed a strategy for the gradual adaptation of the children to the kindergarten, which consists of the following steps:

- The child visits the kindergarten accompanied by his / her parents and teacher is introduced to him / her; at this stage, the child is accompanied by a parent during the activities carried out in the kindergarten;
- The beginning of the pre-school education is prepared by visiting the playgrounds, by story telling related to activities which are carried out in kindergarten or stories in which the characters go to kindergarten, so as to convey feelings of confidence and curiosity relative to the kindergarten environment and to other children;
- The initial presence of the children in the kindergarten, may last for a limited time of 1-2 hours; during this period the teacher interacts closely with the child and the parents are asked to remain in the waiting area of the kindergarten;
- The gradual increase of the time that the child spends in kindergarten, while starting to interact with the other children, with the support of the teacher. The initial stage is the strengthening of the teacher – child interaction followed by child-child interaction and only later the child is put in a position to interact with the whole group of children;
- Shortening of the length of separation process from the parents, in the morning; we recommend the parents to announce that child that they will leave and that they will return to take him / her home, while specifying a concrete time landmark related to the child's specific daily rituals in the kindergarten (for example, after lunch, after the afternoon snack or after a certain optional activity that the child likes);

- The beginning of optional activities, which involve socialization with other adults in the kindergarten (specialized teachers) is recommended to begin only after the negative manifestations of the child fall sharply in intensity, and the child demonstrates a state of comfort related to the kindergarten environment, interacting easily with the other children and adults in the kindergarten.
- Avoiding, during the activities in the kindergarten, of an imposing, severe attitude of the of teachers and auxiliary staff; the child is not forced to carry out any activity, and does not receive negative feedback in the case of such a refusal. Our purpose is to convey the child's trust in the kindergarten staff, and to generate feelings of safety and acceptance.
- For the adaptation of children with intense, negative manifestation that continue over a period of time longer than 2 weeks, we recommend spending a long time in the kindergarten in the presence of the parents, but in a neutral space such as the very spacious waiting lobby, equipped with a multitude of toys and educational games. Parents are advised to avoid keeping the child in their arms, and to give him / her the freedom to explore the new space, while the kindergarten staff intervenes only sporadically, attempting to relate with the child in a non-intrusive manner. Other spaces we use for this sort of habituation are those intended for sports and ludic activities, where the child experiences a state of comfort that can be easily associated with the more general environment of the kindergarten.
- Support for parents in their process of adaptation, through a coordinated program of parenting advice from expert staff of the kindergarten (psychologist / psycho-pedagogue). This programme of counseling seeks to support the parents in their own effort of adaptation related to the transition to a new form of the parent-child relationship, marked by a decreasing dependence of the child to his parents and by the intervention of other adults responsible for his / her care and education. We are planning to direct our future research towards the scientific development of such a programme.

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