

PARENTS COUNSELING FOR IMPROVING THE CAPACITY OF SOCIALIZATION OF THEIR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract: *Social networks are gaining more and more users among adults and adolescents. Socialization is not done anymore, nowadays face to face, but online. One of the major effects of this phenomenon is the socialization difficulties that preschool children have when entering kindergarten. The purpose of the present research is to improve the socialization capabilities of preschoolers, using as a method the counseling of parents. The counseling process lasted two months and have been approached topics related to parent-child relationships, parent's identification of the child's stimulation needs, ways of meeting these needs, parents' involvement in the children's games, parents' collaboration with the kindergarten represented by educator and social worker. The intensity of the difficulties of socializing the children was appreciated at the beginning and the end of the experiment. The results show that if the parents are more involved in the activities of the children following the counseling by the social worker, then their ability to socialize will see significant improvements.*

Key words: *preschool children; socializing difficulties; parents; counselling;*

Theoretical frame

IT technologies have grown rapidly lately, and online social networking has gained a large number of users. The Internet and smartphone becomes necessary tools in our daily activities, for professional activities and recreational purpose (Tudorel et al., 2018). More and more adults are adept at this mode of communication on the one hand due to lack of time (working hours from 9am to 5pm covering most of the day) on the other hand because it is easier to stay home and talk with whom you want, rather than getting ready to go out to meet someone. Digital applications allows people to use the internet, email, and video games directly on their smartphone (Vintila et al., 2018).

The use of these networks, besides the imminent dangers of knowing all kinds of strangers about whom you only know what they want you to know, also implies multiple negative effects on children. Parents drastically reduce their activities with their children and the time they spend together. In the short time that remains after the completion of the professional program and the necessary household activities, they prefer to stay on social networks, instead of playing with children or reading or explaining different things. Many times they do not even answer the children's questions, which remains with a series of unknown and unexplained things.

It is known that at this age children learn most things through imitation and identification. They will tend to mimic the behaviors of their parents (ie to stay on the phone or computer) and will identify with the parents' behavior, considering that this is the correct one. As a consequence, more and more children are no longer going out to play with the block neighbors, but are sitting in the house in front of the computer, playing all kinds of games or in front of the TV watching cartoons. The literature show that adolescents with a lack of social support or poor social and familial relationships, tend to isolate themselves, feel lonely and depressed, therefore they will search for online support in the virtual environment (Tudorel &

Vintila, 2018). All this causes the child to live in an imaginary, fictional world, which, can be very easy to confuse with reality.

Socialization is a social process in which the human being goes through several successive stages in a framework of permanent interaction. Through socialization, the following are transmitted and structured:

- *communication modalities*: linguistic, symbolic, expressive (non-verbal) coding systems;
- *social models of behavior* based on functional norms considered as values in a certain culture;
- *instrumental sets* (ways of knowing, learning etc.);
- *possibilities of interpersonal relationships* as forms of behavior characteristic of group life;
- *motivational-affective modeling* of the individual (www.rasfoiesc.com/educatie/psihologie).

The vast majority of authors agree that, in a general sense, socialization is an assimilation of social experiences (knowledge, norms, ideals and roles) that essentially influence the formation of the person's capacities of action, their conceptions determining the development of personality traits, social intelligence, personal and collective motives and aspirations.

Complex social behaviors are assimilated through social learning modalities, which are located in continuation of imitation, such as identification. Identification is a process of knowledge and learning that seeks to explain how the child learns new behavior, social roles, or how he or she can develop internal control and awareness. Identification is a fundamental process in the socialization of the child, which incorporates rules, behavioral styles that transform them into a way of being appropriate, so that they are not subjected to isolation or even social exclusion (Mureşan, 1980, p. 105). The child's purchases are based on the openness to the world which offers an orientation to the world and to the world, outlining the limits of the subsequent receptivity of the person building the first universe of the child that identifies with the reality, reality that will be subsequently internalized (Stănciulescu, 1996, p.102).

Summarizing it can be said that socialization forms the education of the child, allows the transmission of knowledge and ensures the formation of the qualities necessary for social life. At the same time, it contributes to the control of instincts and needs and to the formulation of aspirations and ideals.

The process of socializing the child is multidimensional, contradictory and independent. In the path of the integration of the individual in the social life, two major phases can be distinguished, namely: primary socialization (which is done in the family) and secondary socialization (in kindergarten, school and other social institutions). In all societies, the family is the primary factor of socialization of the child. It is the framework in which the psychological and social needs of the child are met and in which the whole cycle of growth and development takes place. In this way, the family becomes the first integrating community that conditions all subsequent purchases of the child.

Primary or basic socialization allows learning the rules of conduct, norms and values that can be learned at a young age and which constitute the informational and affective baggage of any individual (Schifirnet, 1999, p. 101). Primary socialization is deeply affective, unlike the other forms of socialization, secondary and continuous, which are oriented towards affective neutrality. During the early childhood, socialization has a strong maternal character. The initiation of the child in the human life, the learning of the language, the acquisition of the values and the ways of becoming independent are realized in the relationship with the mother (Munteanu, 2009). The mother is the first model from which the child learns skills and acquires knowledge.

The family is the most important socialization environment, the place where the first social behaviors are formed (Breaz, Iovu, 2018). From this point of view the family will fulfill the function of socialization in four specific situations:

- *the situation of moral education* - is based on the relations of authority with the help of which are transmitted to the child the moral rules that must be learned. Through the family, the child acquires the first notions regarding duty, interdiction and responsibility, thus contributing to the formation of a generalized moral conscience (Baron, Byrne, 2004).

- *the situation of cognitive learning* - through which the child learns the system of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for coexistence in society (Bonchiş, 2002).

- *the situation of employing imagination* - which contributes to the development of anticipatory thinking and creative abilities (Dughi, Ropotă, 2018).

- *the psychological communication situation* - which contributes to the development of the specific human affectivity necessary for achieving a mental and moral balance (Voinea, 1993, p.62).

If it is analyzed the formation of the child's personality, it can be seen that the socialization process is intentional, through which the child acquires desirable behaviors necessary for coexistence and integration into society. By transmitting guidelines, the child can become a human being in a social sense, because he internalizes the formative models exercised by parents. Socialization will develop constant features in the child through which he will acquire his own identity in relation to the others, and the family is the place where this process takes place. The psychic traits that socialization develops are not innate, but are acquired from the first years of life (Petrea 2018).

The fundamental instrument of socialization and its content is the language through which the child receives patterns of behavior that can be applied immediately or subsequently useful for everyday life. Socialization cannot be achieved without language, which is learned by the child from adults and which becomes his most important tool in relationships with others. Through language the child can act on others, he / she can acquire new knowledge and the skills necessary for a good accommodation in the environment (Rotăraşu, 2019). If at first they were meaningless, words gradually become understood through their constant association with a particular object, phenomenon or action. Learning the terms means acquiring a vocabulary that includes varied knowledge, parents' life experiences as well as the society to which they belong. Through language parents can communicate to the child various emotional states, feelings and emotions.

The development of the language goes in parallel with the development of the thinking and the child tends towards an increasingly complex organization of thinking that will help him later to explain his phenomena of reality and to solve the problem situations that he will face in his life. From intuitive thinking, the child will arrive at language through thinking capable of formulating deductive or inductive reasoning (Schaffer, 2010).

The acquired knowledge will be harnessed with the help of appropriate skills and skills, which are also initially formed in the family, as the parents involve the child in the fundamental forms of activity specific to each age: play, learning and work (Verza and Verza, 2017). The structure and manifestation of aptitudes are strongly influenced by the favorable character of the family environment expressed through education, stimulation, valorization and appreciation. By stimulating the parents the child will gain not only sensory-motor skills (necessary in actions with and on objects), but also intellectual skills (which allow him better adaptations and the possibility of managing social situations correctly). Primary socialization includes besides the cognitive side also the affective side, which is equally important for the psychic balance of the person. The child identifies himself emotionally with the people around him, especially those who have a special significance for him, taking on roles and attitudes that he internalizes thus laying the foundations of future roles he will play in society (Vernon, 2006). The advantage of primary socialization lies precisely in the fact that it is realized in the family in an atmosphere full of affection which facilitates both the transmission and the acquisition of social values and norms. The positive role of the family in the process of socializing the child

is given, in particular, by the affective nature of the relationships that exist in the family and which constitute a background of safety and security for the child so necessary for its harmonious maturation. Affective factors are of great importance in this process giving rise to a determinism of the future trajectory of the child.

Although the role of the family changes as the child grows up his or her responsibilities do not diminish in intensity, as the other socializing agents involved subsequently, continually emphasize their importance. Over time, the attitude towards parents changes and moves from the affective-symbolic approach to other relationships required by the developmental stages that the child goes through. But he will always feel the need of a family as support in the dramatic stages that he must go through during puberty and adolescence (Bonchiş, 2002).

Through primary socialization, a symmetry between objective and subjective reality is reached, although this is not total. The content of what is learned, the order of learning and the program after which the learning takes place differs from one society to another, from one culture to another.

The identification of the child with the significant persons in his life is semi-automatic. The world appears to the child as a real and social world according to what others define as such. Piaget speaks of moral realism, that is, the way in which the child considers the rules and values imposed on him as real and necessary and believes that he must respect them in all conditions (Piaget, 2005).

In childhood, self-awareness is formed as the child realizes that he is the one who is involved or performs different actions. Based on the relationships he has with those in the family, the communication with them and the experience gained, the child acquires a personal identity and the feeling of permanence of this identity. This feeling is essential for adapting to subsequent changes and avoiding personality disorders that may occur in childhood and adolescence (Smith et al. 2010). The inability to acquire their own identity will cause the child to become a troubled youth, a social victim, frustrated and lacking in perspective (Tinica, 2004; Dickel, 2015)

The society, through the family, has a special influence, the child being fully culturalized in the family, in relation to the society in which he lives. The family lays the foundations of the future personality, pursuing an individuality based on harmony. Parents transmit values and beliefs, conceptions of the world and life, knowledge and habits and, in particular, language as a communication tool. The evolution of the child's personality results from the integration of all these meanings, criteria, symbols or action modes (Furtună, 2007).

Taking into account the rules of the society, the family lays the foundation of the child's adaptation for its proper integration in the psycho-social field. This integration will result from the formation of a totality and mental unit (Breaz, 2018). By means of the competition between the external environment and the internal environment of the child, a full development of his / her abilities and characteristics is reached, to a construction of his own that defines him as an individual. The child's behavior will become typical and unique, specific to a balanced personality.

Objectives and hypothesis

The main objective of our research was to improve and develop the socialization capacity of preschool children. In this sense, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H: *if the parents are more involved in the activities of the children following the counseling by the social worker, then their ability to socialize will register significant improvements.*

Methodology

Lot. In order to make up our lot, we studied the children from the small group, who one month after the beginning of the kindergarten were labeled by educators as having socialization

difficulties. Out of 74 children enrolled in the small group of the 2018-2019 school year, 32 presented difficulties of socialization in different degrees. These were the group of children with which it was worked and the research was carried out. Of the 32 children, 17 were boys and 15 were girls. It was worked with the parents of children with socialization difficulties, forming a counseling group of 43 parents (for some children both parents participated).

The type of family of children with socialization difficulties is shown in table 1 and figure 1:

Table 1. Type of family of origin

Type of family	Nr of children
organized	18
organized with problems	6
disorganized	8

From the perspective of the type of family, the vast majority of children come from organized families (a number of 18 children) and 6 children come from organized families, but currently have couple problems. Only 8 children come from so-called disorganized families. We use the term so-called because we have two children who are from single-parent families (their mothers have never been married and do not want to do so).

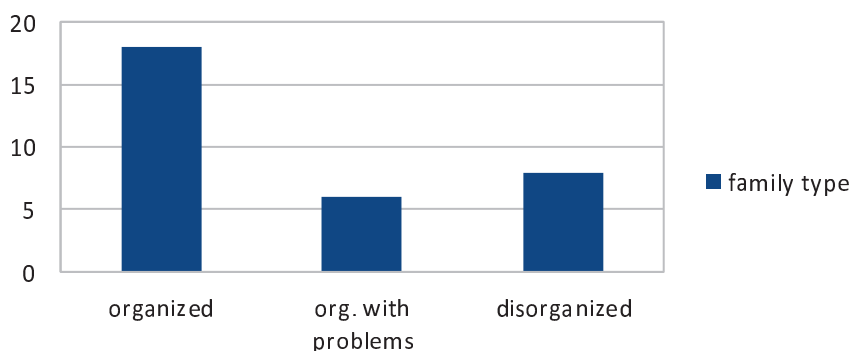


Figure 1. Type of family of origin

Method

Parents benefited from 8 counseling sessions (one per week), which addressed topics related to parent-child relationships, parents identification of the child's needs for stimulation, ways to meet these needs, parents involvement in children's games, parents' collaboration with the kindergarten represented by the educator and the social worker. Parents were asked to assess their children's progress after two months. Of course, parents' assessments are more subjective, given that it was their own child's assessment

Results and discussions

To verify the hypothesis, parents were asked at the beginning of the counseling sessions to evaluate on a scale from very little to very much, how much they are involved in the children's activities and how much time they spend with him daily. The results of this assessment are visible in table 2 and figure 2.

Table 2. Parents' appreciation of their involvement in the child's activities before counseling

Degree of involvement	nr. parents
very little	15
little	8
medium	7
a lot	2
verymuch	0

It is observed that most parents spend very little time with their child. This fact can be explained on the one hand by the working hours of the parents (most work from 9 to 17). In this way, until they get the children out of kindergarten, it is from 5.30 pm to 6.30 pm and by the time they get home, they have to give the children dinner and go to bed to wake them up the next day. On the other hand, in the short time that they spend with the family, parents tend to share with each other the events of the day and make plans for the next day, so discuss more with each other and less with the child. Parental fatigue also speaks its word when it comes to, in particular, getting involved in their games or when they are patiently tested due to the many questions a child constantly asks.

None of the parents is very involved in the activities, does not play enough with the child, does not answer all the questions and generally does not spend enough time with the child. Some of them have classified themselves in the category of medium and long because on the weekends they spend more time with the child. But it is not enough to be a weekend parent to have a good child development from all points of view.

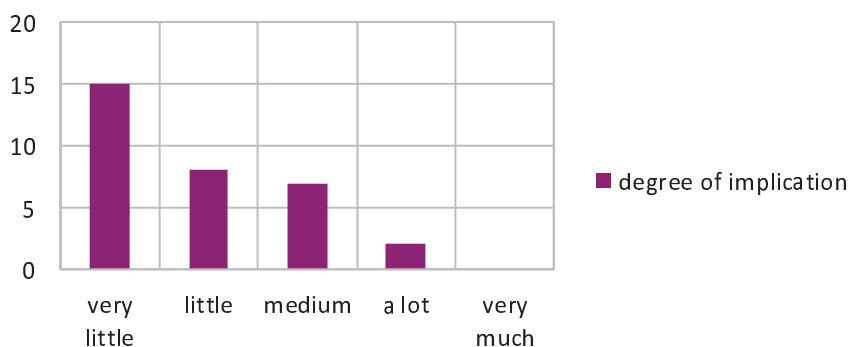


Figure 2. The degree of involvement of parents in the activities children before counseling

Children stay in front of the television, in cartoons or play on their parents' phones or tablets, thus becoming isolated in a world of their own which, at this age, is very easy to confuse with reality. On the other hand, let's not forget that most of the things the child learns at this age are based on imitation. If a child sees his parent always with his eyes on the phone or tablet or computer, then he will learn the same thing: instead of socializing in the real world, he will socialize online and will not know how to handle in face-to-face situations

This is why parenting has focused on all these aspects of family life, which need to be reviewed and solutions must be found to be resolved and to help the child develop optimally. Out of the 8 counseling sessions, two were held together with the children, the parents participating in the activities that the social worker organized together with the children.

In addition, in order for the child's time to be appreciated to be less subjective, parents were asked to note daily how much time they spent playing with the child or talking to him.

After the two months of counseling, in which the parents' participation was very good, proving to be interested in the discussions, a final assessment of the time spent by parents with the children was made. Table 3 and figure 3 show the degree of involvement of parents after counseling.

Table 3. Parents' appreciation of their involvement in the child's activities after counseling

Degree of involvement	nr. parents
very little	1
little	2
medium	7
a lot	12
verymuch	10

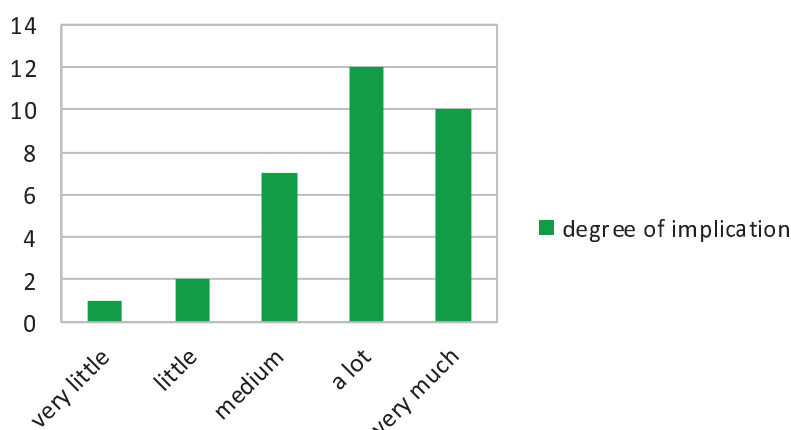


Figure 3. Parents' appreciation of their involvement in the child's activities after counseling

In order to visualize more easily the change that took place in the attitude and involvement of the parents, we present comparatively the two assessments before and after counseling in table 4 and figure 4.

It is extremely encouraging that following the counseling the parents understood what their importance is in achieving an adequate and quality socialization of their child. They endeavored, as far as possible, to become more involved in the child's activities: they drew together, they built or they played with figurines and dolls, they went to the playground together, they read stories, some even have tried to tell them riddles in order to achieve a vocabulary enrichment.

Table 4. Parents' appreciation of their involvement in the child's activities before and after counseling

Degree of involvement	of	before counseling	after counseling

very little	15	1
little	8	2
medium	7	7
a lot	2	12
very much	0	10

Parents have begun to realize the important role of time spent with their children in their harmonious development.

Thew is only one parent, after counseling, who also falls in the category of very low involvement in the child's activities. It is about a family where the father is a TIR driver and therefore, he is away most of the time, staying at home only between two races, and the mother works as a factory worker, in three shifts and actually does not have the time to stay with the child. Usually the child stays with the available people in the extended family and they do not always deal with him properly. However, the mother - who has attended 3 counseling sessions out of the 8 - states that she is looking for a new job where she can work only for an exchange and thus have more time to spend with the child.

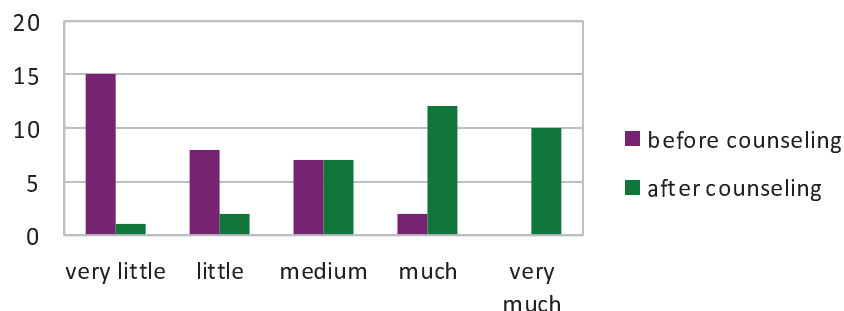


Figure 4. Parents' appreciation of their involvement in the child's activities before and after counseling

The socialization difficulties of the children were evaluated initially, before the beginning of the parents' counseling and at the end of the 8 counseling sessions. The comparative data between the first and the second evaluation are presented in table 5 and figure 5

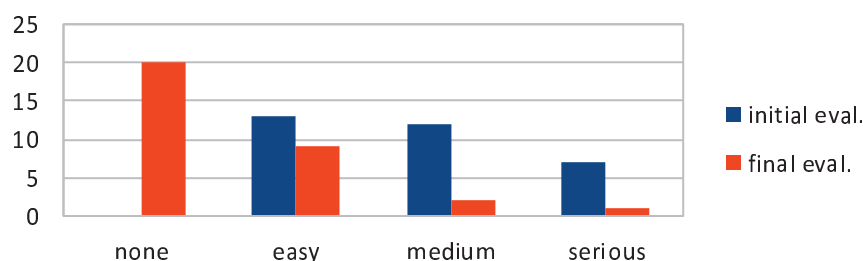
Table 5. Intensity of socialization difficulties compared to the two assessments

Intensity	Initial eval.	Final eval.
none	0	20
easy	13	9
medium	12	2
serious	7	1

The graph that presents the intensity of the socialization difficulties is extremely suggestive: if at the initial evaluation we had no children in the batch without socialization difficulties, at the final evaluation we have 20 children who do not present socialization difficulties. Of course, at the initial evaluation it was normal to have no children without difficulties since the criterion of selection of the children in the batch was precisely the presence of the difficulties of socialization.

Serious difficulties are present only in a child who has major speech problems related to speech therapy. We hope that following the speech-language exercises with the specialist he will be able to improve his communication too.

Figure 5. Intensity of socialization difficulties compared to the two assessments



Corroborating the data obtained from the assessments made by the parents on their involvement in the child's activities with those obtained on the socialization difficulties that decreased much after the two months of experiment, we can say that *the hypothesis* formulated at the beginning of the research *is confirmed by the practical reality*: the greater involvement of parents in the child's activities lead to increased socialization skills and better communication.

Conclusions:

Parents' difficulties in correctly managing the time they spend with their children and in particular how they spend this time has negative influences on their harmonious development, affecting, first of all, socialization skills and communication skills. That is why more and more children have difficulties in socializing with different intensities and low communication skills when entering kindergarten. Research has addressed this problem, and the research has mainly focused on remedying the intensity of socialization difficulties in preschoolers

It was worked with the parents of the children, in a counseling program that included 8 meetings, two of which were held in joint activities with the children. It has been assumed that if the parents are more involved in the activities of the children after the counseling by the social worker, then their ability to socialize will register significant improvements. The weekly observance of the counseling meetings with the parents was followed by a second assessment of the socialization difficulties. Education opportunities for families could increase the chance to understand how to manage it (Goian, 2013). However, specialists should use specialized language with caution, as this can create a barrier between the professional and the client, sharing or receiving meaningless messages (Goian, 2010).

The hypothesis was confirmed by the results obtained: following the counseling the parents became more involved in the child's life and activities and as a result there was a favorable evolution of the ability to communicate with children and a decrease of the socialization difficulties.

We consider that this type of research is a first step for future research in the field, research that has an interdisciplinary character and that will lead to concrete solutions to avoid the difficulties of socialization in the preschool children and, implicitly, in the adults of tomorrow.

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