

## Conference Paper

# Family As a Condition of the Mental Health of a Child When Adapting To a Modern Kindergarten

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## Abstract

This paper considers the family as the basic condition for the mental health of a child when adapting to kindergarten. The specific features of the intrafamilial conditions and factors shaping the mental health of a preschool child are shown. Scientific data on the regularities of a child's passage through the adaptation period and the important role of the family for the dynamics of the adaptation process are provided. Analysis of empirical evidence of long-term interaction with families of pupils attending kindergartens of the Leninsky District of Ekaterinburg served to find out the influence of new social relations on the emotional well-being of a child and its parents upon admission to kindergarten. The intrafamilial problems deteriorating the psychophysical health of a child and complicating its adaptation to kindergarten are revealed. It is shown that these problems lead to emotional instability, developmental delay, as well as the troubled behavior and communication of a child. The peculiarities of how the adaptation period affects the parents are considered when parents reassess their attitude towards parenthood and their child in the process of the social assessment and new social conditions. The specific activities of the teaching staff when interacting with the child's family members for the sake of maintaining and strengthening the child's mental health are outlined. An analysis of the various forms and techniques of communication between teachers and specialists of preschool institutions dedicated to the psychological and pedagogical support of the family for raising the psychological awareness of parents is provided. The participation of parents in the interaction with teachers encourages their further active interaction, and such an active participation forms the background for maintaining and strengthening the mental health of a child while adapting to kindergarten.

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## 1. Introduction [12-Point, Bold, Upper Case and Left Alig.]

### 1.1. How does the family affect the mental health and development of a preschool child?

The priority of family education is enshrined in the legislation of the Russian Federation regulating the activities of preschool educational institutions and organizations. Thus, it is noted that parents have a preferential right to the education and upbringing of their children over other persons, and kindergartens are required to provide psychological and pedagogical support to the family and enhance the competence of parents in the issues related to the development, education, as well as promotion of the good health of children.

By studying the influence of the family on the psychophysical and personal development of a preschool child, it was possible to identify that the life-values of children and their parents are conscious perceptions of their importance for a person, and are conditioned by the nature of individual needs and interests of an individual that are formed in line with the adoption of the parental awareness of family values [2].

The personal traits of the parent, personal and individual traits of the child, particulars of the child-to-parent relationship, as well as the level of the parents' psychological well-being and their psychophysical health are the conditions and factors determining the effectiveness and quality of parenting [6].

The maturity of the parental upbringing style and harmonious emotional interaction can be deemed as the factors promoting the favorable adequate personal development of a preschool child [5].

Thus, the upbringing of a child becomes the socially-significant activity of parents, who should adhere to the conditions and means of upbringing that meet the requirements of the times [4].

Educational potential and the given family distinctions affect the mental health of children. The socio-economic status, socio-cultural, socio-psychological and socio-role features of a family are a significant factor influencing the extent or absence of mental health problems for the family and the child [8].

The family as a system and parenthood as its subsystem both determine the mental health of children, making a background for their normative development. The unconscious parental influence and fuzzy educational goals lead to a stressful state of a child and give boost to the formation of psychosomatic disorders that can result in persistent disturbances not only in psychophysical health, but also in personal development [3].

The family acts as the social institution that builds up the social norms and rules of a child's behavior and forms conditions for its emotional and mental safety. However, recently, the cooperation of teachers with parents at the time of admission to the kindergarten has been hampered, which is attributed to the transformation of the child-to-parent relationship, the changing traditional forms of family education, and the worsened state of the psychophysical health of preschool children [9].

## 1.2. How does the family influence the child's adaptation to kindergarten?

The period of adaptation of a child to kindergarten is widely brought out in the scientific literature on preschool education as the child's interaction in a new social environment imposing its own rules, norms and requirements.

The regularities of a child's success in engaging in the adaptation period and the extent and specific features of adaptive reactions largely depend on the home traditions pertaining to a family, the stability of conditions in which a given family lives and interacts with the surrounding world, as well as sustainable forms of behavior of children and adult family members. The child's keeping to the daily regime, its formation of adequate home habits pertaining to its age, the expansion of social contacts, the positive attitude of a child and its parents towards kindergarten, and the parents' understanding of the age-specific features of their child all contribute to an easy and favorable adaptation (Serova, 2016).

Soon after enrolling in kindergarten, children experience stress, which makes their mind go through serious tests. The factors that affect the course of the adaptation process cover not only the child's traits and features (state of health, the need for communication with peers and adults, the development of independence, etc.), but also highlight the role of the mother and her attitude towards the preschool institution, the type of attachment of a child to its mother and the nature of emotional interaction in the mother-to-child dyad [1].

The interaction of teachers with the family when enrolling a child in kindergarten should be focused on developing the parents' awareness and skills required to implement the educational path of their child. The kindergarten should take steps of distinctive importance towards encouraging parents to join parent teams, establishing a friendly relationship with teachers and specialists, promoting the parents' aspiration towards earning the respect and recognition of their family by other participants to the educational process. The psycho-pedagogical educational activities should necessarily

consider the level of readiness of parents for educational activities, the specific needs in improving the family's educational skills and the education level of each parent [7].

If to assume mental health as a state of mental well-being, the absence of painful mental manifestations, bringing the behavior and activity in line with the conditions of reality, then the enormous influence on the child's mental health by the family forms the **problem** of psychological and pedagogical support of a family throughout the child's adaptation to kindergarten.

## 2. Methodology

This study accumulates many years of experience in psychological and pedagogical work with young families in the period of adaptation of their child to kindergarten. The study employed **methods** such as standardized observation, analysis of children's adaptation sheets and standard diagnostic techniques, analysis of counseling information, interviews, questionnaires and polls of parents and teachers. This study draws on the **methodology** of attachment theory and the system approach, when the system is viewed as an aggregate of elements that form a certain integrality arising from interaction cases and acquire new integrative properties that emerge only in this aggregate and did not exist before it.

### 2.1. Subjects (cases)

The study subjects were

1. parents, pupils and teachers of Kindergarten No. 26 Municipal Budgetary Preschool Educational Institution of the Leninsky District of Ekaterinburg;
2. parents, pupils and teachers of the kindergartens of the Leninsky District of Ekaterinburg (basically represented by employees of the Regional Methodical Association of Teachers and Psychologists of the Education Department of the District Administration).

### 2.2. Procedure

The study was conducted within the scope of the psychological and pedagogical support rendered to young families and their children during the enrollment of the child to kindergarten within the period of its adaptation to a preschool institution. The results

of work of the psychologist teacher accomplished within their functional duties and according to their job descriptions were analyzed.

### 3. Results

Kindergarten No. 26 Municipal Budgetary Preschool Educational Institution of the Leninsky District of Ekaterinburg is engaged in studying how a family influences a child's mental health and the specific features of the adaptation dynamics for a preschool child for over 20 years.

When enrolling in kindergarten, a child meets the adaptation processes that occur at different levels:

1. physiological (daily regime, meals, hygiene procedures, walks, etc.);
2. psychological (being parted from the family, the need for self-correction of behavior);
3. social (new relationships with adults and peers).

It was revealed that the emotional well-being and mental health of a child in the period of adaptation produce an essential impact on the new social ties and interactions faced by a child and its parents for the first time:

1. between a child and its teacher;
2. between pupils in a group;
3. between parents and teachers;
4. among all the parents of the children's group;
5. between parents and the administration of a kindergarten;
6. among parents within the same family;
7. between the child's parents and other family members involved in interaction with the kindergarten;
8. among parents and friends with children attending kindergartens.

Thus, the processes of adaptation of a child also extends to its parents, who find themselves in the new social conditions and social evaluation system.

Special mention should be made of the problems of social communication that arise between the parents of a child and their colleagues and the administration of the organization where they are employed. These problems arise in connection with the need of the parents to change their working hours to allocate time for attending the general events of the kindergarten (e.g. parental meetings, matinees or open classes), possible sick leaves, etc. In this regard, the problems arising at work due to the child attending kindergarten largely affect the emotional state of the parents negatively, which complicates their child's adaptation flow.

These interactions make the parental behavior, parental culture, and particulars of the relationship of the parents with their child and the motivational and valuation component of parenthood a focus of social assessment.

The adaptation processes leads to changes occurring in various spheres of the parents' lives, often urging them to adjust their behavior and style of communication, as well as revise their attitudes.

Upon admission to an educational institution, in addition to the social assessment of a child (how it conforms to age norms, its communication patterns and behavior, etc.), its relationship with parents are also a focus of assessment, with the child-to-parent relationship features to be manifested with respect to other families when parents of a children's group are interacting. Of particular importance are the child's habits of self-care and ways of resolving problem situations, in which family members who create an emotional background for the child's stay in the kindergarten should participate.

It was found out that the family's attitude to the kindergarten, teachers, the daily regime or the conditions of stay can facilitate, worsen or even adversely affect the child's mental health.

Therefore, a number of problems that worsen the psychophysical health of the child and hamper its adaptation to kindergarten can be singled out:

1. parents with inadequate ideas about the age-specific and individual characteristics of young children;
2. the negative attitude of parents towards kindergarten;
3. a family with conflicting styles of parenting;
4. parents not recognizing the authority of a teacher communicating certain pedagogical requirements that the family should adhere to;
5. the child having problems in its psychophysical, personal development or behavior;

6. parents shifting the responsibility for their child to other family members and relatives;
7. the immaturity of the personal attitudes of the parents;
8. parents having excessive or low expectations in relation to the level of development of their child;
9. low level of household, hygienic and general culture, etc.

A child with these problems is characterized by emotional instability, prolonged and constant crying, delay in the development of age-related hygienic skills, difficulties in falling asleep and eating, as well as disturbances in the development of behavioral self-control. Such children often lack interest in communicating with adults and peers; they repeat the same monotonous actions and very unwillingly part with their parents in the morning.

The results obtained lead to the need for interaction with parents in the period of adaptation to kindergarten and the psycho-pedagogical support of the family as the basic condition for maintaining and strengthening the mental health of the child.

All types of interaction are made use of in cases when:

1. working with a parent face-to-face;
2. working with a pupil's family;
3. working with a group of parents upon request.

Within the context of the kindergarten-parent relationship when a child is adapting to a preschool institution, for the maintenance of its mental health and emotional well-being, the work of the entire teaching staff should involve offering parents various forms and methods of interaction:

1. Involving teachers in familiarizing parents with the kindergarten daily regime, sanitary and epidemiological rules and regulations, helping with the development of hygienic skills and self-care of children characteristic of a given age, the rules and norms of communication of pupils with adults and peers, the particulars of learning the educational program, the features of the participation of the parents in the life of their child when attending kindergarten,
2. Involving educational specialists (psychologist teacher, speech therapist, physical education instructor, music teacher) in familiarizing parents with the age-specific

features and individual developmental characteristics of the child, helping them to correct the child's behavior, learning the techniques of improving child-to-parent relationship, discussing possible problems in the child's educational program and ways to resolve them, the particulars of properly organizing the family education and development for strengthening the psycho-physical health of a child, the particulars of how a family affects the development of a preschool child, etc.;

3. Involving the kindergarten administration (the head, deputy head) in familiarizing parents with the legislative framework governing the kindergarten activities, informing parents on their rights and obligations in maintaining their child's psycho-physical health, and also familiarizing them with the educational program of the kindergarten and the particulars of the conditions for preserving the emotional well-being of pupils.

A variety of forms and techniques of work aimed at raising the psychological awareness of parents include lectures, seminars and briefings devoted to a wide range of child-to-parent relations for the development by the parents of ideas about adequate ways of influencing their child's behavior, instructing parents on how to develop the child's self-care and self-control skills characteristic of its age, and informing them about the particulars of the emotional development of an infant and preschooler.

Direct contact with parents in individual or family counseling sessions help form the subjective position of parents as participants to the educational and upbringing processes for maintaining the emotional well-being and mental health of their children.

Psychological and pedagogical information available in electronic version on the website of the kindergarten and in printed form promotes an adequate and positive perception by parents of their child. The themes covered by the information materials to be handled and communicated to parents are necessary for the family even before the child's first visit to kindergarten. In particular, there are *Recommendations to Parents for Preparing a Child for Kindergarten*, *Typical Mistakes of Parents when Adapting a Child to Kindergarten*, *Techniques for Easier Parting with a Child Leaving for Kindergarten in the Morning*, *Degrees of Infant and Preschooler Adaptation to Kindergarten*, *Causes Evoking a Child to Cry*, etc.

## 4. Conclusions

Therefore, the **conclusion** can be made that, taking into account the influence of the family on the mental health of a child when adapting to kindergarten, the family



should be provided with psychological and pedagogical support and the psychological awareness of the parents raised during the teacher-to-parent interactions. The period of adaptation of a child to kindergarten is also an adaptation period for its parents, when they are reassessing their attitude to parenthood and to their child. The parents' well-shaped ideas about the appropriate interaction with their child, other children of the group, their parents, teachers and the administration will help all family members maintain interest in the life and health of their child. Participation in the development and upbringing of children stimulates parents to further active cooperation and positive interaction with teachers and educational specialists, and creates the conditions for maintaining and strengthening the mental health of a child when adapting to kindergarten.

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