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Emotions and socialization in preschool

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Abstract

Keywords: Emotions in preschool, emotional competence, social competence, coloring book, development program, emotional literacy, educators.

The doctoral thesis "Emotions and socialization in preschool" contributes to the socio-emotional development of preschoolers from two different perspectives, that of the kindergarten environment but also by investigating the parent-child relationship, in terms of managing emotions.

Childhood is the most important period in human life through the lasting consequences it has on further development, given that each child is unique and our main goal is to help him develop.

Today's generation of children needs a new type of approach, both from teachers and parents, to help them grow and develop to their full potential. The needs of society, always changing and the challenges in the preschool environment require us to come up with innovative solutions to adapt the educational approach to the psycho-individual development of each child.

Research in the field of psychology has shown that a high level of intellectual IQ skills can contribute to good results in various fields, but this is not enough, especially in "human" areas, where empathy and self-control could be more remarkable skills. than the cognitive ones. Over time, the study of emotions has brought many problems to researchers, becoming *"one of the most confusing and difficult chapters of scientific psychology"* (Boncu, Nastas, 2015, p.7). Therefore, the field of research on emotional intelligence has met with resistance from academics, but nevertheless emotional intelligence has established itself as a resonance paradigm, and today the benefits brought especially in the Sciences of Education are recognized.

This thesis contains aims at the socio-emotional development of preschoolers, through a program entitled *"Emotions and socialization in preschool, vital skills for today's children"*, but also by creating coloring books for children and parents.

The doctoral thesis entitled "Emotions and socialization in preschool" brings to the fore the importance of emotions and socialization of children during development, developed in four distinct chapters: **Chapter I**: Emotional intelligence in preschool**, Chapter II**: Socialization - determining factor of the development of emotional intelligence, **Chapter III**: The role of parents and educators in the emotional development of preschool children, **Chapter IV:** Research method. First, this paper contributes to the clarification of the theoretical issue regarding the emotional and social development of preschoolers, and the chapters in the paper approach in a structured way the current theoretical approach.

In Chapter I, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN PRESCHOOL, we focus on the concept of emotional intelligence on the theoretical basis and landmarks in educational practice.

The development of the concept called *emotional intelligence* refers to the ability to effectively use emotionally charged information in the process of adaptation and in achieving emotional comfort. This concept emerged as early as the second decade of the twentieth century, when American professor **Edward Thorndike** identified general, *academic intelligence* and another type of intelligence that defines *social intelligence* and will later be related to *emotional intelligence* - the latter being the ability to understand and act skillfully, skillfully and balanced in interpersonal or interpersonal realities (Stein, Book, 2003, p.15).

Peter Salovey (1997) includes Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences in his basic definition of emotional intelligence, extending these abilities to five main areas:

Knowing personal emotions - is represented by self-awareness, recognition of a feeling when it occurs, which is the cornerstone of emotional intelligence. People who have more certainty about their feelings are better "pilots" of personal existence, being more confident about how they react to personal decisions.

Managing emotions - mastering emotions in such a way as to be the right ones, is the ability to build self-awareness. Those who fail to manage their emotions properly and control themselves will constantly face frustrations, while those who excel in this direction can rebalance faster due to obstacles and problems in life.

Self-motivation - being absolutely essential, is putting emotions at the service of a goal. Emotional self-control, delaying rewards and suppressing impulses are the basis of success of all kinds, the ability to be "on stage" leads to outstanding performance in all areas.

Recognition of emotions in others - empathy is another ability that is built by emotional self-awareness, is the foundation of "the ability to understand others." Empathetic people are more attentive to social signals, they are subtle and show what others need.

Relationship management - the art of establishing relationships, largely means the ability to manage the emotions of others. Those who excel in these skills do well in everything that means positive interaction with others, being considered socially charismatic people whose company is sought after.

Emotional development in early childhood as well as biological and social influences guide the course of this complex process, and at some point in development, children are expected to acquire *"emotional competence* - this refers to the ability of people to adapt to their own emotions as well as the emotions of others "(Schaffer, 2010, p. 125). Socio-emotional development is an interpretation of theories of social intelligence (Thorndike, 1920; Gardner, 1983; Sternberg, 1985), emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 1988; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995; 1998) but also of skills development (Boyatzis, 1982; Spencer & Spencer, 1993) applied in education (Seal, 2011). The two concepts, emotional intelligence and socio-emotional skills, are correlated both theoretically and applied (Goleman, 1998; Seal & Andrews-Brown, 2010; Wang & al., 2011).

The ability to recognize one's own emotions as well as the ability to recognize the emotions of others is an important task, taking into account the course of emotional development that develops especially in early childhood.

In the first six years of life, children make important progress in their emotional development, which allows them to be more and more emotionally competent in various social situations such as:

* developing and expressing emotions,
* knowing and understanding emotions,
* regulation of emotions.

1.3. Emotional competence in preschool

In terms of emotional competence, it has been defined by several theorists, including Schaffer (2010, p.125) who calls emotional competence "a concept that refers to the ability of children to manage their own emotions, as well as to recognize and to adapt to the emotions of others ", E. Stănculescu (2008) noted the defining characteristics of emotional competence, which involve emotional expressiveness, understanding emotions, the ability to react

appropriately to the emotional manifestations of others, and establishing harmonious interpersonal relationships is influenced by both social and emotional competence. Moreover, A. Ștefan, E. Kallay (2010) also define emotional competence as the ability of people to adapt to both their own emotions and the emotions of others, it influences the cognitive development of children. In the literature, the term Emotional Intelligence is mainly used in the case of adults, and in the case of children the term emotional competence is used, because it is in full development.

1.3.1. Emotional competence as a resource for development

The literature highlights how children who have an age-appropriate emotional skill can develop other skills in various areas of development at the same time. Relevant studies give positive clues between expressing emotions and developing other skills, so emotional skills are an important resource in the complex development of the child.

Table I.3. The connection between emotional skills in children

Studies	Emotional competence	Connection with other skills
Cole, Dennis, Smith-Simon& Cohen (2009)	- strategies for regulating emotions	- better communication in children, observed especially in free play.
Köckeritz, Klinkhammer&von Salisch (2010)	- understanding emotions	- language comprehension - behavior regulation
Denham et. al. (2012)	- extensive knowledge of emotions	- behavioral self-regulation - self-regulation of negative emotions
Blankson et al. (2013)	- proper expression of emotions	- better cognitive control
Denham et. al. (2012,2014)	- emotional control	- appropriate strategies for regulating emotions
von Salisch, Hänel&Denham	- differentiating positive from negative emotions	- better communication - improved memory

(2015)		- behavior regulation

The ability of the preschool child to manage his emotions also depends on the model offered by the adults, there are also biological aspects such as temperament, which is innate and difficult to change. During development, neurological maturation plays an important role because it allows the child to acquire more complex emotional regulation skills, the transition from adult-controlled to child-controlled emotional regulation is made, so the acquisition of these skills allows children to adequately express their emotions, but also to effectively manage situations with a negative emotional load (Ștefan, Kallay, 2010).

1.4. Development and expression of emotions in preschool

Today's children are fascinating, extremely important and have a huge learning potential, they are fascinating by their way of discovering the world around them, of exploring the environment, but also by their way of developing human abilities.

Joy, enthusiasm, happiness and sadness, anger, rage, fear, anger are different forms of the child's subjective attitude towards reality, these emotions manifest them differently depending on the context, so that *"at preschool we meet only emotions and feelings, unable to talk about affections or passions at this age "*(Golu, 2015, p.42), at the same time the feelings and emotions experienced by children are many and diverse; In this way the preschool child can easily go through various emotional states from joy to anger, from laughter to crying, and these *emotions "are not innate, but are formed under the influence of education and affectivity"* (ibidem) developing into this period and moral, intellectual and aesthetic feelings.

Everyone's genetic predisposition involves certain gifted temperaments, which determine emotions, but the brain circuit has an extraordinary malleability, so temperament is not a destiny, and emotional lessons learned in everyday life shape emotional circuits, depending on the context, being more adaptable or unadaptable to emotional understanding, resulting in childhood being a *"window of opportunity"* for essential emotional habits that dominate a person's entire existence. In biological terms, which underlie the description of the neural circuit of emotions, it has been discovered that the human species is born with what has worked best for the last 50,000 human generations (Goleman 2008, p.24).

1.4.2. Emotions and facial expressions

Facial expressions are part of our genetic heritage, so that children cannot control them, they are expressed naturally, and *"the appearance of various emotions at various ages*

is genetically programmed" (Schaffer, 2010, p.127,) regardless of the environment social or cultural environment where children develop. Facial expressions that go with an emotion ease its communication, so the first scientific attempt to record children's emotional behavior and explain its origin is made by Charles Darwin in 1872, The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals , becoming a fundamental work approached over time by various researchers and having an important function in communicating emotions.

The universality of certain emotional expressions supports Darwin's hypothesis that these are innate reactions with an evolutionary history, but also that these signals are imprinted in our nervous system. For example, many of the ways we express our emotions are inherited patterns that initially had a certain survival value.

A conclusion reached by the American psychologist Paul Ekman (1972) and his team, based on extensive research, which reveals the existence of six facial expressions that can be recognized by anyone belonging to any culture on the planet, he showed photos with various facial expressions of representatives of distant cultures, such as those in New Guinea, where there are isolated ethnic groups, in this way the participants in this study recognized fundamental emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, joy, surprise and later disgust, belonging to a repertoire common and thus admitting the universality of emotions.

Recognition of emotions in facial expressions is a controversial topic and has been studied in recent decades where advanced techniques are used to describe them in detail. These studies link to various psychological processes that take place in neurological structures, such as the Maximally Discriminative Facial Movement Coding System (Izard, 1979), and the Facial Action Coding System. (Ekman, Friesen & Hager, 1978, 2003) this measuring instrument being considered internationally, the main method used for the standardized analysis of facial microexpressions. The nature of facial expressions is an aspect of the emotional response, but also of children's social communication, so these aspects meet simultaneously and outline a facial expression.

Chapter II SOCIALIZATION - DETERMINING FACTOR OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, focuses on social experience in childhood including both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

Childhood is a unique opportunity for ideal development, because the human brain is in formation, and the strongest progress is made during childhood. According to specialized studies, we are born with many more neurons than those that will stay in the adult brain,

basically the brain loses those neural connections that are less used, so the experience we are subjected to in childhood is fundamental. The impact of experience on brain development was studied by Thorsten Wiesel and David Hubel, both Nobel Prize winners, in 1981.

The socialization of emotions in childhood is one of the important topics in developmental psychology, being a progressive and complex process through which children learn how to control and externalize their own feelings, in different contexts, taking into account the effects on others.

Emotional development is shaped by social experiences, and this highlights the rules of expression that children acquire during development, about the rules for expressing particular emotions in certain circumstances. Just as human beings differ in terms of intellectual competence but also in terms of emotional competence, there are several reasons for these differences, such as: hereditary characteristics that are passed from one generation to another, the environment that includes all natural, social, cultural elements , and education being the decisive factor of psycho-individual development having a social function, that of intermediary between man and environmental conditions. All these factors work together to successfully adapt the individual to society and prepare him for future challenges.

2.2. Social competence in preschool

The environment represents the culture, the society, but also the social group in which the children grow up. Thus it denotes that there is no competent social behavior in itself, and what is assessed as socially competent depends primarily on the interests of the child, but also on the norms and values of the social environment in which he lives and develops. In this context, the multitude of definitions of *social competence* also becomes clear, the most important of which are highlighted as areas of social competence.

- Ability to form positive relationships with others;
- Self-management competence, which involves controlling anger and resolving conflict situations;
- Cognitive competence refers to the child's ability to follow the instructions given by educators or parents, to understand the connections and to ask for help in various social situations;
- Cooperative skills that refer to knowing the rules and regulations of a society or group to which the child belongs;

- Self-affirmation involves the child's behavior, the initiative to start a conversation, but also to make friends.

This model emphasizes the idea that social and emotional skills are in a relationship of interdependence, and the knowledge of emotions and their regulation, but also social behavior form the optimal basis for creating effective human relationships (Pfeffer, 2019).

2.2.1. Interpersonal skills

All the psychological functions of the child develop in a social context. The course of development depends very much on the adults responsible for its care. The main function of relationships with adults is to give them with security, protection, to ease the acquisition of knowledge and skills. The child's social relationships with adults form his ability to trust, interact easily and recognize different social roles. Positive social relationships are formed when children understand the meaning of different behaviors, when they are able to adapt to different social contexts and are involved in group activities. Interactions with loved ones play a central role in their socio-emotional health, providing a sense of stability, security and belonging.

According to R. Schaffer (2010), a basic task of childhood is the sense of identity *"Who am I?"* an essential question that children try to find an answer to. This sense of self being built initially in relation to the parents, and then to the group colleagues. Friendship implies acceptance, appreciation and what others think about the child, but a significant impact is also the way the child behaves from preschool, a behavior that can last until adolescence. The child through relationships with others shapes and forms self-esteem.

2.2.2. Interpersonal skills

Coping with frustration is a challenge for all children. In terms of frustration tolerance, there are large differences in character, where more and more children are able to overcome such situations more easily, while for others it takes longer and they need support to successfully cope with strong emotions.

Frustration tolerance describes the child's ability to be constructive with disappointments, unfulfilled goals but also with unfulfilled desires, children realize on the other hand that not all people are willing to fulfill their desires. Young children have a lower tolerance for frustration, so we sometimes see fits of anger and crying when they do not get what they want, so a child must first learn to cope with frustrating situations.

During development, children acquire the ability to control impulses, through which they learn to cope successfully with frustrating situations. With the period of autonomy but

also the period in which they become aware of their own selves, through objectives and desires, they realize that not all people are willing to fulfill their desires. Waiting must be learned, so not every child's wish must be fulfilled, and certain events also have immediate consequences (such as: if the child sees a toy, he wants to play with it, even though it is with another child) in this situation the child they learn to socialize their needs.

2.3. The role of kindergarten in the socialization process

Kindergarten is the child's first life experience in society, after the family. In kindergarten, he experiences social life and directs the shaping of an authentic interrelation behavior, so the group of children generates a psychosocial climate. As we accept and become aware of certain rules and norms of coexistence, *"emotions are mediated by the analysis of situations through the prism of moral values, which is a higher level of emotional socialization"* (Glava, 2002 p.111) taking place a structuring of self-identity of the child.

In kindergarten, the main activity of the child is the free or didactic game through which children experience and assimilate important knowledge about the environment in which they live. Through play, children learn social rules, the optimal way to interact with others but also the right expression of emotions in different contexts. Children's play also promotes the acquisition of cognitive skills through language development, the ability to concentrate and successfully solve tasks.

2.3.1. Preschool curriculum on socio-emotional development

The dynamics of the preschool curriculum was marked by important changes, so that about the diachronic evolution of the Romanian preschool curriculum from 1960 to 2008, the phrase *socio-emotional education* is not found in the curricular documents, it is presented in various forms and names as Patriotic education, affective education, civic moral education, and in 2008, the curriculum reform addresses for the first time the concept of *global child development* which emphasizes the importance of child development areas, where the Experiential field Man and society is found.

At the level of the education system, the reform of early education has evolved rapidly, being considered a priority at national and global level. Curriculum for preschool education appeared in 2008 and was approved by OM. 5233/2008, the Curriculum, the Application Methodology, as well as the framework and reference objectives, they represent an important landmark in preschool education on socio-emotional development and offering teachers a new concept of approaching the contents.

In the current context in which, in today's society, the child's preparation for school and for life must take into account not only academic skills, but also abilities, skills, attitudes related to *socio-emotional development* such as: expressing emotions, establishing social relationships, prosocial behaviors, *cognitive development*: by addressing problematic situations, divergent thinking, establishing causal relationships, *physical development* on: motor skills, health, healthy eating. Moreover, the approach of the curriculum from the perspective of *global development* aims to cover all important aspects of the complete development of the child, in accordance with his age and each characteristics.

2.4. Risk factors in the development of emotional and social skills

Children make important progress in terms of their emotional development in the first years of life and learn a number of social and emotional skills. However, the acquisition of these skills can be disrupted by various risk factors. Children who are or have been exposed to such adverse influences often have severe disorders, which in turn are associated with an increased risk of developing mental disorders.

Moreover, children have different peculiarities in terms of the level of development of social and emotional skills. The ideal development of these skills is the result of genetic components that are specific to each child, the influences of the environment from which he comes or of which the family is part but also the educational environment. Thus, the optimal adaptation of the child to the requirements of the social environment represents an efficient interaction of these factors. And on the other hand, poor socio-emotional development that may occur along the way is an inadequate interaction of factors, so children can develop emotional and mental problems.

Children's temperament

The child's temperament is a risk of emotional development that affects the acquisition of emotional skills (Feng, Shau, Skubar, Lane, 2007). A vulnerability reason related to temperament is characterized in children with a behavioral inhibition which defines:

- Children who react to situations of emotional stimulation;
- Children who show a high level of negative emotionality and often experience intense negative feelings.

As Stefan, Kallay (2010) points out, from the point of view of temperament, children can be divided into three distinct categories:

1. children with a mild temperament, who show a favorable social adaptation, being able to develop harmonious relationships with others, are interested in exploring space, follow the rules and show proper management of emotional reactions.

2. children with difficult temperament, are characterized by aggressive reactions and often show fits of anger, these children are perceived as impulsive, do not follow the rules and show problems in managing reactions of anger and frustration, when they have to wait.

3. children with a temperament difficult to activate, show a withdrawn behavior, they avoid relating to others. At the same time, they rarely express their desires and need constant encouragement from adults, are characterized as shy, often prone to social isolation and show fear reactions in new and unforeseen situations.

Aggressive Behavior - During development, children also show less socially accepted behaviors than aggressive behavior, they more often develop a poor understanding of emotions, but also a low level of empathy, also they often experience negative emotions such as anger and fear. which cannot adjust them properly. However, aggression is increasingly common among preschoolers, and ways to prevent aggressive behavior is a challenge for both parents, children in the group and teachers.

Chapter III - THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND EDUCATORS IN THE EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, refers to the way of approaching emotions from the perspective of both parents and educators.

3.1. The role of parents in the socio-emotional development of children

In the last 50 years, the traditional family consisting of mother, father and children, has undergone multiple social changes, namely: single-parent families, divorce, reversal of roles between partners, lesbian couples, gay couples, stepbrothers and combined families. The implications of these variations of family forms on children's social and emotional development are questioned. At the same time, family life is the first learning environment of emotional knowledge and in this intimate environment children learn how to react to various situations, how others react to their feelings, how to process these feelings and what possibilities for reaction exist. These emotional courses are taught not only through the words and deeds of the parents towards the children, but also through the models that the parents offer, respectively the control of their own feelings and the manifestation of emotions. The

family, in terms of raising children, has a formative-educational role, so that through mimesis, children imitate specific behaviors and behaviors, and they turn into patterns.

However, in the 21st century, the demands of the role of parent in which adults have to find and apply creative solutions are dominated by crises, rapid transformations, limited time spent with children and a busy work schedule. At the same time, the role of today's child has changed, being a demanding one especially due to the uncertainties, the diversity of stimuli, pseudo-models and information received from the external environment.

Emotional learning starts from the first moments of life and continues throughout childhood, so all interactions between child and parent have an emotional meaning, children form a basis of emotional perspective and abilities, for example: a child who meets difficulties in coloring and asks his mother to help him, the difference in perspective is the reaction that the mother has on the situation, namely that of helping him, giving him an opportunity to learn or to challenge him and to criticize him in the way which it fails to color.

When such reactions become typical in the parent-child relationship, the child's emotional beliefs about interpersonal relationships are shaped, but also the perspectives that will decide the child's functioning about the development of emotional intelligence.

3.1.1. Parents' emotional abilities

The first educational environment with which the child comes in contact is the family, where he will form his first habits, emotional and social behaviors, values, which will guide the child throughout life. As children grow, the emotional lessons they are ready for and need change. For example, empathy lessons begin in early childhood, with parents adapting to their child's feelings. Even if some emotional skills are strengthened by the circle of friends over the years, emotionally fit parents can help their children, learning them with all the forms of emotional intelligence that appear in interpersonal relationships.

The impact of parents on their children is extraordinarily strong. A study conducted by specialists from the University of Washington (2006) showed that those children with emotionally developed parents are more sociable, more affectionate and less tense in front of their parents, more relaxed from a biological point of view. and has a lower level of stress hormones compared to those children whose parents do not know how to control their emotions. The advantages that emotional development has are also cognitive, because these children show more attention, they can concentrate more easily, thus learning more effectively.

In the literature, according to Denham et al., (2011), extensive research shows that the child's parents and family environment shape and support the acquisition of emotional skills in the early period. Both mothers and fathers have a different but also complementary influence on the child's development, because they both react and respond to the child's feelings differently. The data obtained support the idea that parents can stimulate the development of emotional skills by:

- establishing a positive connection with the child;
- a harmonious emotional climate in the family;
- open expression of one's emotions;
- conversations about feelings;
- support in regulating emotions.

3.1.2. The attachment relationship between parents and children

Children discover emotions for the first time in the family environment, and the way others interact sends them messages about how to express emotions, the contexts in which emotions can be externalized but also about how to process to adapt to events that cause emotions. The type of relationship determines the extent to which emotional socialization takes place by examining the association between the development of children's emotions and the type of attachment (Cassidy, 1994).

Attachment is defined "as an emotional connection, being a relationship in which children gain the most intense educational experiences" (Schaffer, 2010, p. 143). The experiences offered, as well as the parents' response to the a priori emotional modality, represent the decisive influences on the children's development course. Moreover, the maternal sensitivity about the management of children's emotional experiences gives him the security of attachment. On the contrary, the insensitivity of parents to the manifestation of children's emotions is an unfavorable effect on development, giving them emotional insecurity.

Currently, it has been agreed in the literature that children raised by sensitive parents who give and develop secure attachments are more likely to develop emotional regulation strategies compared to children who may often develop anxious attachments due to the fact that their parents are insensitive. The data obtained support the idea that certain types of attachment can be associated with the following types of patterns (Goldberg, 2000):

- *Secured children,* develop a positive or negative emotional expression, are able to express their emotions, such as when they show signs of distress, will have the necessary support from parents manifesting anxiety emotions. Similarly, children who express their emotions such as joy, happiness, also have reciprocal reactions from parents, moreover, they will respond appropriately to a range of emotions.

- *Avoidant children* show repeated rejections of emotional expressions, especially negative emotions, they develop a strategy to hide the signs of distress, so as not to be ignored or despised, the manifestation of positive emotions is restricted, they develop anxiety in interacting with others .

- *Resistant children* show emotional expressions through which parents respond inconsistently, and the effects they produce are unpredictable. In this way, children develop a strategy of exaggerated expression of emotions, such as a child who hits and cries harder if the parent notices him, thus gaining the attention of parents.

3.3. Parental education in Romania

The term parental education broadly refers to programs, services and resources for parents and caregivers, to support and improve their ability, giving them a harmonious development (Carter, 1996). In a narrower sense, parental education refers to programs that help parents to develop and improve parenting skills, understanding the process of child development, to learn to reduce stress that can affect parental functionality, but also to learn to use alternative ways of approaching difficult situations met with children (Unicef, 2011).

The involvement of parents and family members in the education of children, about their learning and development, has direct benefits on them. This conclusion is supported by dozens of studies that suggest that family engagement has positive implications for children's outcomes when they enter the compulsory education system (Frances, Van Voorhis et. Al. 2013).

Regarding the parental practices associated with the emotional expression of children, it is known that most of the time children feel more free to express their emotions in reaction to the emotions of others, especially negative emotions, but also positive ones, if parents are warmer, receptive and expressive. A study on parenting practices in our country, conducted by UNICEF (2014), concludes that despite improving parents' knowledge in certain areas of child care, upbringing and education, they sometimes have shortcomings or reproduce traditional models, which are often not recommended by specialists in the field.

Discussing emotions by parents helps children understand the emotions of others and develop social skills, these discussions with parents can also increase understanding of perspectives, promote empathy and recognition of emotional states expressed.

Discussions about emotions can be beneficial for preschool children if parents use age-appropriate techniques. Also, the frequency with which children are involved in emotional language seems to have long-term consequences, as Dunn (1991) pointed out, following children up to the age of 6, and those who have been most exposed to such they have developed better language skills in understanding and expressing emotions than those with less exposure.

3.4. Cooperation between teachers and parents for the socio-emotional development of preschoolers

Research in recent decades on the importance of preschoolers' emotional development, studies of family involvement, but also the crucial role of preschool educators has shown that when parents and teachers communicate and work together effectively, children have more success (Epstein, 2011; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, and Davies, 2007).

As other researchers have said after the experience of developing early education programs, they reported that *"it is not enough an intervention focused only on activities for children, because the development of children socially and emotionally is largely the result of influences from from the relationship with adults in their lives* (Ștefan, Kallay, 2010, p. 15)" such as parents and educators. These data emphasize once again the need for effective collaboration between teachers and parents, so that the acquisition of certain behaviors depends not only on the child's abilities, but also on how parents ease or block the child's socio-emotional development.

Parental involvement in education increases children's outcomes in participating in activities and improving their behavior (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton, 2011; Marzano, 2003; Sheldon, 2003). These relevant studies follow the same direction that when parents and teachers work together as partners in education, children benefit from all the benefits of this relationship.

Chapter IV - **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, EMOTIONS AND SOCIALIZATION IN PRESCHOOL**, includes the experimental stages of the program "Emotions and socialization, vital skills for today's children."

Preschool age is the stage in which education can most effectively influence children's development, therefore, early intervention in terms of socio-emotional development is

essential by implementing appropriate programs, specially created for the harmonious development of preschoolers.

The scientific accumulations in the field of child psychology and pedagogy, as well as the experience of confirming in time the emotional education programs in the world have contributed in a significant way to the knowledge of the way children grow and develop harmoniously. Thus, the entire educational approach is built taking into account the developmental needs of children. The obvious evidence provided by developmental psychology has generated indisputable understandings of preschoolers' needs, as each child represents a unique person, with an personal temperament and learning style, a person who lives in a family environment and has unique developmental patterns. The needs they have (need for love, need for security, need for care, need for recognition and appreciation) are similar for all children, but as they develop, they need different types of stimulation and interaction to develop to their full potential.

According to the European Union 2020 Strategy, one of the key elements for the education and care of preschool children in Europe (2014) is that all young children can have access to and benefit from high quality education and care. Reliable information on European systems is essential to understand the challenges facing European countries, what we can learn from each other and what new solutions could be developed to meet the needs of the youngest members of society. In a time of unprecedented challenges, the importance of giving our children a solid start in ensuring quality pre-school education is a key element of the European strategy for smart and sustainable growth, according to the EU 2020 Strategy, *(Key data on education and care of preschool children in Europe, 2014).*

The proposed program consists in implementing an original idea that includes sequential activities. They aim at developing preschoolers with right emotional skills in terms of their harmonious development, helping them to be able to define the emotions they experience and to be balanced with everything that happens inside them. The activities of this program also give children the opportunity to take part in discussions about emotions, improving their ability to associate words with emotions, so they can communicate how they feel. Moreover, understanding the nature of emotions, their causes and consequences, and their management thus becomes much easier once children can verbally relate to emotions.

4.1. The purpose and objectives of the research

The purpose of this program is to build, develop, implement and evaluate the program of activities *"Emotions and socialization, vital skills for today's children"*, from the perspective of the positive impact on the socio-emotional development of preschoolers.

Verbalization, but also the identification of their own emotions, are essential for preschool children, so when children learn to communicate their emotions properly, they accept different points of view and can negotiate solutions in conflict situations. Through the proposed program I want to contribute to a complete training of preschoolers, emphasizing early socio-emotional development, by developing and conducting a program at the group level, specific to the field of socio-emotional education. Also through this program, I want to highlight the importance of emotions in the lives of preschoolers, verbalizing real feelings being one of the most common obstacles in social life.

Specific objectives:

- identifying in the program techniques and strategies for training appropriate socio-emotional behaviors in children;
- experimentation in the educational practice of the program for the development of socio-emotional skills in preschool children.
- analyzing the impact of the development program *"Emotions and socialization, vital skills for today's children"*.

4.2. Research hypothesis and variables

Corroborating both the theoretical aspects with the practical ones, resulting from the analysis of the socio-emotional development programs both at national and international level, in the realization of the pedagogical research, we formulated the following working hypothesis: The involvement of preschoolers in the educational program *"Emotions and socialization, vital skills for today's children"* determines the optimization of socio-emotional development. By applying the intervention program on socio-emotional development, we assume that it leads to the formation and modeling of basic socio-emotional skills of preschoolers such as: knowing emotions, identifying their own emotions, empathy, sharing positive and negative emotions.

4.3. Place and period

The present research was carried out in two kindergartens in the city of Sibiu, the Kindergarten with Extended Program No. 14 and the Kindergarten with Extended Program

No. 16, each of the institutions operating with 6 groups of children, constituted by age levels. The research took place in the 2017-2018 school year.

Research period:
- ✓ Pre-experimental stage: September 25 - October 9;
- ✓ The stage of the formative experiment: October 16 - May 16;
- ✓ Post-experimental stage: June 4 - June 15.

4.3.1. The sample of subjects

The research was carried out on preschool children in a natural setting where they carry out their daily activities. For the composition of the groups we used as a technique the random selection because in the pedagogical research it is not possible to select subjects without the risk of incomplete the number of the group, so we chose as experimental groups and control groups parallel classes. For the experimental research we chose 108 children from urban areas, boys and girls, who are part of Level II development (4-6 years), these being divided in turn into two groups, one representing the experimental group and the other the control group:

The experimental group in the urban environment includes 2 large class groups and 2 middle class groups comprising a staff of 49 children: 26 girls and 23 boys aged 4-6 years.

The control group in the urban environment includes 2 large class groups and 2 middle class groups comprising a staff of 59 children: 33 girls and 26 boys aged 4-6 years.
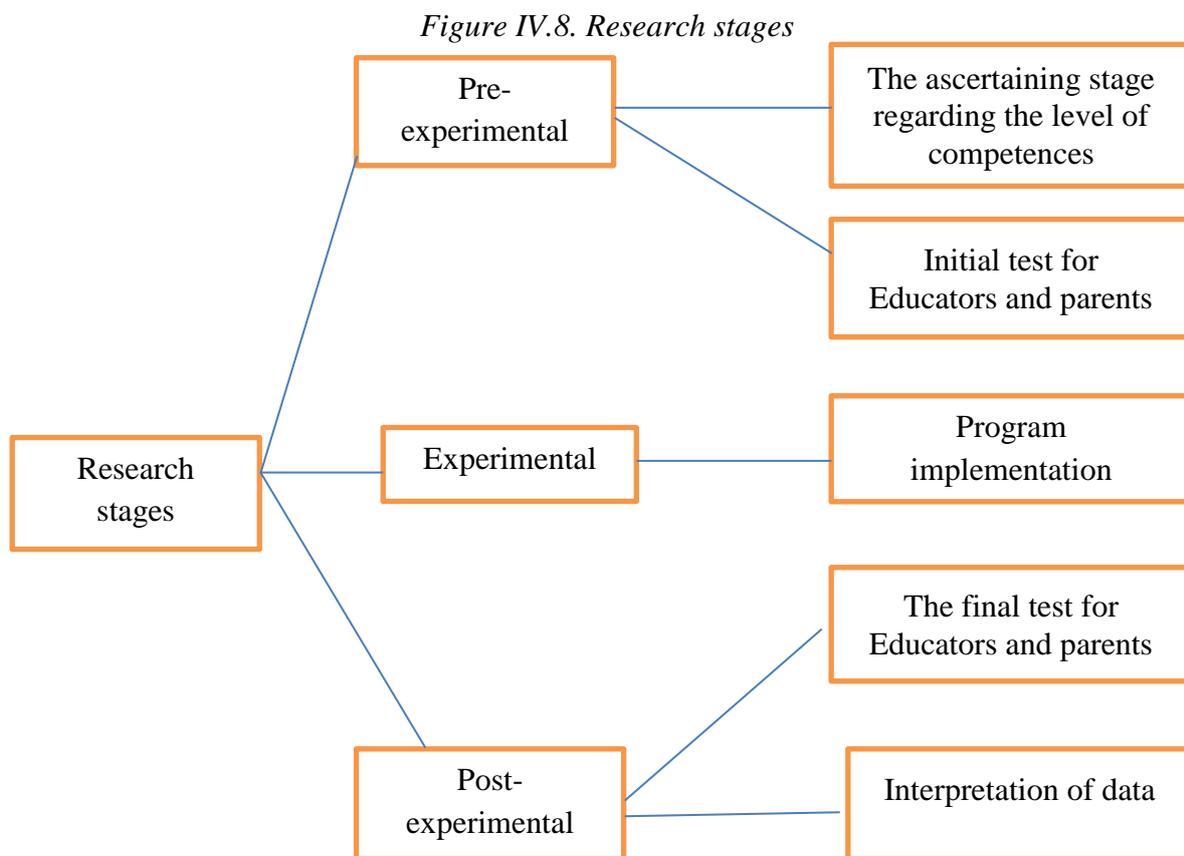
4.4. Research tools used

The research tools used to conduct the experiment were:

-Development evaluation platform 3-6/7 years PED[a] realized by the research and development organization COGNITROM realized in 2009, being compliant with the Romanian and European legislation in the field and accredited by the National Research Authority based on Law 324/2003 and GD 351 / 2007, representing an offline system of psychological evaluation of the development of competencies in preschoolers. The educational institution where I applied the experiment has purchased the test battery of the PED[a] platform, so I requested the consent of Cognitrom to use the test battery for academic purposes, thus obtaining the agreement to use the program in experimental research under the supervision of kindergarten psychologist.

4.5. Research stages

Therefore, capturing the way both the proposed activities and the techniques and strategies for training the socio-emotional skills of preschoolers are developed, we undertook an experimental research that included three stages: pre-experimental, experimental formative and post-experimental.

Figure IV.8. Research stages

Description of the experimental intervention

In the research we used as a method of intervention the psycho-pedagogical experiment of inter-subject type. The experimental intervention consists in the application of the proposed program, carrying out one activity per week, this including games and activities specially created for the socio-emotional development of preschoolers.

4.6. Pre-experimental stage

The initial assessment of the children was made on the basis of the Observation Sheet of the group by age levels, this testing tool being developed by the Ministry of Education and

Research. In the chosen experimental groups we observed the children's behaviors from a social and emotional point of view, and together with the group educators we completed the Observation sheet of the preschool group.

During the program I kept a journal on the start of the experimental steps in terms of the steps taken in the program and at the same time a record of the children who participated in the research.

Preschoolers will be initially tested using the PEDa 2.0 platform from Cognitrom. Being a psychological evaluation software, the evaluation of the child is done both through the parent and through the educator, and within this platform will be used only screening tests to assess the emotional and social skills of children.

Regarding the initial testing of preschoolers, the following tests were applied:

Assessment of emotional skills

- Screening of emotional skills - the option for parents;
- Screening of emotional skills - the option for educators;

Assessment of social skills

- Screening of social skills - the option for parents;
- Screening of social skills - the option for educators.

Through the educators from the preschool groups, we obtained the written consent of the parents regarding the participation of the children in the proposed development program.

4.7. The experimental stage

The experimental stage consisted in applying the program Emotions and socialization, vital skills for today's children in preschool groups, carrying out one activity per week, for a school semester.

These activities have been specially created and carefully selected for preschoolers, including:

Educational games:

- ❖ "Box with playful emotions" - applications and games for the development of children's emotional intelligence;
- ❖ "Wheel of emotions" - identifying the emotion at the beginning of the activity;
- ❖ "Cube of emotions" - recognizes emotion;
- ❖ Cards with calming strategies, created by Liz Early Learning Spot.

Activities proposed within the development program - designing the program "Emotions and socialization, vital skills for today's children". The program starts with the following question: "Are there the right ways to raise children and help them develop their full potential?". Therefore, by practicing a holistic approach, one can speak of a "maximum development". This approach addresses the multilateral development of children with content that prepares all children with psychosocial skills and competences considered vital today.

❖ <u>Educational stories</u> used with the written consent of the publishing house. Stories play an important role in emotional development, which transpose children "into the skin" of the characters, borrowing their feelings and emotions. That is why the proposed program also involves a collaboration with the children's book writer Lucia Muntean, her storybook "I can succeed! reminding us that "*the first alphabet we need to learn is the alphabet of emotions. In order to live among people, children need to learn how to interact with them, and the quality of these interactions is determined primarily by their emotions* (2017, p. 2)". Through the stories in the book, written for both children and parents and educators, we discover together how to go through this maze of emotions, how to recognize them, how we can respond to them, how we can control them and how we can express what we feel. Each experience gained by children in social and emotional learning will contribute to the development of their ability to become organized, to get along with others, to have self-confidence, to be persevering and emotionally resilient.

4.8. The post-experimental stage

After the completion of the activities proposed within the implemented program "Emotions and socialization in preschool, vital skills for today's children" was the reapplication of questionnaires to assess social and emotional skills. Following these, a longitudinal evaluation report was obtained that integrates the results of the two evaluations of the same child, making such a report being extremely useful to check the evolution of children's social and emotional skills from the perspective of educators and parents. Thus, the interpretation of the results is achieved by converting the scores obtained into color codes: red, yellow, green.

Code red - specifies children in the risk group who have serious problems in developing social and emotional skills

The yellow code - specifies that certain assessed competencies are insufficiently consolidated, and in this case a detailed psychological assessment is indicated, but also remedial psycho-educational measures.

The green code - specifies that there is a good consolidation and development of social and emotional skills, being necessary for other psychological assessment. (Development Assessment Platform, 2010).

QUALITATIVE INTERPRETATION OF DATA, this stage includes experimental verification.

Through the SPSS statistical analysis program, it will be verified to what extent the research goals were achieved and the effectiveness of the proposed program of socio-emotional development in preschoolers, entitled "Emotions and socialization, vital skills for today's children." We further present the results obtained, which capture the extent to which the specific hypotheses were or were not validated in the study.

Regarding the validation of study hypotheses 1 and 3, the test results thus confirm that, in the case of parents, there are optimized levels of recognition and expression of emotions and an optimized level of recognition of the social behavior of preschool children after the application of the program. intervention. Thus, the results allow us to close that parents spend quality time with their children, find them and properly recognize their emotions, and thus proves that educating emotional intelligence is the key to effective parenting (Stanculescu, E. 2011), being a condition for the harmonious development of children.

A recent study (University of Turku, 2019) on the predictability of parental interaction with children shows that they positively influence the ability to recognize and regulate emotions. I consider that a significant influence on the results obtained was achieved during the interaction by parents and children by completing the coloring books, being an activity specially created to generate a dialogue about the emotions we experience, but also to analyze how children they understand emotions and make them in their own behavior.

Research on the art of coloring is relatively recent, so Eaton and Tiber (2017) studied how mood and anxiety were influenced by the structure of a coloring activity. Thus, obvious evidence was found on improving mood and reducing anxiety, these results were more evident in the group in which subjects were given the freedom to choose their own colors compared to another group of subjects who took on the same colors from an existing image.

On the other hand, the study provided information that supports the results of previous studies on the importance of coloring (How does coloring influence mood, stress and

mindfulness, Journal of Integrated Social Sciences, 2018), which confirms the importance of coloring books for adults to reduce stress and negative emotions, improve relaxation and mindfulness.

Regarding the validation of study hypotheses 2 and 4, educators do not notice an improvement in the skills of recognition and expression of emotions, the same situation being maintained in the case of testing social skills in preschool children. Thus, even if in the case of testing the pre-test and post-test phases we did not obtain statistically significant results in the case of testing the differences between the pre and post test phases, they could not be confirmed or validated. This aspect signals the possibility of the appearance of hidden variables during the intervention that influence the results or changes in behavior noticed, which means that there was no significant change in the socio-emotional behavior of children in the experimental groups.

The results allow us to conclude that parents spend more quality time with their children, while educators spend time with all children, so the time of observation and analysis of each child is quite short, they are focused on teaching content, and the activities are carried out according to a well-established schedule.

The educational program "Emotions and socialization, vital skills for today's children" did not record the expected results so I believe that continuous investment is needed in terms of social and emotional development of preschoolers, a greater share of activities for the experiential field "Man and society" in which children can explore the complex world of emotions.

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