



„Wychowanie w Rodzinie” t. XXXI (4/2024)

Submitted: September 30, 2024 – Accepted: December 12, 2024

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## Parental attitudes and children's adaptation strategies in a new educational environment

### Postawy rodzicielskie a strategie adaptacyjne dzieci w nowym środowisku wychowawczym

#### Abstract

**Introduction.** Parents play an important role in the process of a child's adaptation to kindergarten. An early bond between a child and a parent (Lubowiecka, 2000; Klim-Klimaszewska, 2006; Brzezińska, Czub, & Ożadowicz, 2012; Szczotka, Szewczuk, 2015), especially the mother (Bowlby, 2007; Ziemska, 2009) influences the development of a sense

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of security, which is essential for effective adaptation to a new environment. Children who develop a healthy, trusting attachment cope better with the challenges associated with separation from parents and adaptation to a new environment. They are more willing to explore the world, are better able to regulate emotions and establish relationships with peers. On the other hand, children with an anxious or ambivalent attachment style may perceive new situations, such as being in kindergarten, as a threat, which makes the adaptation process more difficult and may lead to strong emotional reactions. Understanding how parental attitudes influence children's adaptive strategies in preschool can aid in developing more effective methods to support the adaptation process.

**Aim.** The aim of the study is to learn about the relationships between the attitudes represented by parents and the adaptation strategies adopted by their children in kindergarten.

**Methods and materials.** The study included three-year-old children entering a new environment, which is kindergarten, and their parents. The study used the Parental Attitude Scale by M. Plopa (SPR) and the Adaptive Strategies Questionnaire by A. Brzezińska, M. Czub and N. Ożadowicz (KSA).

**Results.** The study did not clearly show the relationships between parental attitudes and children's adaptation strategies.

**Keywords:** adaptation, adaptation strategies, parental attitudes, kindergarten environment, parents.

### **Abstrakt**

**Wprowadzenie.** Rodzice odgrywają istotną rolę w procesie adaptacji dziecka do przedszkola. Wczesna więź między dzieckiem a rodzicem (Lubowiecka, 2000; Klim-Klimaszewska, 2006; Brzezińska, Czub, Ożadowicz, 2012; Szczotka, Szewczuk, 2015), zwłaszcza matką (Bowlby, 2007; Ziemska, 2009) wpływa na rozwój poczucia bezpieczeństwa, które jest niezbędne dla efektywnego przystosowania się do nowego środowiska. Dzieci, które rozwijają zdrowe, ufne przywiązanie, lepiej radzą sobie z wyzwaniami związanymi z rozstaniem z rodzicami i adaptacją do nowego otoczenia. Są bardziej skłonne do eksplorowania świata, potrafią lepiej regulować emocje i nawiązywać relacje z rówieśnikami. Natomiast dzieci z lękowym lub ambiwalentnym stylem przywiązania mogą postrzegać nowe sytuacje, takie jak pobyt w przedszkolu, jako zagrożenie, co utrudnia proces adaptacji i może prowadzić do silnych reakcji emocjonalnych. Zrozumienie, jak postawy rodzicielskie wpływają na strategie adaptacyjne dzieci w przedszkolu, może pomóc w opracowaniu bardziej efektywnych metod wsparcia dzieci w procesie adaptacji.

**Cel.** Celem badań było poznanie zależności występujących pomiędzy postawami reprezentowanymi przez rodziców a strategiami adaptacyjnymi przyjmowanymi przez ich dzieci w przedszkolu.

**Metody i materiały.** Badaniami objęto dzieci trzyletnie wstępujące do nowego środowi-

ską, jakim jest przedszkole, oraz ich rodziców. Do badań wykorzystano Skalę Postaw Rodzicielskich Mieczysława Plopy (SPR) oraz Kwestionariusz Strategii Adaptacyjnych Anny Brzezińskiej, Magdaleny Czub i Natalii Ożadowicz (KSA).

**Wyniki.** Badania nie wykazały jednoznacznie zależności pomiędzy postawami rodzicielskimi a strategiami adaptacyjnymi dzieci.

**Słowa kluczowe:** adaptacja, strategie adaptacyjne, postawy rodzicielskie, środowisko przedszkolne, rodzice.

## Introduction

The issue of children's adaptation to kindergarten, which is extremely important due to their first experiences in a new educational environment that have a crucial impact on their emotional, social and cognitive development, is relatively rarely studied, which means that there is a lack of systematic analyses and tools to support optimal adaptation conditions. During the first months of a child's stay in kindergarten, which are considered to be the adaptation period, certain behaviours, known as adaptation strategies, can be observed. These strategies can be both positive and negative (Sęk & Brzezińska, 2010). The process of adaptation to the preschool environment is multifaceted. It depends not only on the child's predisposition, but also on the support they receive from both the preschool staff and their parents. Therefore, it is justified to devote research attention to this issue in the context of understanding the relationships between parental attitudes and the coping strategies chosen by children.

The family plays a fundamental role in shaping a child's perception of the world and in transmitting norms and values. Although most parents consciously take educational measures, unintentional emotional reactions that manifest themselves in their relationship with their child, in their words and attitudes, are equally important. In psychological literature, the concept of *attitude* has various definitions, resulting from the approaches of representatives of different schools of psychology. Mieczysław Plopa (2011) distinguishes the following components of attitude: cognitive, emotional-positive and behavioural. Other definitions combine attitude with various mental processes, separating emotions from cognition or intellect from emotions. Contemporary psychology strives to integrate subjective and objective perception in an individual's interactions with their environment. Józef Rembowski (1972) defines parental attitudes as the overall approach of the father and mother towards their children, shaped during the performance of their parental functions. Maria Ziemska (1973) describes parental attitudes as established, acquired structures that influence parents' behaviour towards their children. The author (Ziemska, 2009) distinguished eight attitudes, which she

divided into four opposing pairs: acceptance–rejection, recognition of rights–excessive reward, reasonable freedom–excessive protection, and cooperation–avoidance.

Research indicates that experiences within the family of origin influence the mental health and personality of future parents. Families characterised by high tolerance for autonomy, open communication and sensitivity to the needs of others foster the development of resources necessary for coping with parenthood (Anderson, Sabatell, 1999). Such individuals are more empathetic, patient and communicate better with children. These skills develop in children who have experienced rational control and satisfaction of basic needs in their families. For this reason, experiences from the family home, emotional interactions with parents and identification with parental roles have a significant impact on how attitudes towards one's children are formed (Plopa, 2011). The absence of one parent can lead to difficulties in fulfilling parental roles in the future. A properly functioning marriage provides emotional and instrumental support, which has a positive impact on parenting. Emotional support makes spouses feel loved, respected and appreciated, which increases their commitment and patience in their relationships with their children. Instrumental support allows for better energy management in childcare, especially for women for whom motherhood is crucial. Jay Belsky (1984) showed that the quality of a marital relationship influences parenting attitudes – weaker relationships lead to negative attitudes towards parenting. In addition, social support from friends, relatives and neighbours increases parental competence, sensitivity and patience, and also raises parents' self-esteem (Belsky, Steinberg, & Draper, 1991).

Early socialisation experiences influence both men's and women's attitudes towards parenting. In the past, men did not have a clear model of fatherhood because their fathers did not take an active role in childcare. Nowadays, however, more and more men are getting involved in raising children. Research suggests that interactions with children are just as important for fathers as they are for mothers, and that infants form relationships with both parents. Early involvement of the father has a positive impact on child development and supports family integration (Plopa, 2011). However, parenting attitudes are a comprehensive way in which parents (both mothers and fathers) relate to their children and issues related to upbringing, shaped during the performance of their parental roles (Rembowski, 1972). Although these attitudes are an objective phenomenon, their impact on a child's development depends on how they are perceived by the child. Both children and adults may interpret the same parental behaviours differently, depending on their internal emotional and cognitive state. A cooperative attitude is based on active engagement with the child. Parents take an interest in their child's problems and support them in difficult, significant moments in their lives. This attitude instils trust in the child towards their parents and encourages them to actively overcome difficulties. It develops the cognitive area and satisfies social and psychological needs (Cudak, Cudak, 2020). Positive parenting attitudes have a significant

positive impact on children's mental, social and emotional development, on satisfying their cognitive needs, reinforcing their sense of security, and eliminating aggressive behaviour. Children's behaviour shows a high degree of independence, a desire to help others, a search for interaction with peers, as well as optimal intellectual and social development. Parents often use punishment and humiliate their children. Such parental attitudes cause aggressive behaviour in children, which manifests itself as violence towards their peers. Emotional imbalance or personality development inhibition may occur. The child is characterised by social maladjustment and cognitive, including intellectual, development disorders. They experience intense anxiety, a lack of security, and nervousness. An overly protective attitude can cause the child to often feel helpless and lost, characterised by low self-esteem and a negative attitude towards their actions, often being hyperactive and impulsive (Cudak, Cudak, 2020). Therefore, the child's proper adaptation to the new educational environment, as well as the quality of their life in the immediate and distant future, depends on the proper relationship between parents and the child.

Adaptation (Latin: *adaptatio*) is a process of interaction between an individual and their environment, consisting of the ability to maintain or restore internal balance and satisfy needs in reality (Okoń, 1992; Lubowiecka, 2000). Adaptation to the pre-school environment should enable the child to cope with difficulties, fulfil social roles and satisfy their own needs, which determines their satisfaction and contentment. Adaptation should occur in a manner that enables the child to fulfil a specific social role, allowing them to satisfy their own needs and achieve a sense of satisfaction and contentment (Lubowiecka, 2000; Klim-Klimaszewska, 2006).

The process of social identification is super important in shaping a kid's personality. It helps them learn to see, feel, and act like people who are important to them, which helps them understand the world in a social context. Erik Erikson, in his theory of psychosocial development, points to the occurrence of three normative crises in childhood (as cited in Brzezińska, Appelt, & Ziółkowska, 2021). During the preschool period, children go through a crisis of initiative versus guilt. At this time, the development of their personality influences changes in their relationships with their environment and the new social roles they take on, e.g. the role of a preschooler. The researcher emphasises that the development of initiative in children is expressed through joy, competition, perseverance, and satisfaction with achievements (as cited in Brzezińska, Appelt, & Ziółkowska, 2021). If a child's development proceeds in a positive direction, their *ego* gains internal strength, known as entrepreneurship. This strength enables the child to cooperate freely with others, defend themselves against imposed restrictions, and, at the same time, take their initiatives. The experiences gained during this period teach the child how to maintain a sense of agency while respecting the rights and rules of others. Self-control has a key role in how a kid adapts to a new educational

environment, and how it develops can really depend on how their parents act. Between the ages of 3 and 6, kids gradually learn to plan what they do, act in a systematic way, and follow what adults tell them (Trempla, 2011). During this period, the ability to exercise self-control becomes essential in order to cope effectively with the demands of nursery school, where children have to function in a group and follow rules. Parents who show patience, support, and consistency help their children develop the ability to regulate their emotions and behaviour. Children raised in an atmosphere of support and understanding find it easier to acquire self-control, which helps them adapt better to new environments. On the other hand, a lack of support or inconsistency in upbringing can delay the development of these key skills, making it difficult for children to adapt to new conditions and tasks.

Children who have difficulty adapting to the preschool environment display a negative attitude towards preschool, manifested by crying when separated from their parents and reluctance to stay in the new environment. These children often express negative opinions about kindergarten, and their behaviour indicates difficulties in establishing and maintaining social relationships. They avoid initiating contact with their peers and kindergarten staff. When faced with new situations or difficulties, they manifest crying, aggression, and resistance. Research by Marzena Buchnat (2011) conducted in a mainstream kindergarten showed that 34% of 238 three-year-old children had adaptation difficulties. Teachers describing these problems pointed to the following behaviours, persisting for at least four weeks: persistent crying, lack of eye contact with the teacher, refusal to eat, failure to satisfy physiological needs, lack of interaction with peers, passivity or withdrawal during play, and verbal and physical aversion to separation from parents. These children cried for most of their time at preschool and waited for their parents to return (Buchnat, 2011). Anna Klim-Klimaszewska (2010), on the other hand, points to several syndromes associated with emotional disorders in children who have difficulties in the adaptation process. These include neurotic reactions characterised by a variety of symptoms, aggressive or withdrawn behaviour, social aggression and psychosomatic disorders.

## **Research aim**

The study aimed to investigate the connections between the attitudes represented by parents and the strategies adopted by their children to adapt to the preschool environment. The following questions were posed:

- P1. What types of attitudes do the parents in the study represent?
- P2. What adaptation strategies do three-year-old children adopt in their first weeks of kindergarten as a new educational environment?

P3. Are there any relationships between the attitudes represented by parents and the adaptation strategies adopted by their children to the preschool environment?

## Materials and methods

Two tools were used in the study. The *Skala Postaw Rodzicielskich* [Parenting Attitudes Scale] by M. Plopa (2008) was used to examine parenting attitudes. It contains 50 statements that divide parents' attitudes into five types: acceptance-rejection, demands, autonomy, inconsistency, and protection. These attitudes describe different approaches to parenting, ranging from acceptance and support to distance, emotional instability or excessive control. The scale measures how strongly parents exhibit these attitudes. A score of 10 to 50 can be obtained on each subscale, with a higher score indicating a greater intensity of the attitude. This tool is internally consistent and has proven theoretical validity through factor analysis and correlations with other questionnaires. To examine the adaptation strategies of three-year-old children to kindergarten conditions, the *Kwestionariusz Strategii Adaptacyjnych* (KSA) [Adaptation Strategies Questionnaire] by Anna Izabela Brzezińska, Magdalena Czub, and Natalia Ożadowicz (2012) was used. It was developed to assess the adaptation process of children aged 2–3 to kindergarten. It consists of 36 statements describing children's behaviour, to which the respondent answers "yes" or "no." The questionnaire contains three subscales: creative adaptation (TA), which is characterised by normal development and no adaptation problems; anxiety and submissiveness (LU), associated with average development requiring support; and rebellion and resentment (BU), indicating problems in psychomotor and social development. The tool is highly accurate in assessing adaptation.

A total of 60 people were examined, including 30 parents (19 women and 11 men) and 30 children (14 girls and 16 boys). The median age of the parents was 35 years, the oldest person participating in the study was 42 years old, and the youngest parent was 24 years old. The median age of the children participating in the study was 37 months, the youngest was 31 months old, and the oldest was 47 months old.

## Results

### *Parenting attitudes in the child adaptation process*

The analysis of the results for all respondents allowed us to identify the highest scores for the acceptance-rejection attitude ( $M=44.83\pm4.73$ ) and for the autonomy attitude ( $38.47\pm3.38$ ). In the case of acceptance-rejection and autonomy attitudes, extreme left-sided asymmetries of distributions were also found ( $p<0.05$ ;  $Sk<0$ ) (Table 1).

Table 1

*Parenting attitudes in the child adaptation process – results for all respondents*

Variable	M	ME	MIN	MAX	SD	SK	KU	W	P
Acceptance-rejection	44.83	45.50	32.00	50.00	4.73	-1.31	1.48	0.86	0.001
Autonomy	38.47	38.50	32.00	43.00	3.38	-0.33	-0.99	0.92	0.029
Protection	26.87	26.50	13.00	37.00	5.84	-0.22	-0.33	0.98	0.83
Demands	27.40	28.50	15.00	40.00	7.07	-0.01	-0.96	0.95	0.27
Inconsistency	20.77	19.50	11.00	36.00	6.92	0.59	-0.51	0.94	0.13

*Note:* M – arithmetic mean, Me – median, SD – standard deviation, Sk – skewness, Ku – kurtosis, W – results of the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, p – test probability for the normality test.

*Source:* Authors' own study.

The gender of the parents was statistically significant ( $p=0.038$ ) to their dominant parenting style. It was observed that the percentage of acceptance-rejection attitudes was higher among women, accounting for 100%. Among men, this percentage was 81.82%. In their case, the dominant attitude was autonomy. Analysis of the results of parental attitudes for mothers showed the highest scores for the acceptance-rejection attitude ( $M=46.11 \pm 2.71$ ) and for the autonomy attitude ( $38.95 \pm 3.24$ ) (Table 2). For none of the variables were there grounds for rejecting the null hypothesis of normality of distribution  $p>0.05$ . Analysis of the results of parental attitudes for fathers showed the highest results for the acceptance-rejection attitude  $M=42.64 \pm 6.58$ , and for the autonomy attitude  $37.64 \pm 3.61$  (Table 3). For none of the variables were there grounds for rejecting the null hypothesis of normality of distribution  $p>0.05$ .

Table 2

*Parenting attitudes in the child adaptation process – results for mothers*

Variable	M	ME	MIN	MAX	SD	SK	KU	W	P
Acceptance-rejection	46.11	47.00	42.00	50.00	2.71	-0.24	-1.51	0.89	0.052
Autonomy	38.95	40.00	33.00	43.00	3.24	-0.30	-1.24	0.91	0.074
Protection	27.37	27.00	13.00	37.00	6.99	-0.36	-0.94	0.94	0.22
Demands	25.79	27.00	15.00	40.00	6.87	0.27	-0.60	0.97	0.75
Inconsistency	20.26	18.00	11.00	35.00	6.85	0.72	-0.45	0.93	0.17

*Note:* M – arithmetic mean, Me – median, SD – standard deviation, Sk – skewness, Ku – kurtosis, W – results of the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, p – test probability for the normality test.

*Source:* Authors' own study.



Table 3

*Parenting attitudes in the child adaptation process – results for fathers*

Variable	M	ME	MIN	MAX	SD	SK	KU	W	P
Acceptance-rejection	42.64	45.00	32.00	50.00	6.58	-0.54	-1.17	0.89	0.15
Autonomy	37.64	37.00	32.00	42.00	3.61	-0.32	-0.92	0.90	0.18
Protection	26.00	26.00	19.00	29.00	3.13	-1.12	1.13	0.88	0.11
Demands	30.18	31.00	19.00	40.00	6.84	-0.55	-0.42	0.93	0.41
Inconsistency	21.64	21.00	12.00	36.00	7.28	0.46	-0.06	0.95	0.69

*Note:* M – arithmetic mean, Me – median, SD – standard deviation, Sk – skewness, Ku – kurtosis, W – results of the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, p – test probability for the normality test.

*Source:* Authors' own study.

In subsequent analyses, we verified whether gender significantly differentiates parenting attitudes for the entire sample. For this purpose, a Student's t-test was used for independent samples and, in the case of the acceptance-rejection variable, due to the heterogeneity of variance (Levene's  $p < 0.05$ ), a Student's t-test with independent variance estimation was used.

Women in the high results group had a significantly higher mean for autonomy  $p=0.022$ , Cohen's d effect size  $D=1.94$ , and protective attitudes  $p=0.0004$ , Cohen's d effect size  $D=7.12$ . Women in the low results group had a significantly higher mean for autonomy  $p=0.0096$ , Cohen's d effect size  $= 4.58$ , and acceptance-rejection attitude  $p=0.0011$ , Cohen's d effect size  $= 3.72$ .

### ***Adaptive strategies of children of parents with different parenting styles***

The data obtained from the study indicate that children mainly use creative adaptation, but there are children in the study group who exhibit anxious and submissive behaviour. The analysis of the results allowed us to conclude that the highest scores for adaptation strategies were achieved by children attending a kindergarten for creative adaptation,  $M=8.60 \pm 3.30$ . In the case of anxiety-submissive and rebellious-submissive adaptation strategies, extreme right-sided asymmetries of distributions were also found,  $p < 0.05$ ;  $Sk > 0$ . The gender of the children was statistically significant,  $p=0.0029$ , strongly  $\tau_b=0.47$ , associated with their dominant adaptation strategy. It can be observed that the percentage of creative adaptation strategies was higher among girls, at 100%, than among boys, at 62.50%. In 37% of boys, the dominant strategy was fear-submissiveness.

The analysis of the results allowed us to conclude that the highest results for adaptation strategies were obtained for girls attending kindergarten for creative

adaptation  $M=10\pm 2.11$ . In the case of anxiety-submissive and rebellion-submissive adaptation strategies, extreme right-sided asymmetries of distributions were also found  $p<0.05$ ;  $Sk>0$ . For adaptation strategies for boys, the same was found for creative adaptation  $M=7.37\pm 3.70$ . In the case of anxiety-submissive and rebellious-submissive adaptation strategies, extreme right-sided asymmetries of distributions were also found  $p<0.05$ ;  $Sk>0$ . The study confirmed that girls had a statistically significantly higher mean creative adaptation strategy than boys  $p=0.03$ ; Cohen's effect size  $D=0.87$ .

In subsequent analyses, due to the lack of normality of the distributions of the analysed variables, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to verify the significance of the differences. The analysis of the results did not provide grounds for concluding that gender significantly differentiates the distributions of the analysed variables  $p>0.05$ . However, the gender of the children significantly differentiated the results of the creative adaptation strategy. It was found that girls had a statistically significantly higher mean creative adaptation strategy than boys  $p=0.0011$ ; Cohen's  $d$  effect size = 4.11.

### ***Parenting attitudes and their children's adaptive strategies***

Due to the non-normality of the distributions of the analysed variables, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to verify the significance of differences for the anxiety-submissiveness and rebellion-submissiveness variables. Due to the lack of rank differentiation, these results could not be converted. Next, we verified whether parental attitudes were related to their children's adaptive strategies. For this purpose, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used. It was found that as the scores for the parental basis of protection increased, the scores for the anxiety-submissiveness adaptive strategy decreased in girls,  $R=-0.55$ ;  $p=0.04$ . It was also found that as the scores for parental inconsistency increased, the scores for the anxiety-submissive adaptation strategy decreased in girls,  $R=-0.56$ ;  $p=0.04$  (Table 4). Further analyses were conducted to verify whether the adaptation strategies dominant in children significantly differentiated the scores for parental attitudes. The results revealed that they did not significantly differentiate parental attitude scores  $p>0.05$ . Similarly, the dominant parental attitudes did not significantly differentiate the adaptive strategy scores of children  $p>0.05$ .

Table 4

*Spearman's rank correlation coefficient – for girls*

Pair of variables	N SIGNIFICANT	R SPEARMAN	T(N-2)	P
Creative adaptation & Acceptance-rejection	14	0.16	0.56	0.59
Creative adaptation & Autonomy	14	0.46	1.81	0.10
Creative Adaptation & Protection	14	0.14	0.50	0.63
Creative Adaptation & Demands	14	-0.32	-1.16	0.27

Pair of variables	N SIGNIFICANT	R SPEARMAN	T(N-2)	P
Creative adaptation & Inconsistency	14	-0.12	-0.43	0.67
Anxiety-submissiveness & Acceptance-rejection	14	0.18	0.65	0.53
Anxiety-submissiveness & Autonomy	14	0.27	0.97	0.35
Anxiety-submissiveness & Protection	14	-0.55	-2.30	0.04
Anxiety-submissiveness & Demands	14	-0.22	-0.79	0.44
Anxiety-submissiveness & Inconsistency	14	-0.56	-2.34	0.04
Rebellion-submissiveness & Acceptance-rejection	14	-0.08	-0.29	0.78
Rebellion-submissiveness & Autonomy	14	-0.19	-0.67	0.51
Rebellion-submissiveness & Protection	14	-0.04	-0.12	0.90
Rebellion-submissiveness & Demands	14	0.04	0.15	0.88
Rebellion-submissiveness & Inconsistency	14	0.08	0.27	0.79

*Source:* Authors' own study.

## Discussion

With regard to the first research problem, it was found that parents in the study group mainly adopt an attitude of acceptance. Statistical analyses indicate that, given the size of the group, it cannot be concluded whether gender significantly influences the parental attitudes adopted by parents. The results obtained indicate that parents in the study group accept their children as they are. They create an environment for their children that is conducive to the exchange of feelings and teaches trust in other people and in the world. The results obtained are consistent with the research of Grażyna Rudkowska (1997) on parental attitudes towards preschool children. However, they are not confirmed by the research conducted by Dorota Dykalska-Biecka, Anna Zawadzka, and Małgorzata Lipowska (2017). The authors describe that in the group they studied, parents usually adopt an inconsistent or overly demanding attitude. According to the researchers, the results obtained may be related to the age of the children and, consequently, to the parents' attitudes. However, Dillon T. Browne and colleagues (2010), who studied parental interactions by gender in child psychopathology, put forward hypotheses based on the theory of bad behaviour associated with gender stereotypes: parental hostility was supposed to be associated with externalisation in girls and internalisation in boys, and parental inconsistency with the opposite patterns. It was assumed that girls respond to inconsistent parental attitudes with hidden aggression, while boys are more susceptible to parental influence regardless of the theory. The study confirmed gender differences in child socialisation and parental responses

and proved that permissive and inconsistent parenting is associated with inappropriate gender-stereotypical behaviour in children – externalisation in boys and internalisation in girls. Strict parenting further exacerbates these non-stereotypical behaviours. The study found that parents of boys exhibiting symptoms of internalisation were more likely to use inconsistent discipline. Healthy interactions between parents and children had a positive impact on emotional functioning, which was also evident in boys. The impact of hostile and inconsistent parenting attitudes on hyperactivity was more pronounced in girls. It is worth noting that cultural and structural diversity should be taken into account when discussing parent-child relationships. Culture shapes parenting experiences and structures (Martin & Colbert, 1997) and influences parenting styles through the values, attitudes, beliefs, and goals that parents set for their children. Child development occurs within a specific cultural context that parents pass on to subsequent generations. This means that parents from different cultures may have different values and beliefs, which influence their approach to parenting and the fulfilment of their parental roles. Comparative research on this topic would be interesting.

Further results of this study demonstrate that children most often adopt behavioural strategies indicating creative adaptation after the first two months of attending preschool, which enables them to find their place in relationships with their peers and teachers in a positive and constructive manner. The results obtained differ from those obtained by A. Brzezińska, M. Czub, and N. Ożadowicz (2012), where 37.5% of children adopted a creative adaptation strategy and the same number of children used a rebellion-submission strategy. The analyses carried out show that the creative adaptation strategy is significantly determined by the gender of the children.

The interpretation of the research results did not allow for an unambiguous conclusion that, as assumed, the parental attitudes applied by parents are related to their children's styles of adaptation to kindergarten. After statistical analysis using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, no significant correlations were found between parental attitudes and their children's adaptation strategies ( $p > 0.05$ ). Only two strong negative correlations were observed in girls. The first: as the intensity of protective attitudes increased, the results of the anxiety-submissiveness adaptation strategy decreased. This correlation suggests that the attitude of parents who are overly concerned about their children enables them to adapt to kindergarten without anxiety. These children adopt a creative adaptation strategy. The second strong negative correlation occurred when, with an increase in the intensity of parental inconsistency, the results of the anxiety-submissive strategy decreased. It can be concluded here that a lack of stability in a parent's behaviour towards their own child causes the child to more often adopt a creative adaptation strategy in the adaptation process. The results of the Student's t-test to verify whether the dominant adaptation strategies differentiated the results of parental attitudes did not significantly differentiate the results of parental attitudes

$p > 0.05$ . The same test did not show that dominant parental attitudes statistically differentiate adaptation strategies. Research (Darling-Fisher, Tiedje, 1990) reveals gender differences in parental involvement – mothers are more involved in care, devote more time to their children and show a high readiness to meet their needs, while fathers are more likely to engage in play and innovative activities.

Effective adaptation of a child to kindergarten requires cooperation between parents and the institution. Parents should build a positive attitude towards kindergarten in their child, prepare them for new challenges and support their independence. It is worth remembering that the process of adaptation depends on the child's early relationship with their mother, and especially on the type of attachment that develops in early childhood (Bowlby, 2007). Children with a secure attachment find it easier to cope with separation, while those with an anxious attachment may experience difficulties in kindergarten, reacting with crying and resistance.

A child's adaptation may be hindered by parental anxiety, lack of trust in teachers or lack of contact with them. Parents' acceptance of the nursery and adaptation classes that the child attends with their parents help to reduce anxiety and get to know the new environment better. Research by Martyna Szczotka and Katarzyna Szezwczuk (2015) shows that parents who prepare their children for preschool early, talk about this event and involve them in buying school supplies, facilitate the adaptation process. In addition, enabling contact with peers and adaptation classes are crucial in the adaptation process.

The limitation of this study is certainly the size of the research group. In subsequent studies, the number of children surveyed should be increased. It would also be worthwhile to survey both parents. This could show whether parents agree in presenting certain attitudes and whether these influence their children's adoption of adaptation strategies.

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