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Adaptation of children from complete and broken families to kindergarten

Przystosowanie do przedszkola dzieci z rodzin pełnych i rozbitych

Abstract

Aim. The aim of the research presented in this article is to learn and describe the differences in selected factors of family life, such as parental attitudes and children's attitudes towards parents in complete and broken families, and to determine the significance of these factors in differentiating children's adaptation to kindergarten.

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Methods and materials. To verify the assumptions made, the following research tools were used: A questionnaire for the assessment of the child's adaptation to the CBI, by E. Schaefer and M. Aronson; a Questionnaire of Parental Attitudes PARI and Test of Two Houses by W. Szyryński were used to assess the emotional relations between a child and its parents. In addition, document analysis focused on information on parents was used.

Results. It was found that children from broken families tend to be shy, less open in social contacts, less persistent at work, and less adapted to kindergarten. In terms of parental attitudes, it was found that parents from broken families are less interested in the needs of children and more willing to discipline them than parents in complete families and that there is a significant correlation between parents' attitudes and the level of children's adaptation to kindergarten within the studied group. With regard to the study of children's emotional attitudes towards their parents, it has been established that in both complete and broken families, mothers are the most preferred people. It was also found that less positive emotional relationships between children and parents in broken families are associated with lower levels of adaptation to kindergarten.

Keywords: broken family, adaptation to kindergarten, preschool child, parental attitudes, emotional relationships.

Abstrakt

Cel. Celem prezentowanych w niniejszym artykule badań jest poznanie i opis różnic w zakresie wybranych czynników życia rodzinnego takich jak postawy rodzicielskie i stosunek dzieci do rodziców w rodzinach pełnych i rozbitych i określenie znaczenia tych czynników w różnicowaniu przystosowania dzieci do przedszkola.

Metody i materiały. W celu weryfikacji przyjętych założeń zastosowano następujące narzędzia badawcze: Kwestionariusz do oceny przystosowania dziecka do przedszkola CBI, E. Schaefera i M. Aronson; Kwestionariusz postaw rodzicielskich PARI i Test dwóch domków W. Szyryńskiego stosowany do oceny relacji emocjonalnych dziecka z rodzicami. Ponadto wykorzystano analizę dokumentów skupioną na informacjach na temat rodziców.

Wyniki. Ustalono, że dzieci z rozbitych rodzin wykazują tendencję do przejawiania nieśmiałości, są mniej otwarte w kontaktach społecznych, cechuje je też mniejszą wytrwałość w pracy i niższy poziom przystosowania do przedszkola. W zakresie postaw rodzicielskich ustalono, że rodzice z rodzin rozbitych są mniej zainteresowani potrzebami dzieci i bardziej skłonni do ich dyscyplinowania niż rodzice w rodzinach pełnych oraz że pomiędzy postawami rodziców a poziomem przystosowania dzieci do przedszkola w badanej grupie jest istotna korelacja. W odniesieniu do badania stosunku emocjonalnego dzieci do rodziców ustalono, że zarówno w rodzinach pełnych, jak i rozbitych, wśród najbardziej preferowanych osób są matki. Stwierdzono też, że mniej pozytywne relacje emocjonalne dzieci z rodzicami w rodzinach rozbitych są powiązane z niższym poziomem ich przystosowania do przedszkola.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzina rozbita, przystosowanie do przedszkola, dziecko w wieku przedszkolnym, postawy rodzicielskie, relacje emocjonalne.

Introduction

Family is the most common rearing environment for humans, ensuring the best development conditions for children. Through the relations of its members, family influences the physical, mental, and emotional development and shapes moral and social behaviours (Bakiera, 2022; Brzezińska, Appelt, & Ziółkowska, 2016; Grusec, 2017; Fonseca, Moreira, & Canavarro, 2020; Kawula, Brągiel, & Janke, 2022; Ladd, Parke, 2021; Ładyżyński, 2020; Matyjas, 2020; Stachyra, 2000). The effects of education depend to a large extent on the interactions within the family, i.e., the mutual impact partners have on each other (Bakiera, 2022). Normally formed families facilitate the formation of deep emotional relations and strengthen the focus on the child and its development. Parental love allows the child to develop with the feeling of being fully accepted and protected. The child learns to experience the feeling of great satisfaction resulting from the performed tasks and feels joy originating from the ability to combine personal needs with those of the surrounding environment. The child also understands that humans, as social beings, may coexist in a community with other individuals and becomes aware of the limited ability to act without connections to others. This knowledge proves to be crucial, especially when the child finds itself away from the family, first in the kindergarten, then at school and, gradually, in other places in later life (Koralewska-Samko, 2019).

The determinants of mutual interactions are attitudes. An attitude is a set of relatively constant dispositions used for assessing the attitude object and the emotional response to it, as well as any relatively stable beliefs about the nature and properties of this object and relatively stable behavioural dispositions towards it that accompany such emotional-evaluative dispositions (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2012; Moskal, 2022). There are two groups of interrelated attitudes within a family: the attitudes of parents and other family members and the attitudes of children. The attitudes of parents towards their children are defined as parental attitudes. Maria Ziemska defines them as the acquired cognitive, affective and volitional structures directing the behaviour of parents towards the child (Ziemska, 2009). Parental attitudes are essential for childrens' success in education. They determine the method of selecting means of education and shaping child's behaviour (Harold, Acquah, Sellers, & Chowdry, 2016). On the other hand, parents' emotional relationship with the child is the basis for shaping the attitude of the child towards the parents. Therefore, the child's attitude towards the parents will depend on the child's perception of his value in the eyes of the parents. Proper emotional relationships in the family are the basis for a positive emotional development

of the child, they affect the development of the child's emotional stability, sense of security, and learning of socially acceptable behaviours. Maintaining proper emotional relationships in the family is particularly important at preschool age (Goodman, Joshi, Nasim, & Tyler, 2015). During this period, the impact of the family is complemented by the influence of the kindergarten. Going to kindergarten results in many changes in the child's life and development. Its behaviour towards others will be shaped through the relationships established within the peer group (Ladd, Parke, 2021).

The literature emphasizes that the educational influences and behaviours of parents have a decisive influence on the adaptation of children to new conditions (Prochera, 2020; Sands, Thompson, & Gaysina, 2017). Children who are raised in a democratic way by their parents achieve the best adaptation capabilities. In the case of small children, those who are raised in an overprotective style are less capable of adapting (they become helpless in an unfamiliar environment because somebody else used to complete their self-service activities for them). In the case of older children, the process is more difficult due to their rejecting behaviour and the lack of acceptance on the side of their parents (no parental support and interest) (McShane, Davey, Rouse, Usher, & Sullivan, 2015; Parzyszek, 2020).

In the literature, one can also find studies indicating which pointed to a clear relation between the adaptation to the stay in kindergarten and the environment in which the child was raised, as well as the method of rearing used by the parents. If children are raised in a rational way, the difficulty range of adaptation is clearly lower and the disorders in emotional reactions and life functions are much less significant. The situation is worse in the case of children that are raised in a too liberal manner or that have overprotective parents. They have serious difficulties with adaptation and have stronger behavioural disorders. Incorrect parental influences lead to child behavioural disorders, including aggressiveness, and may lead to criminal activities later in life (Bakiera, 2022; Goodman et al., 2015; Harold et al., 2016; Hovee et al., 2009; Kuźniewska, 2019; Wałęcka-Matyja, Janicka, 2021).

At the end of the third year of life, family influence is supplemented by the influence of the kindergarten environment. The moment that a child begins kindergarten education is a breakthrough for every family. The combined influence of both family and kindergarten is to create the best possible conditions for the child to maximise personal development.

The mutual impact of both environments should be standardized, as it is a major condition for child's proper adjustment to kindergarten. The definitions of social adjustment of young children to institutions found in the subject literature indicate that proper social adjustment should manifest itself in:

- the need to participate in the life of a formal social group,
- recognition of the child by members of this group,

- a positive attitude towards other people conditioned by kindness, tolerance, and understanding of the experiences of other members of the group,
- initiative and activity towards the requirements set for the child by the school and parents,
- cooperation with the environment,
- lack of aggressive attitudes towards people and other antisocial behaviour (Brzezińska, Appelt, & Ziólkowska, 2016; Duraj, 2017; Kępowicz, Żebrowska, & Rejman, 2019; Lubowiecka, 2000; Tuerk et al., 2013).

The researchers point out that a proper adjustment to kindergarten consists of the ability to meet own needs within the environment and the ability to meet the demands of the environment (Lubowiecka, 2000). When entering a new social environment such as the kindergarten, the child experiences a significant number of strong stimuli, leading to anxiety and difficulties with the process of adaptation. A proper adjustment process during the period in question is essential for the child's proper functioning throughout life as "a poor adjustment in one area of life may tend to spread to other areas and, in extreme forms, lead to disintegration of personality" (Anderson, 2014). For a child in the kindergarten period, the instability of an incomplete family is the biggest threat because the lack of an authority figure may lead to the lack of personality cohesiveness and the inability to correctly form social relations (Mphaphuli, 2023). Preschool age is the period of highest plasticity in terms of shaping individual behaviours. Parents play a major part in this process as authority figures and role models to follow. The extent to which a preschool child imitates or identifies with its parents is dependent on the degree of emotional connection with them. Therefore, any emotional distress in the family (on the assumption that parents display socially acceptable forms of behaviour) may lead to the development of socially unacceptable behaviour in the child: any deviation in behaviour can be and often is explained by the disturbances in family relationships (Cudak, Cudak, 2020).

The emotional disturbance in family relationships usually results from the breakdown of a family (by separation, divorce, and the death of a parent). The breakdown of a family leads to a shift in its formation reflected in changes in the household structure, social roles, and internal power and authority within the family. The results of a family breakdown have a significant impact on the whole future life of a child (Żelichowska, 2022). The functioning of these families is very diverse due to the specifics of their formation (single mothers or single fathers, cohabitating persons (Krasiejko, 2019). The broken family is also characterized by the weakened child control system, because after the family breakup, the parent remaining with the child takes over the tasks of the absent parent, both in terms of family support as well as child's upbringing (Benson, McKay, 2017; Sands, Thompson, & Gaysina, 2017). The raising of children in broken

and incomplete families is complicated and difficult. The problems include insufficient money and the necessity to live on one salary, as well as psychological problems occurring due to the lack of support from the second parent. Broken families also struggle with childcare as a consequence of the increase of household chores and professional obligations. They also have problems with raising the child as they cannot fulfil his or her development needs without the second parent (Przybysz, 2023). Studies show that children from families broken due to divorce have clear problems with adaptation two to three times more often than children from complete families (Kuźniewska, 2019).

For these reasons, the situation in a broken family may also encourage the emergence of unacceptable social behaviour in preschool children (Indrawati, Dewi, 2022; Ubaidi, 2017).

The ideas presented here are the basis of this study. The presented research is an attempt to answer the following questions: How does the family structure differentiate a child's adaptation to kindergarten? How do parental attitudes (respondents from broken and whole families) differentiate children's adaptation to kindergarten? What are the differences in parental attitudes depending on the family structure? What kind of emotional relationship do children have with their parents in complete and broken families? How do children's emotional relationships with their parents (from broken and whole families) differentiate their adaptation to kindergarten?

Test methods and test group summary

In an attempt to answer the above questions, the following research tools were used: Classroom Behavior Inventory Preschool to Primary (CBI), The Parental Attitude Research Instrument (PARI), and Wiktor Szyryński's Two Houses Technique to determine the emotional relationship between a child and his parents. In addition, observations and analysis of documents were conducted.

Classroom Behavior Inventory Preschool to Primary (CBI) by Earl S. Schaefer and May Aronson in Józef Rembowski's Polish study is used to measure a child's adaptation to kindergarten and school (Jarosz, Wysocka, 2006). The questionnaire considered 60 behavioural traits of the child in the peer group. Individual features make up a total of 12 scales of the questionnaire. These are: (1) verbal expression, (2) hyperactivity, (3) kindness, (4) social withdrawal, (5) perseverance, (6) nervousness, (7) sociability, (8) absent-mindedness, (9) tactful conduct, (10) shyness, (11) concentration, and (12) stubbornness. Individual scales can be combined. In this way, three factors are obtained – the main dimensions of the child's behaviour. Factor I is extroversion – introversion, factor II is love–hate: positive behaviour as opposed to hostile, and factor III – positive attitude – negative attitude of behaviour, positive orientation in

behaviour as opposed to negative orientation in behaviour. Each of a child's 60 behavioural traits can have a different intensity. This is denoted by a numerical index from 1 to 4. The level of a child's adaptation to kindergarten is determined by the sum of points obtained by the child in all scales and dimensions of the survey. A child can score from +32 to -32 points in each of the three behavioural dimensions. The overall score ranges from +96 to -96 points. The questionnaires were completed by the educators of the children in the presence of the researchers. The described tool is characterized by very high reliability – the alpha-Cronbach coefficient for individual 12 scales – behavioural traits range from 0.74 to 0.86 (verbal expression 0.77; hyperactivity 0.82; kindness 0.74; social withdrawal 0.79; perseverance 0.79; nervousness 0.81; sociability 0.74; absent-mindedness diplomacy 0.74; tactful conduct of anxiety 0.74; shyness 0.75; concentration 0.86; and stubbornness 0.77) (Schaefer, 1975). The dimensions of the child's behaviour in kindergarten and school were identified because of the use of configuration and hierarchical models during repeated studies on very large samples. One example is a study conducted by Miriam Heyman and Penny Hauser-Cram (2019) on a population of 25,000 preschool children. Factor analysis and multivariate scaling were used to investigate the dimensionality of scale positions. The reliability calculated in subsequent studies according to Guttman's model is for factor I from 0.68 to 0.66, factor II from 0.64 to 0.53, and factor III from 0.50 to 0.43 (Schaefer, 1975). The reliability of the whole tool (calculated in subsequent studies) was evaluated at alpha-Cronbach 0.81 (Schaefer, 1975), and 0.91 (Schaefer, Edgerton, 1983). In the case of Polish studies, Marzena Kowaluk-Romanek (2012) states that Cronbach's internal alpha reliability coefficient is much higher than the reliability value of the test (0.75) sufficient for diagnostic purposes. The usefulness of the model of examining children's adaptation to kindergarten and school proposed in the questionnaire has been confirmed in many studies, including Polish ones (Behar, Stringfield, 1974; Karakayal, Tufan, 2018; Hetmańczyk-Bajer, 2012; Heyman, Hauser-Cram, 2019; Kowaluk-Romanek, 2012; Knopp, 2013; Kwiatkowska, 2020).

In this study, The Parental Attitude Research Instrument (PARI) by Earl S. Schaefer and Richard Q Bell was used. In the Polish study, this tool was used by Maria Ziemska (2009). In the selected version A, the questionnaire contains 45 statements regarding parents' opinions on the upbringing of children. Individual statements make up the 9 subscales defining parents' partial attitudes. Partial attitudes serve to establish global attitudes which are: emotional connection with, excessive emotional concentration on, and emotional detachment from the child. The arrangement of partial attitudes/subscales within global attitudes/global scales and their reliability (Kuder-Richardson index 20 and r-Pearson coefficient as a test-retest result) is presented in such a way that the first global attitude of emotional relationship with the child consists of the following sub-attitudes: 1) encouraging the child to speak (0.67; 0.61); 2) equality of

rights (0.58; 0.46); 3) the opposite of deifying the parents (0.77; 0.60); 7) the opposite of eliminating external influences (0.62; 0.68); 9) the opposite of irritability (0.65; 0.51). The second attitude, namely excessive emotional concentration, was defined by the following subscales: 4) exclusion of external influences (0.77; 0.72); 8) deification of parents (0.77; 0.70). On the other hand, the third global attitude, i.e., emotional distance, was described using the following subscales: 5) irritability and irritation (0.77; 0.70); 6) disinformation (0.73; 0.50) (Schaefer, Bell, 1958). Each subscale consisted of five statements assessed with scores from 1 to 4. As a result, the intensity of each of the 9 subscales/partial attitudes could be expressed using numerical indices from 5 to 20. The results for each subscale were presented as an arithmetic mean of points, which in turn formed the basis for calculating the results of global attitudes. The arithmetic mean of points was also the indicator of global attitudes. The Parental Attitude Research Instrument (PARI) is used in scientific research, including Polish research (Ecker, Krug, 1965; Goatskaya, Kiselnikova, & Markova, 2018; Grussu, Quatraro, & Nasta, 2005; Guzel, Osmanoglu, 2023; Kukołowicz, Kołacka, 1976; Plutecka, 2022; Siudem, 2006; Stanton, Silva, 1992).

To study the child's relationship with both parents, The Two Houses Technique by W. Szyryński was applied (Stemplewska-Żakowicz, 2009). The test is a combination of three elements: an interview, a game, and a projection. The study is fun in form and involves four stages: I – prioritizing of family members, II – accommodating family members in two houses, III – invitations, and IV – relocation. Verification of the information given by the child is made by formulation of opposing statements. Children's statements made during the test were also analysed. The test began by inviting the child to have fun and participate in a conversation. Then, in the first stage of the test, figures of family members were drawn on a piece of paper and named, based on the names provided by the child. In the second stage, two houses were drawn, and the child was asked to name the persons who lived in the first house and persons who lived in the second house. Stage III consisted in naming the persons whom a child would invite to their home. The persons listed were marked based on the order of invitation and the direction. In stage IV, where the child would remove persons from its house, the order of these relocations was studied.

The observation provided data on the behavioural characteristics of a child within a kindergarten, which complemented the CBI questionnaire data. The analysis of the documentation provided the basis for the selection of a researched group and, complemented by the interview with the child and its educator – indicated the family anamnesis.

Raw data, i.e., indicators derived directly from research tools, were used for quantitative analyses using the statistical measures described below. Taking into account the design of the tools used, it was assumed that the outcome indicators are measured on ordinal scales. All quantitative variables selected for the study were characterized by

high symmetry (skewness and kurtosis within < than absolute value 2) (Abbot, 2017). To verify the normality of the distribution of variables, Shapiro-Wilk tests were performed. The results of all the studied variables, i.e., the child's adaptation to kindergarten ($W = 1.25, p = 0.21$), parental attitudes, i.e., the correct emotional relationship with the child ($W = 1.07, p = 0.28$), excessive concentration on the child ($W = 1.23, p = 0.22$), emotional distance towards the child ($W = 1.09, p = 0.27$) and the variable child-to-parent ratio ($W = 0.97, p = 0.33$) turned out to be statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$), which means that the analysed data are normally distributed (Abbot, 2017). Therefore, parametric tests were performed. To determine the differences between the subgroups, the Student's t-test for independent data was used (Ferguson, Takane, 2007) and the probability of 0.05 was assumed as the limit significance level (p). A quantitative measure of the strength of individual differences – the size of the effect – is expressed in the form of a statistical measure, which is the Cohen d-effect strength index. In order to determine the relationship between the variables selected for the study (the child's adaptation to kindergarten with parental attitudes and the child's emotional attitude towards parents), the Kendall tau correlation was used (Ferguson, Takane, 2007). As in the case of the analysis of differences, the limit significance level $p = 0.05$ was assumed.

The research was conducted in public integration kindergartens in West Pomeranian Voivodeship (incl. Goleniów, Kamień Pomorski, Nowogard, Stargard, Szczecin, and Świnoujście)*. A group of 59 children aged 6 years was examined. Among the groups of children selected for the study, 29 children came from broken families and 30 children from whole families. Groups were equal in age. The 29-member group of parents from broken families consisted exclusively of mothers. No cases of father remaining with a child after a family breakdown were reported in the research group. Three of the causes of family breakdown included death and all others were linked with father's departure. An important factor behind the test results was professional work of all mothers from broken families.

Results

Child's adjustment to kindergarten and family structure

The CBI questionnaire was analysed in two stages. The first step was to determine the level of adjustment to the kindergarten of the whole population. In the second stage, the differences in the adjustment of children from broken and complete families were

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demonstrated. For the purposes of this study, we will discuss the results of the second stage in more detail.

Based on the extreme score results that can be obtained from the CBI questionnaire, a four-point adjustment scale has been used that facilitates empirical data analysis.

	Adjustment	Group
96–45 points	good	A
45–0 points	sufficient	B
0–(-45) points	disturbed	C
-45–(-96) points	severely disturbed	D

Before we move on to reviewing the differences in the level of adjustment of children from broken and complete families, we will mention the data on the distribution of adjustment across the whole population in question.

As shown in Table 1, group A, i.e., the well-adjusted, is represented solely by children from complete families. They also form a majority in Group B with sufficient adjustment. In contrast, group C, i.e., the individuals with disturbed adjustment, is dominated by the children from broken families. The rest of the population consists of an individual from a broken family, characterized by severely disturbed adjustment.

Table 1
The spread of adjustment in the examined population

Family type	Complete families		Broken families		Total		
	1.0	%	1.0	%	1.0	%	
good	A	7	23.3	–	–	7	11.8
sufficient	B	16	53.3	9	31.0	25	42.3
disturbed	C	7	23.3	19	65.5	26	44.0
severely disturbed	D	–	–	1	3.4	1	1.69
total	x	30	100.0	29	100.0	59	100.0

Source: Authors' own study.

The discussed levels of children's adaptation to kindergarten are determined on the basis of scales – behavioural traits and behavioural dimensions. Results of analyses of 12 scales – traits of the child's behaviour in kindergarten. Since in groups A and D there are only representatives of one type of family (children from complete families in group A and a child from a broken family in group D) – in order to obtain differences in the behaviour of children from broken and complete families, the results of only those children who achieved a good (group B) and disturbed (group C) level of adaptation to kindergarten were included in Table 2. Table 2 illustrates the presentation of the mean results obtained by the study of children on individual scales of the CBI questionnaire (broken down into positive and negative behavioural traits) depending on the type of family.

Table 2
Children's characteristics and family type

Level of adjustment		B		C	
		Complete families	Broken families	Complete families	Broken families
1.	verbal expression	16.1	16.8	14.5	12.9
2.	kindness	16.7	16.5	11.7	11.5
3.	perseverance	16.1	14.9	12.8	9.6
4.	sociability	16.1	18.0	12.7	12.2
5.	tactful conduct	15.4	14.2	9.1	10.9
6.	concentration	16.0	15.4	13.8	12.0
7.	hyperactivity	11.2	15.1	16.5	16.9
8.	social withdrawal	12.1	12.7	13.7	13.6
9.	nervousness	10.6	13.4	17.6	14.8
10.	absent-mindedness	13.7	14.1	17.7	15.4
11.	shyness	11.7	13.5	12.3	14.1
12.	stubbornness	10.2	9.9	15.6	14.4

Source: Authors' own study.

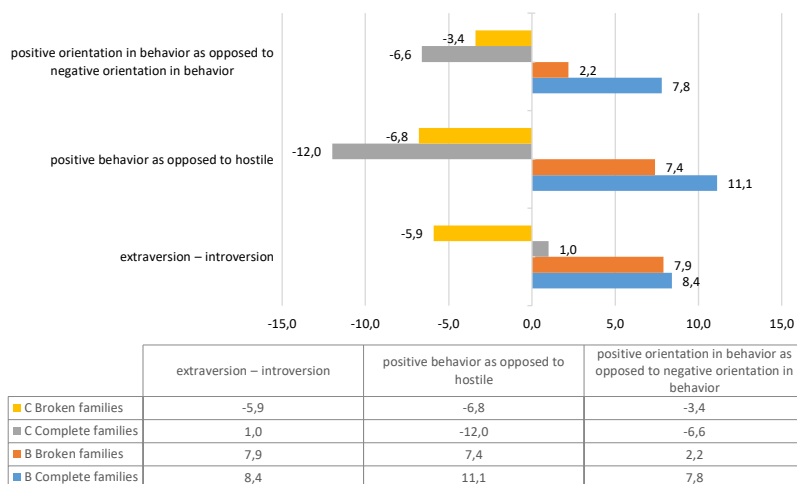
According to the analysis of the average scores of individual scales – behavioural traits presented in Table 2, children from group B from whole families are characterized by kindness towards their peers. They easily connect with peers and adults. They are characterized by the ability to concentrate and persevere. They work until they re-

ach their goal. They are rarely disappointed by trifles, are rarely merciless in anger or willing to tease others. Children from broken families in group B also easily establish contact, organize games together with their peers, are open to conversations about topics related to themselves, and are friendly and sociable. However, to a greater extent than their peers from whole families, they are characterized by hyperactivity. This difference is statistically significant ($t = 1.90$, $p = 0.06$, $\alpha = 0.05$, $p < 0.05$) but indicates a small strength of the effect (Cohen's $d = 0.28$).

The characteristics of the C-testers indicate that children in complete families exhibit a lack of concentration, hyperactivity, and inability to stay in one place for too long. They are irritable and quick-tempered in contacts with peers and adults. They show lack of kindness, and an inability to cooperate with peers in the group.

Similar characteristics are observed in children from broken families, some of them greater in intensity. These children are also characterized by hyperactivity and a lack of initiative in organizing games. They often get into bad humour, are distracted and restless. The majority of children from broken families are shy, less open in conversations with adults, and less efficient than the children from complete families. They also show lower perseverance at work. The difference was significant, $t = 2.01$, $p = 0.05$ for $\alpha = 0.05$. The effect size is small. The value of Cohen's d -factor = 0.32. Lower perseverance is often the reason for the lack of effects in learning of children from broken families.

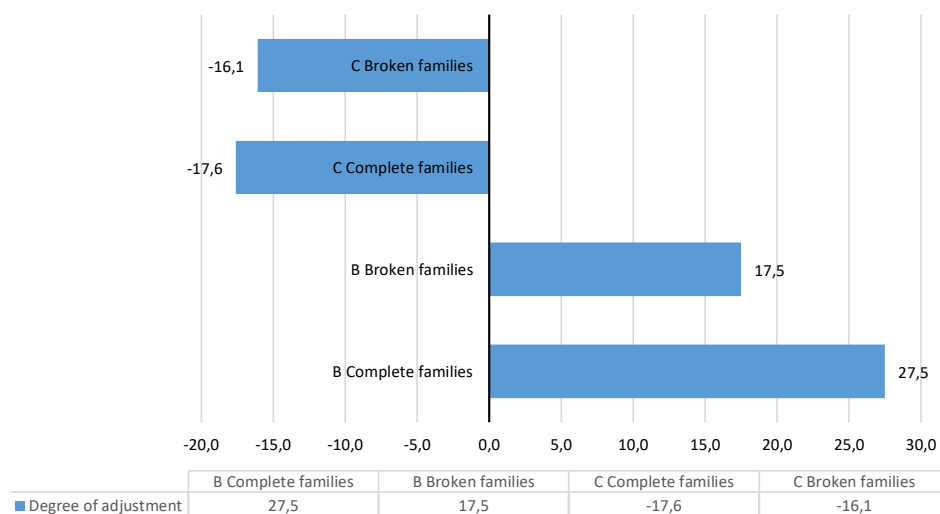
Factor I is extraversion – introversion, factor II is love–hate: positive behaviour as opposed to hostile, and factor III – positive attitude – negative attitude of behaviour, positive orientation in behaviour as opposed to negative orientation in behaviour.



Picture 1. Predictive factors (behavioural dimensions) and family type.

Source: Authors' own study.

The average results presented in Picture 1 show that children with a good level of adjustment to kindergarten (level B) from complete families are more extroverted and more likely to direct their attention outward than their peers from broken families. They also have a positive attitude and are kinder and more considerate than children from broken homes. Positive traits such as perseverance and concentration are also seen to prevail over negative traits such as hypersensitivity or absent-mindedness. A similar distribution of results is also found in children representing the disturbed (group C) level of adaptation to kindergarten, but only in the area of the first dimension, i.e., extroversion-introversion. The results are different in the other two dimensions of adaptation. In terms of the second dimension, i.e., positive behaviour as opposed to hostile, and the third dimension, i.e., positive orientation in behaviour as opposed to negative orientation in behaviour, children from complete families obtained less favourable results than children from broken families. This means that preschoolers who have difficulty adjusting to kindergarten from complete families are less kind and tactful than their peers from broken families. They are also less persistent in their work. It is difficult for them to concentrate on completing their tasks. Children from broken families are also more likely to be hypersensitive and absent-minded. The overall degree of adjustment expressed in terms of average scores obtained by children from complete and broken families in groups B and C is presented in Picture 2.



Picture 2. The children's level of adjustment to kindergarten and family type.

Source: Authors' own study.

The results presented in Picture 2 indicate that there is a difference in the level of adjustment of children from complete and broken families. The studied children representing a good and a disturbed level of adaptation to kindergarten brought up in complete families are characterized by more favourable traits and dimensions of behaviour.

Parental attitudes and child's adjustment to kindergarten

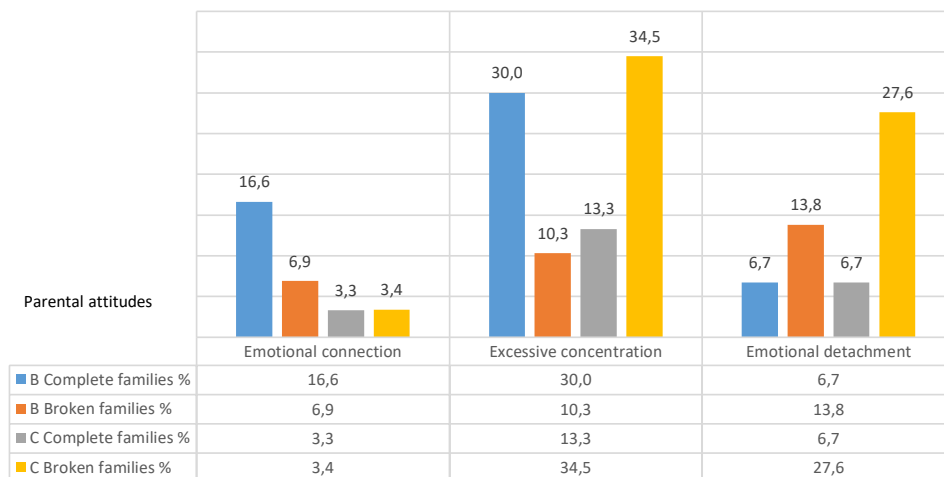
In this study, the arithmetic mean of points for each partial attitude was also the basic indicator of parental attitudes. This allowed establishing differences in global attitudes. In terms of the global attitude determining the proper emotional connection with the child, the average score in complete families is 15.2 points, while in the broken families – 14.4 points (the difference is not statistically significant). Data analysis shows that parents from complete families encourage their children – to a greater extent than parents in broken families – to express their feelings, needs, and thoughts, and to express their views on family life and issues related to family functioning. The above pictures show the differences between the average points of the ‘encouraging the child to speak’ subscale. In complete families, the average of points is 16.8, while in broken families – 15.8. The results of the next subscale included in the presented global attitude – equality of rights – are also more favourable for parents from complete families. Within this subscale, they scored 15.4 points, while the parents from broken families – 14.4 points. This indicates that the relationships between parents and children in complete families are more friendly. These parents more often recognize the children’s right to behave as they wish and adhere to the principle that children should not be subjected to absolute loyalty. Loyalty and respect for parents should be the results of proper education of the child. The characteristics of such behaviour are determined by “the opposite of parent idolization” subscale which scored 15.2 points in complete families and 14.3 points in broken families.

Another subscale: “the opposite of eliminating external influences” (14.6 points in complete families and 13.8 points in broken families) indicates that the surveyed parents from complete families show a lower tendency to raise children in the atmosphere of parent idolization and reveal a lower inclination to intervene in the psychological life of the child, its thoughts, feelings, needs, and plans. Parents from complete families demonstrate a more tolerant attitude toward their children than parents from broken families. They are characterized by greater patience and self-control, which is reflected in “the opposite of irritability” subscale (14.6 points for complete families and 13.9 points for broken families). Similar differences indicating the occurrence of disturbed parental attitudes in parents from broken families also occur within another global attitude: excessive emotional concentration. The arith-

metic average of subscales for this attitude is 15.2 points for complete families and 16.7 points for broken families. This difference turned out to be statistically significant $t = 2.21$, $p = 0.03$, $\alpha = 0.05$. However, Cohen's d -value (0.28) indicates a low strength of effect. The "eliminating external influences" subscale, contained within the scope of "excessive emotional concentration", was 14.2 points for complete families and 16.3 points for broken families. This indicates a slightly lower tendency of parents from complete families to bring up their children in a relation of dominance and dependency, while parents who remain with their children after the family breakup assume that the child should not question their views. By interfering in the child's life, they restrict its freedom and create a sense of dependency. This is confirmed by the average results obtained by the average results obtained by both groups of families within the 'parent idolization' subscale (the average score for complete families is 16.2 points and for broken families – 17.1 points).

We shall now elaborate on the third attitude that defines the level of emotional detachment between parents and children. The obtained data show that, as in the above-presented attitudes, the parents from complete families obtained more favourable results within subscales. The subscale average score for complete families is 11.3 points and for broken families – 13.3 points. In this case, t is equal to 2.50, $p = 0.01$ for $\alpha = 0.01$. but it indicates a small strength of the effect (Cohen's $d = 0.37$). The parents of children from complete families show less sensitivity and irritability than parents from broken families (12.2 points versus 14.1 points respectively). In complete families, parents exhibit a lower degree of irritability and strictness towards children, their concerns and worries, and a lower tendency to misinform children. In the scope of this subscale, they obtained a lower average of 10.4 points to the average scored in broken families – 12.6 points.

The results of the study indicate that in complete family's parents are more interested in the needs of children and less inclined to use strict discipline than parents in broken families. As indicated in the study, parental attitudes can be an important factor in shaping the behaviour of the child. To justify this thesis, another stage of the analysis of results obtained in the studied population was conducted. It was based on determining the relationship between parental attitudes and the child's adjustment to kindergarten. The results are presented in Picture 3.



Picture 3. Parental attitudes and the level of adjustment to kindergarten of children from complete and broken families.

Source: Authors' own study.

Picture 3 shows the results that have been obtained by children with sufficient and disturbed levels of adjustment to kindergarten because, as mentioned above, within these levels are found representatives of both types of families. The data included in the picture were subjected to further statistical analysis and, as a result, it was found that the correlation between parents' attitudes and the level of children's adaptation to kindergarten in the study group, calculated on the basis of the tau Kendall correlation coefficient, is Kendall's $\tau = 0.36$ and is significant for $p = 0.005$, which means that the relationship is linear and positive and its strength is average. The stronger the parent-child bond, the more beneficial the child's behaviour in the nursery.

With the increase in the intensity of the positive attitude of parents towards the child, the level of adaptation to the kindergarten increases.

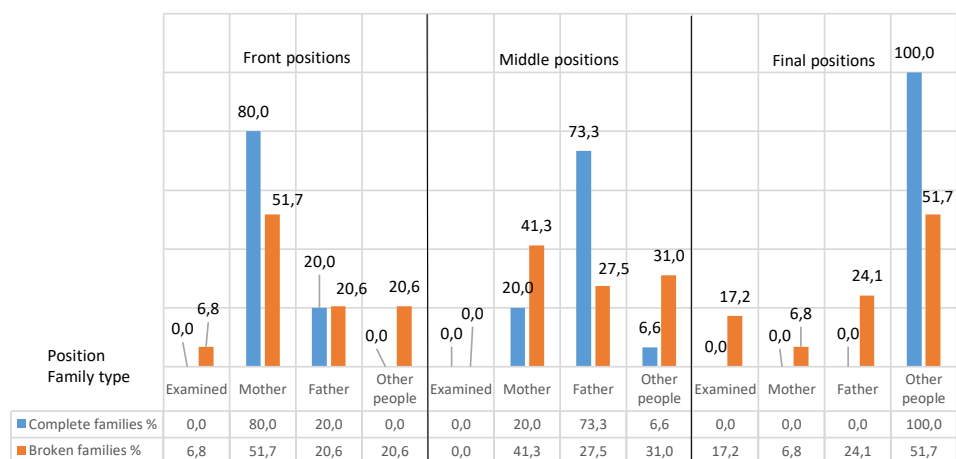
The higher intensity of positive parenting in single-parent families found in the present study is associated with more favourable features and dimensions of the child's behaviour in kindergarten.

Children's emotional relation towards their parents and their adjustment to kindergarten

Another aim is to determine the emotional relationship of children towards their parents in relation to their adjustment to kindergarten. For this purpose, the above-mentioned Two Houses Technique by W. Szyryński was used. The data was obtained during the four stages of the test, i.e., prioritizing of family members, accommodating family

members in two houses, invitations, and relocation. The results of the first stage of the test – prioritizing of family members – are presented in Picture 4.

During the first stage of the study, it was found that children from whole families put their mothers (80%) and fathers (20%) first when prioritizing family members. They did not put themselves or other persons first, while the children from broken families showed discrepancies in the family members' prioritization. Mother was put first in order by 51.7% of children and the father was put first by 20.6%. However, the same number of children from broken families (20.6%) placed other persons in the first place, while 6.8% of children put themselves first. As far as the middle places in the ranking are concerned, children from complete families would put their fathers there (73.3%), then their mothers (20%) and others (6.6%). Children from broken families would put their mothers in the middle positions (41.3%), then others (31%) and fathers (27.5%). Final places in the ranking of family members assigned by children from complete families were occupied only by other persons (100%), similarly to those assigned by the children from broken families, whereby a majority of places was occupied by other persons (51.7%). Final positions in broken families were also occupied by fathers (24.1%), children themselves (17.2%) and mothers (6.8%).



Picture 4. Prioritizing of family members according to family type.

Source: Authors' own study.

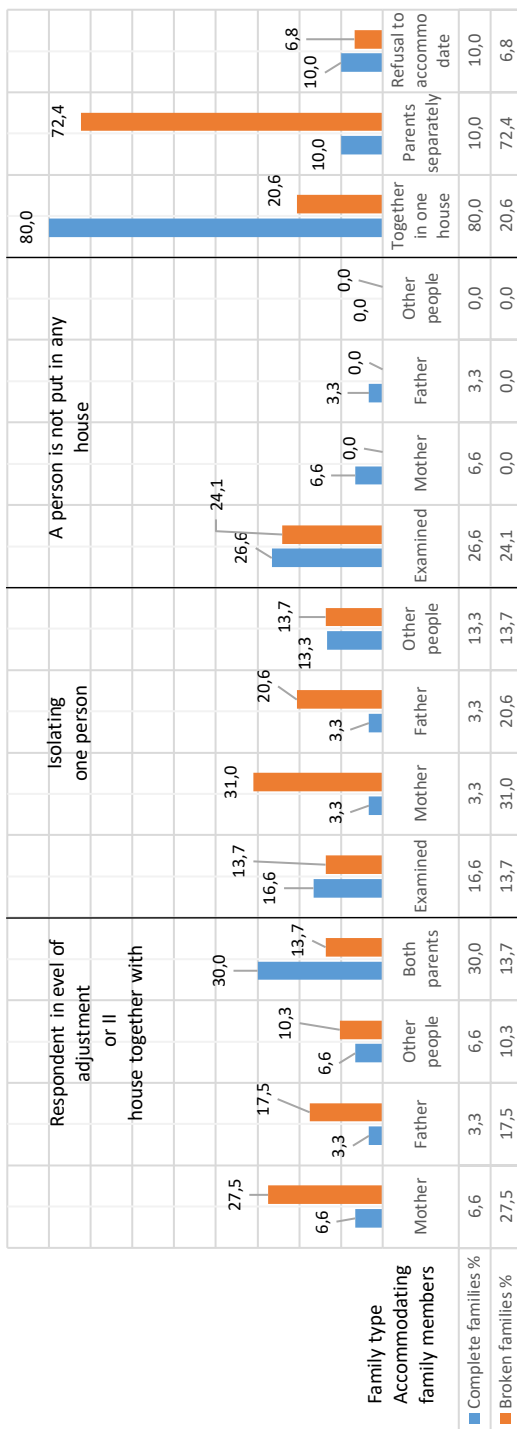
This way of prioritizing indicates that, in both the complete and the broken families, among the most preferred people are mothers. Their forefront positions prove their dominant role in the family. The forefront position of other people in broken families indicates their strong influence on the child. Most commonly, they are the people who

participate in the child's upbringing: grandmothers, grandfathers, or other people who take care of the children periodically due to time limitations of the single mother, her professional work, or attempts to reorganize her family. The data show that in broken families the first place belongs to children under examination. This indicates that they are overly focused on themselves/egocentric. The central positions of fathers in complete families and mothers in part of the broken families are evidence of their low attractiveness.

Significant differences exist among the last few places in the family order in both types of families. Children from complete families put only other persons in the final positions (their relatives, friends, and neighbours), while the answers of children from broken families were highly differentiated. In most cases, children have the weakest emotional connection with other persons. According to their responses, these are their so-called "uncles". For the most part, they are rather disliked by children who find them responsible for the diminishing interest in children's life demonstrated by their mothers. The partners of mothers generally do not tend to engage in parenting. They often fail to accept the children of their partners, which in turn leads to their lack of acceptance from the children. Among the children from broken families, we also observe a lack of strong emotional connection with their fathers. This is probably caused by the family breakup and breaking up or restricting contacts with the father. Most often, the children do not know their fathers, or they rarely see them. Based on their answers, they often do not know anything about their fathers or know very little. What they do know (often untrue) usually comes down to their father's occupation and place of residence. Respondents from this type of family tend to place themselves on the last position in the family, which indicates their lack of security and a sense of inferiority. This is probably related to family situation, and the lack of emotional bond with both parents.

During the second stage of the study, i.e., "accommodating family members in two houses", the following results were obtained (Picture 5).

During the second stage of the study, i.e., "accommodating family members in two houses," it was found that in complete families, the largest percentage of children (30%) placed themselves together with both parents, while in broken families, only 13.7% of children showed willingness to share a house with their parents. However, children from broken families show a strong tendency to place themselves at home with their mother – 27.5%, whereas similar is true for 6.6% of children from complete families. 17.2% of children from broken families want to live with their fathers and similar is true for 3.3% of respondents from complete families. And finally, 10.3% of children from broken families want to live with other people, and the same is true for 6.6% children from complete families.



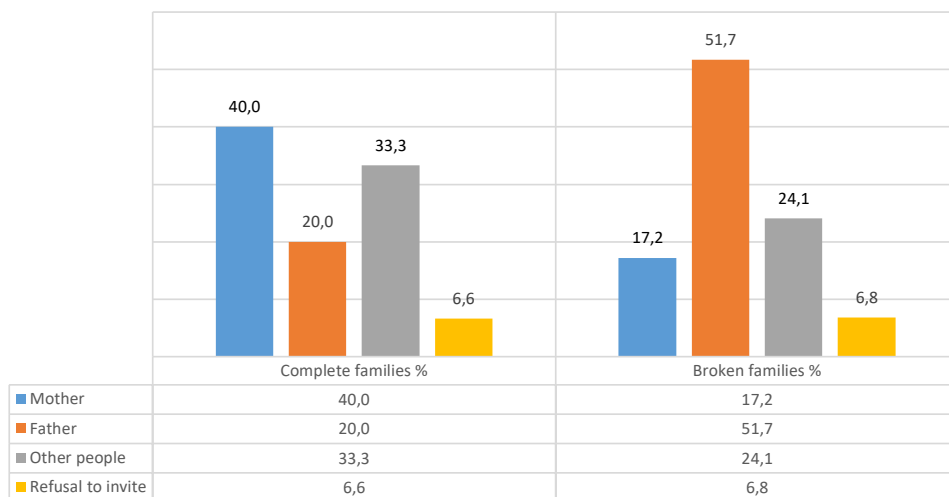
Picture 5. The position of family members in the Two Houses Technique by W. Szyryński depending on family type.
Source: Authors' own study.

The above data shows the existence of an emotional connection between children from complete families and both their parents, with a stronger emotional dependence of children from broken families in comparison to their peers from complete families. The latter tend to be more emotionally independent from their parents. This is evidenced by the isolation of the respondents in one house (16.6% in complete families, 13.7% in broken families). Some children from broken families show a weaker emotional connection with their parents, demonstrated by their desire to move away from their parents or their fear of them. This is evidenced by the number of respondents who placed their mother home alone: 3.3% in complete families, 31% in broken families; and their father home alone – 3.3% in complete families and 20.6% in broken families.

Further analysis of the “reception of family members” stage showed that children from complete families were more likely than children from broken families not to be placed in any home (26.6% and 24.1%). The absence of a child in the picture may be due to a sense of loneliness or a wish to become emotionally independent from parents. In only a few cases, children from complete families did not include a mother (6.6%) nor a father (3.3%) in any of the houses, indicating the loosening of emotional bonds between parents and children in this type of family.

Further data are interesting: 80% of children from complete families put their parents together in one house, while only 20.6% of children from broken families did the same. 10% of children from complete families and 72.4% of children from broken families put their parents separately. This indicates a lower identification with both parents in broken families and a weaker emotional bond with them. A case that is also worth noting is the refusal to accommodate family members in houses. This type of reaction was prevalent among children from complete families (10.9% and 6.8%). These reactions indicate the child’s sense of danger and the fear of being able to break up a family (Stemplewska-Żakowicz, 2009). They prove the existence of conflicts between parents, which can lead to a disintegration of the family.

Further analysis of the results of The Two Houses Technique was intended to determine the level of emotional bond between children and parents from broken families. The information was provided in the third stage of the study – the invitation. The order of inviting family members allows for identification of people who are accepted by the child and with whom the child is willing to establish a strong emotional connection. The results obtained during this stage are presented in Picture 6.



Picture 6. The order of inviting family members in the Two Houses Technique by W. Szyryński depending on family type.

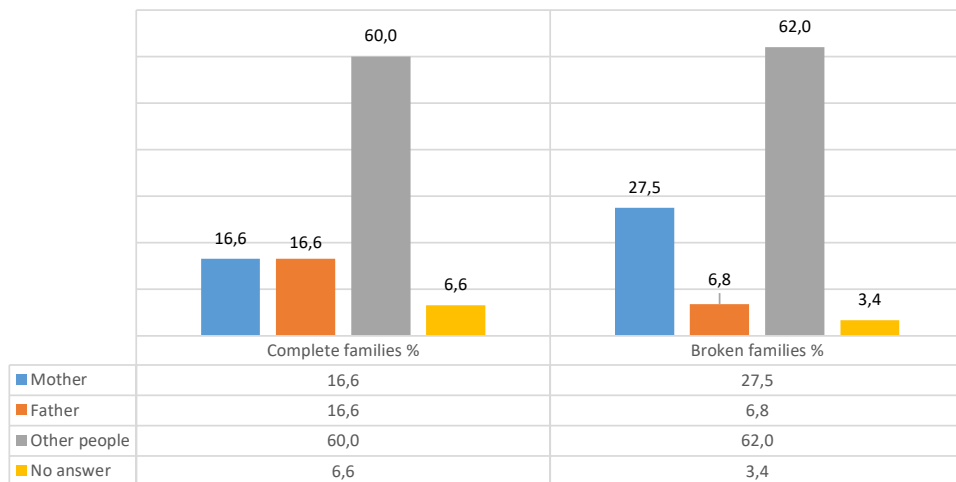
Source: Authors' own study.

Information from the picture shows that in complete family's children have a stronger tendency to become closer with mothers (40%) than others (33.3%) and fathers (20%). In broken families, children are striving to increase emotional connection with their fathers (51.7%), mothers (17.2%), and others (24.1%). During the study, at this stage, there was a refusal to invite any member of the family. This applies to 6.6% of children from complete families and 6.8% of children from broken families. These results indicate that in both complete and broken families there are cases of parental rejection and isolation of children. The results from the third stage indicate that children from broken families show a need for emotional dependence on their fathers. They also want to increase the level of emotional bond both with other people who are in this case the peers from kindergarten as well as their mothers.

Presented conclusions can be confirmed by the results of the next stage of The Two Houses Technique, i.e., relocation. The order of relocation indicates a tendency to reject persons from their own environment (Picture 7).

Children from complete families as well as from broken families most often reject others (60% and 62%). Among other members of the family, the children from broken families more often rejected mothers (27.5%) than did the children from complete families (16.6%). Fathers are accentuated more because in complete families they were rejected by 16.6% of the children, while in the broken families – only by 6.8% of the respondents. The higher lack of response among children from complete families (6.6%)

than from broken families (3.4%) indicates (as in the previous stage) the existence of sense of danger due to an unfavourable family situation.

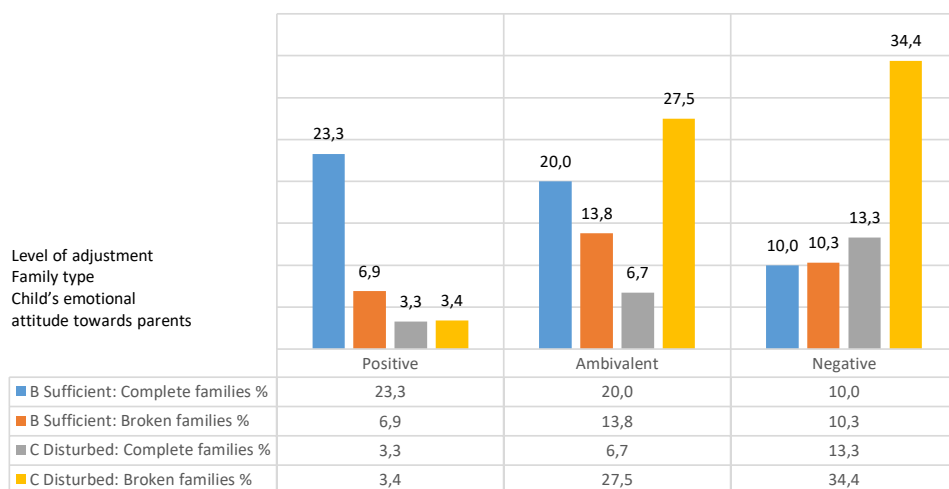


Picture 7. The order of rejecting family members in the Two Houses Technique by W. Szyryński depending on family type.

Source: Authors' own study.

Results of the relocation stage confirm the results of the invitation stage. Both show that there is a strong bond between children and mothers from broken families and at the same time a lack thereof with fathers. The lack of contact with fathers' results in a strong need to increase it among preschool children and a strong need for identification.

The final stage of the analysis of the emotional relationship of children towards parents in families with differentiated structure was by grouping data into three main categories, defining 3 types of relationships of children towards parents. Thus, positive, ambivalent, and negative relationships were identified. To establish the presented types of emotional relationships, the previous categories to develop the results of various stages of the test by W. Szyryński were used, i.e., the position in line of family members, the way the family members were housed, the order of the invitations and the order of rejection of the parents. The data obtained from the presented categorization was compiled on a 7-point estimation scale. The results from the data estimation enabled the definition of the relation between the emotional attitude of the child toward the family and its adjustment to kindergarten. Picture 8 contains the results of children with sufficient and disturbed adjustment to kindergarten because, as mentioned above, within these two levels we find children from different family types.



Picture 8. The emotional attitude of children towards parents and their level of adjustment to kindergarten.

Source: Authors' own study.

The Picture presented shows the quantitative distribution of the results. Statistical analysis of the presented data allowed determining the level of dependence between the child's relationship with parents and the level of his or her adaptation to kindergarten. This relationship was calculated using Kendall's tau coefficient and is Kendall's $\tau = 0.28$, $p = 0.03$, $\alpha = 0.05$, which means that the relationship is statistically significant but weak. It is also linear and positive, which allows us to conclude that with the increase in the intensity of positive emotional bonds between the child and the parents, the level of adaptation of this child to the kindergarten increases. The values of the average intensity of the positive emotional attitude of children towards their parents in complete families established in the present study are associated with favourable/better/behaviour of children in kindergarten.

Summary and conclusion

In the conclusion of the study, it can be stated that there are differences in the level of adjustment to kindergarten among children from broken and complete families. In attempting to find the answer to the question of the reason behind it, we analysed the selected elements of the emotional situation in the family, i.e., the analysis of parental attitudes and the emotional attitudes of children towards parents.

The results of the Parental Attitudes Survey showed that in broken families parents are more likely to have abnormal attitudes towards raising children. Statistically significant differences were found between the attitudes of parents from complete and broken

families in terms of negative attitudes, i.e., excessive emotional concentration on the child ($t = 2.21$, $p = 0.03$, $\alpha = 0.05$). and emotional detachment from the child ($t = 2.50$, $p = 0.01$, $\alpha = 0.01$) but indicates a small effect (Cohen's $d = 0.37$). Studies have also shown that there is a statistically significant relationship between parental attitudes and a child's adjustment to kindergarten (Kendall's $\tau = 0.36$, $p = 0.01$, $\alpha = 0.01$). The results of the study of parental attitudes have shown that in broken families parents are more likely to have abnormal attitudes toward raising children. There were statistically significant differences between the attitudes of parents from complete and broken families in terms of negative attitudes, i.e., excessive emotional concentration on the child ($t = 2.20$, $\alpha = 0.05$) and emotional detachment from the child ($t = 2.50$, $\alpha = 0.01$). Studies have also shown that there is a statistically significant relationship between parental attitudes and child's adjustment to kindergarten (Kendall's $\tau = 0.36$, $\alpha = 0.01$). The studies correspond to the observations present in the subject literature confirming that single parents tend to behave incorrectly in two ways – they are overprotective and/or too demanding. Overprotection stems from the parental attempt to make up for the lack of the other parent, making the single parent more lenient in relation to the child, contributing to the development of weaker self-sufficiency, lack of resourcefulness, and problems with establishing relations with peers (Żelichowska, 2022). On the other hand, the behaviour that lacks emotions in relation to the child is manifested by the parent's lack of interest in the child's needs. The parent requires too much from the child and sets the bar too high, exceeding the child's capabilities, which may lead to lack of faith in one's abilities and low self-esteem (Behere, Basnet, & Campbell, 2017).

Several attitudes may cripple the child's ability to enter the kindergarten environment. These include incorrect child rearing patterns and parental behaviours, such as excessive control over a child's life, making the child too dependent on the parent and to conform to all of the parent's decisions, establishing too strict discipline, and showing more anger in relation to the child while maintaining a reduced level of tolerance. As was highlighted earlier – raising patterns and parental behaviours and practices have an influence on the child's ability to adapt to new circumstances (Goodman et al., 2015). Moreover, most probably the relation between a mother and a child has a decisive role in the development and socialization of a small child, as well as the process of kindergarten adaptation.

The analysis of children's emotional relationship towards parents showed that children from broken families had stronger emotional bonds with their mothers than children from complete families, alongside a strong need to establish a connection with fathers. It was found that the correlation between a child's attitude towards parents and his or her adjustment is statistically significant (Kendall's $\tau = 0.28$, $p = 0.03$, $\alpha = 0.05$).

The process of child socialization is hindered in incomplete families due to the interaction with only a single authority figure. A stronger bond with the mother is a result

of more contact and increased care. Fathers may participate in the child's life, maintaining contact. However, there are cases when they see their children only occasionally, or they withdraw from the relation completely. Despite a difficult family relation, children pursue the contact with their father. They are afraid of a complete loss, and they still want to feel important to him (Rydz, 2014).

The presented results confirm that the lowest number of negative phenomena in a child's life occurs when he or she is raised in a complete family (Fagan, Churchill, 2022; Morawska, 2011). Children who are raised in incomplete or broken families do not have access to the cognitive-behavioural resources that help to become self-sufficient, resulting in inhibited functioning not only in a family environment but also in other areas of life (Błażek, 2014). Children whose family was broken suffer from a higher degree of social anxiety and are characterized by lower cognitive competences (Minullina, 2018). They more often withdraw from social relations, achieve lower results at school, and their parents often point to their behavioural problems (Fagan, Churchill, 2022). In a longer perspective, children who come from broken families suffer from numerous psychological difficulties, such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and frequent anger (Gumowska, Koprowicz, 2020).

Family break-up and kindergarten adaptation are highly stressful experiences for a child. There is a need for more attention, conversations, and intimacy. The child can receive support not only from parents, but also grandparents, kindergarten employees, and in particular cases – doctors and psychologists.

The performed studies were merely one of the possible ways of discussing the process of child adaptation to kindergarten. The process is highly connected to the type of family in which the child is being raised, the behaviour of parents, and the emotional relationships between the parents and the child. Further studies in child adaptation to kindergarten could include other factors that support or hinder the development of children in this area, such as the characteristics of child temperament, the ability to self-regulate, the readiness of the child to attend kindergarten, or its educational capabilities (e.g., the access to various support resources). The analysis of the possible chances and risk factors in the process of child adaptation to kindergarten may help not only children but also parents and kindergarten employees in arranging the best possible debut of the preschooler in the incredibly interesting world of education and friendship.

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