

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S FEARS AND POSSIBILITIES REDUCING THEM

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Abstract

The article discusses the problem of fears experienced by 3-4-year-old children. Theoretical analysis of fears and anxieties is presented on purpose to find out the possibilities to solve the problem of fears in children; recommendations to educators and families raising 3-4-year-old children who face the problem of fears are presented. The article raises a problematic question: what are common fears of preschoolers and what are possibilities to reduce fears? Research aim: to reveal the fears experienced by preschoolers and possibilities to reduce them. Research objectives: to substantiate the phenomenon of the fear in a preschool age, to determine the opinion of parents raising preschoolers, and the opinion of children about the fears they have experienced, to reveal possibilities to reduce preschoolers' fears. Applied methods: analysis of scientific literature, written survey, oral survey, qualitative and quantitative analysis of the obtained data. Research results: preschoolers experience various fears: fear of strangers, unfamiliar places, things, phenomena. Fears of preschool children are specific and related to a child's age and experience. Many fears go away with the time by themselves. Fearful children become anxious, angry and it is harder for them to concentrate. Children's fears are related to separation from parents, unfamiliar environments and individuals, animals, supernatural things. Parents acknowledge that their children face a variety of fears and they try to help their children to overcome these fears. Interviews with children revealed that children are most often afraid of other children, animals, imaginary creatures, unknown situations or individuals. Children associate the overcoming of their fears with the help of people close to them (parents and teachers). Close family relationship, opportunity to talk, joint activities with other children, pedagogical help and keeping to the rhythm of the day help to overcome fears. In this process it is important cooperation between family and educational institution, development of teachers' competencies and attention to individual needs of a child. Overcoming fears is related to joint efforts of parents and teachers, preparation of educational environment, proper presentation of educational materials.

Keywords: children's anxiety, educational factors, overcoming fears, pedagogical assistance, pre-school age.

Introduction

Relevance. Fear is an inevitable part of our life. Fear, taking on diverse forms, is always close to a person and every moment in the face of internal or external circumstances can arise in his consciousness. Feeling of fear alerts us about the presence of danger, helps to focus on its source and encourages to find opportunities to overcome difficulties (Riemann, 2004). The majority of authors analyze the fears of adults, but children's fears were analyzed in much lesser extent. According to Dewar (2014), increasingly a big number of children face fears and it is important to analyze fears and anxiety in more detail. Studies have shown that emotional disorders caused by anxiety are not uncommon in preschool age. Gray (2013) states that about 7–8% of children have experienced conditions of severe anxiety at least once before adolescence. Regarding separation anxiety disorder, Rost (2001) points out that it is normal for children to be attached to people who are important to them and to experience anxiety caused by being apart from home or loved and close people. Naturally such anxiety appears in infants aged 7 to 8 months, increases until 18 months and then gradually weakens. Majority of children who experience separation anxiety require constant attention, they are sad, cry, complain that their parents do not love them, that they love brothers or sisters more. Concerns should be made if this anxiety becomes too strong. Emotional health developed in childhood leads to more successful overall personality development. Preschool children have very different temperaments and experiences, they are from different family backgrounds, the importance of cooperation between family and educational institution in solving this problem becomes fundamental. Pedagogical tact, tolerance, sense of empathy are essential qualities that help to understand children's problems in this age (Rothaus, 2021; Flake & Scheinichen, 2016; Reid, 2010; Rost, 2001; Bagdonas, 2014). High deficiency in social and emotional skills is a consequence of emotional intelligence underdeveloped in childhood. Receptive, immature, environmentally friendly children's mind quickly captures positive or negative environmental situations. Children react to the environment with their feelings and perceive it directly because they cannot adjust

their experience. If adults perceive reality with the help of mind, memory, feelings, will and desires, children are unable to distinguish imagination from reality. Fears experienced by children cause a lot of worries: they affect child's concentration, communication, it is difficult for a child to perform tasks that require more attention and concentration, to demonstrate achievements, to rest, to sleep, have negative impact on child's physical and mental health. Some children who experience a feeling of fear not only suffer from sleep disorders, urinate in bed but may also develop depression. (Cohen, 2013; Gray, 2013; Dewar, 2014). According to the studies conducted in various countries (Rothaus, 2021; Gebhard, 2020; Sparenborg-Nolte, 2014; Rost, 2001; Bagdonas, 2009), it has been noticed that there is a steady increase in the number of children who need medical and psychological counseling for anxiety-related disorders and the average age of such children is constantly declining. Gray (2013) states that fear is an emotional, mental reaction to a situation that threatens a person. Analyzing children's fears, their specificity, it is often found out that there is no real threat, and the problems caused by fear are caused by children's rich imagination. The source of child's imagination is usually the objects, people and phenomena in his environment. Children's nightmares can be caused after watching movies or hearing stories. Thirty years ago, anxiety disorder was diagnosed in only 1-5 % of children. 2014 data show that the number of anxiety disorders diagnosed in children has jumped to 25 % (Bagdonas, 2014). In modern society anxiety disorders are the most common mental disorder in children and adolescents. It's normal for a preschooler to be scary. Anxiety is a natural condition that helps them to cope with new experiences and protects them from danger. 3-4 years old children are afraid of very specific things: beetles, dogs, darkness or clowns. Other children are afraid of new situations or meeting new people. Most specific fears disappear when a child feels safe in his own or another familiar environment (Cohen, 2013; Gray, 2013; Dewar, 2014; Diomšina, 2010). According to Bagdonas (2009), children are strongly affected by parental conflicts. Tense relationships between parents, siblings, parents and children creates a tense atmosphere. Constant tension in the family contributes to child's insecurity. Unsafe children fail to overcome normal childhood fears. Even normal daily routines can scare an anxious child. *Justification of the problem.* Failure to address child's fears in the future can lead to anxiety disorders, inability to control oneself, to relax, a child will not be able to see positive things in future. For preschoolers facing a new environment, separating from their parents can be an insurmountable challenge. Separation anxiety is normal in young children when their parents leave them in a kindergarten. According to Dewar (2014), children who are anxious are at higher risk for chronic nightmares and other psychological problems. If parents and educators pay proper attention to overcoming child's fears, they can help children to avoid emotional problems later in their life.

Problematic question: what are common fears of preschoolers and what are possibilities for reducing fears?

Object: fears experienced by preschoolers.

Aim: to reveal fears experienced by preschoolers and possibilities to reduce them.

Objectives:

1. To substantiate the phenomenon of fear in preschool age.
2. To determine the opinion of parents raising preschoolers, and the opinion of children about fears they have experienced.
3. To reveal possibilities to reduce preschoolers' fears.

Methods: analysis of scientific literature, written and oral survey (interview), qualitative and quantitative analysis of the obtained data.

1. Theoretical grounding of the preschoolers' fears

1.1. Fears of preschool children

Common fears of children are the fear of separation from their parents, the fear of sounds, the fear of animals. Night fears are manifested by the fact that children are afraid of imaginary creatures in the wardrobe, the dark or fear of monsters. But one of the main reasons for fear is being alone. Environment is the main cause of children's fears. In an unsafe environment children are afraid of animals, strange objects (vacuum cleaner, car, fire truck) and phenomena (darkness, ghosts, monsters, and what they

watch on TV or read in books) (Posth, 2010; Kisser et al., 2011; Flake & Scheinichen, 2016; Fuhrmann & Contard, 2015; Reid, 2010).

The main fears that preschoolers worry about are presented in the scientific literature:

- 0-6 months babies are afraid of losing parental support and loud noises.
- 7-12 months children are afraid of unfamiliar and sudden movements.
- 1-year old children are afraid of separation from parents, toilet, traumas, strangers.
- At 2 years multiple fears occur including loud noises, animals, darkness, separation from parents, large objects, a changing environment.
 - 3-year old children are afraid of masks, darkness, animals, separation from their parents.
 - 4-year old children are afraid of separation from parents, animals, darkness, sounds especially at night.
 - 5-year old children are afraid of animals, bad people, darkness, separation from parents, bodily injury.
 - 6-year old children are afraid of supernatural beings, bodily injuries, thunder and lightning, darkness, separation from parents.

Different period of ages is characterized by certain fears: height (8-15 months), new, unfamiliar stimuli (6-24 months), darkness (3-5 years), monsters, natural phenomena (5-10 years). The fears of preschoolers are interchangeable and very intense. If they last too long, are severe, impair child's psychosocial functioning then they are considered as disorders that need to be treated. With regard to social anxiety disorder it is worth noting that it is normal for a baby over the age of six months to be afraid of strangers. This is quite normal for a preschooler when he or she is still facing new, inexperienced and intimidating situations. However, sometimes a child, even while staying with loved ones, is afraid or avoids strangers. In that case it is worth worrying about the situation. According to Hurrelmann (2000), 50% of the examined children who experience social anxiety exhibit excessive modesty and avoidance of strangers. When children face new unfamiliar social situations some degree of social apprehension or anxiety is normal in early childhood. Social phobias are usually associated with low self-esteem and fear of criticism. These may include redness, shaking of the hands, nausea, palpitations and the need to urinate. Social anxiety and fear can be treated as a lack of social skills and inability to contact other people. Fear negatively affects children not only when they feel it but it can also make harm later in his/her life. Fear has an impact on child's relationship and communication. Self-esteem of anxious children is very low. When a child feels fear he can become passive, apathetic, irritable, distracted. Increasing fears affect a child's physiology – indigestion, abdominal and headaches and a weakened immune system. (Rothaus, 2021; Lutkat, 2021; Gebhard, 2020; Sparenborg-Nolte, 2014; Flake & Scheinichen, 2016; Bagdonas, 2014). Fears can provoke aggression. Studies showed that strong fears experienced before the age of 3 are particularly dangerous for continued successful mental and physical development of children. For children up to 3 years age fears are mostly caused by the environment and fears of older children are related to their own imagination. Therefore, adults have to create conditions for a child to minimize fears. It is normal to be afraid of leaving a safe environment into a completely unfamiliar place. Fear is not a disease - it is a companion of human self-realization. Review of the insights of the researchers who studied the phenomenon of fear and anxiety and its impact on personality development have revealed that problem-solving approaches formed in a childhood may affect future personality behavior and human activity, ability to overcome various fears and self-realization (Hurrelmann, 2000; Gebhard, 2020; Sparenborg-Nolte, 2014).

In preschool age children's fears are interchangeable and most intense in their abundance. A healthy preschooler usually has from 2 to 3 mild fears. By adolescence most children with normal development can have between 9 and 13 different fears. The circle of children's fears expands as they grow and later they stop when children start thinking critically. As a child grows the fears he experiences change, some disappear, others emerge (Rost, 2001). It should be noted that some of children's fears are instilled by the parents themselves. It is important that parents show the real concern for the child and do not hide or deny the influence of fears in child's life but take concrete steps to reduce negative condition in children. All minors have one common basic fear: separation from their parents. Other fears

appear and disappear and are either invented by children themselves or unconsciously imposed by their parents, their worries or anxieties (Sparenborg-Nolte, 2014; Rost, 2001).

Darkness is feared mostly by all children because it hides all familiar things and each faint sound seems unusual. If a child is once frightened by the dark then darkness itself will frighten him. Frequent experiences of fear affect child's physical and mental well-being and adults must develop and support child's feelings of freedom and confidence. The fear of a toilet in preschool age is usually due to a large size of adult toilets compared with the height of a child. A child may be afraid of mystical creatures that will leak out of the water and bite him. If a child has a fear of toilet it may be associated with the pain. Fear of bathing may be related to a child's dislike of water (Cohen, 2013; Gray, 2013; Dewar, 2014).

1.2. Opportunities to overcome fear

Conversations, joint activities, games with parents and peers, finding out the reasons for anxiety can help to manage fears. The more contact with others (communication, competition, conflict) the less fear a child has. Children can successfully cope with their fears by listening to fairy tales and telling the stories by themselves. With the help of a fairy tale adults not only transfer knowledge to a child, show new examples of thinking, feeling and activity but in this way, fiction can be also used as a therapeutic tool.

According to the researchers and practitioners who have studied fears, fairy tales are considered to be a successful tool in managing fears in preschool age. It is recommended to use fairy tales as a therapeutic tool to overcome children's anxiety. Applying a fairy tale therapy in practice a child perceives only what he/she is already matured for and what he/she is already able to perceive. Fairy tales are used to solve personal problems, to achieve personal integration, to develop creativity and to improve interaction with the environment. Fairy tales become a mediator that helps a person to talk about himself. Therapeutic tales in psychotherapy are treated as a method to recognize fears because the stories connect children with a variety of fear-provoking situations. The following functions of fairy tales used in psychotherapy are distinguished: evoking strong emotions by appealing to consciousness and subconsciousness; conveying information about important life phenomena through metaphors, values, inner world of people; developing ability to resist negative environmental phenomena (Posth, 2010; Kisser et al., 2011; Flake&Scheinichen, 2016; Fuhrmann, Contard, 2015; Lutkat, 2021).

Therapeutic use of fairy tales is based on the premise that fairy tales reflect problems of growth and development. The most fascinating magic tales are for children from 4 to 12 years old. Their plots are characterized by certain regularities: the hero is born, is brought up in his parents' house, leaves them for various reasons, chooses his own path, gets acquainted with new creatures in a fairy tale, overcomes the evil and returns home. According to Molicka (2010), a fairy tale for a child is where the real world is connected with the imaginary world and creates a reality which is understandable to him. While reading a fairy tale a child becomes acquainted with worrying situations and finds great examples of how to solve problems and reduce feelings of fear. A child becomes acquainted with people's aspirations and goals, learns an appropriate behavior, morals and norms of behavior that are expected from him. Fairy tales can help a child to overcome emotionally difficult situations, to learn about an appropriate behavior, examples of courage, nobility, morality. A fairy tale world obeys rules of the good that always wins. A happy ending gives a child, who feels being a part of that fairy tale, a pleasant sense of success. A child identifying himself with the characters in a fairy tale takes over their moral attitudes, ways of thinking and acting, admires positive heroes and their qualities (Lesinskienė, Karalienė, 2008).

Therapeutic fairy tales as a method of cognition of fears are widely used in psychotherapy. The stories relate their listener to a variety of frightening situations. For some children parental help and support is enough to overcome anxiety. Others may require advice of a specialist due to intense and prolonged anxiety. It is important for parents to evaluate the abilities of a child and to decide how to help him the best. A sense of security in childhood is the basis for the development of a strong personality. The earlier anxiety and fears are noticed, the easier it will be to overcome them. According to Diomšina (2009), game therapy is a world-renowned method of psych correction for children aged 3 to 11 years. Psychologists use therapeutic game models to help children to avoid emotional and

communication difficulties. Gray (2013), Dewar (2014), Molicka (2010), Rothaus (2021) defines play therapy as a dynamic system of relationship between a child and an adult that helps a child to feel a safe connection with the environment through specially selected play methods. With the help of therapy, a child is provided with favorable conditions for exploring and expressing thoughts, feelings, emotions and behavior. Children develop cognitive skills and motor skills, understand what society is and find their place in it through play (Rothaus, 2021; Gebhard, 2020; Sparenborg-Nolte, 2014; Rost, 2001).

2. Empirical research of the preschoolers' fears

2.1. Methodology

In order to reveal peculiarities of expression of fears in preschoolers and possibilities to reduce them, a study of expression of fears in preschoolers was conducted in May - September, 2023 in Lithuania and Latvia. Two methods were chosen to conduct a survey research: a quantitative method – a written questionnaire to find out the opinion of parents raising preschool age children about their fears and a qualitative method – an oral survey (interview) with preschool children to determine the fears, their expression and methods to reduce them.

Questionnaire is based on Rost (2001) Fear Expression and Overcoming Fear questionnaire. This questionnaire is based on the insights of the authors analyzed in the theoretical part of the research, it is adapted to determine the fears of preschoolers; the instrument is substantiated by characteristics of the criteria of fear and anxiety experience studied in the theoretical part of the work. Questionnaire comprises the following criteria: expression of fear in preschool age, signs of children's fears, possibilities of overcoming fears, actions of a family and educational institution in the face of children's fears. Interviews with children were conducted during a free conversation, focusing on the concept of fear, signs of fear, identification of children's anxiety situations and ways to reduce fears.

Research was conducted in five preschool education institutions. 200 questionnaires were distributed during the study, 170 returned and 20 preschool children were interviewed. Research was conducted in compliance with the research ethics, the principles of voluntary participation in the research, participants' anonymity and confidentiality was ensured, the obtained data was used only for generalized and scientific purposes.

2.2. Analysis and discussion of research data

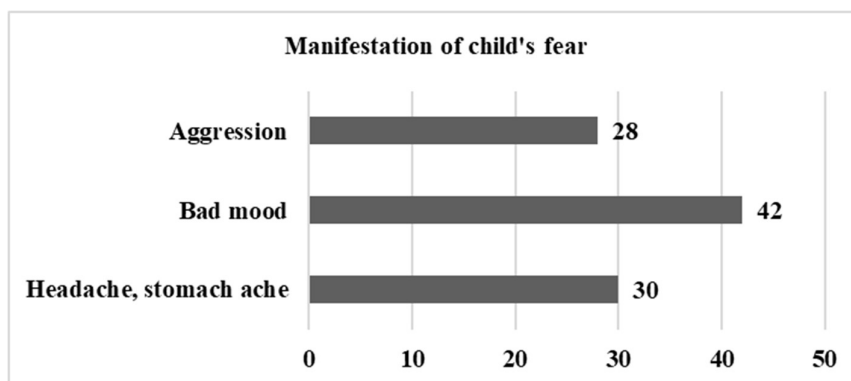


Figure 1. Expression of children's fears

Source: compiled by the author based on the data of the conducted research, 2023.

Respondents answers to the question, what are the signs of children's fear (see Figure 1), were distributed as follows: 42 percent indicated bad mood, 30 percent headache, abdominal pain, 28 percent increased aggression. When faced with fear, physiological, psychological, social symptoms appear. It is important for educators to recognize these symptoms because without recognizing the true cause of the disorder, it will not be possible to reduce the fear phenomenon. The signs of fear expression revealed in the study confirm the fear-inducing factors presented in the reviewed scientific literature (Rothaus, 2021;

Gebhard, 2020; Flake & Scheinichen, 2016; Bagdonas, 2014): physiological, psychological, social and their connections with child's state of uncertainty.

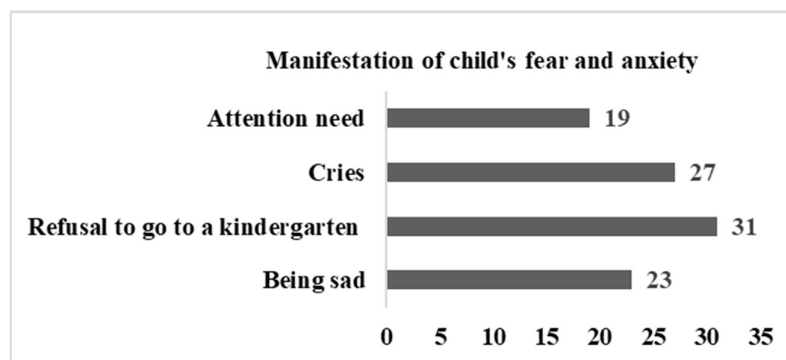


Figure 2. Expression of children's fears

Source: compiled by the author based on the data of the conducted research, 2023.

When asked how child's fears and anxieties manifest themselves (see Figure 2), respondents answered: 31 percent indicated that a child does not want to go to a kindergarten because he feels afraid, 27 percent state that children cry, 23 percent state that a child is in a bad mood, 19 percent state that a child requires additional attention.

Summarizing the received answers, it can be stated that children experiencing fear and anxiety find themselves in an exceptional situation that requires additional attention. Parents and educators must recognize such situations in order to help their children. Therefore, the importance of cooperation between a family and educational institution arises in order to help a child in an exceptional situation (Rothaus, 2021; Gebhard, 2020; Sparenborg-Nolte, 2014; Bagdonas, 2009).

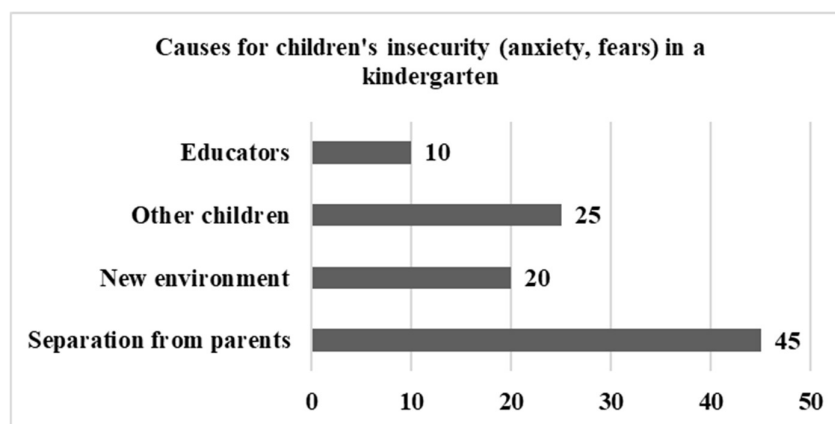


Figure 3. Causes of children's fears

Source: compiled by the author based on the data of the conducted research, 2023.

Respondents answers about the causes of children's insecurity in a kindergarten (see Figure 3), indicated: 45 percent believe that separation from parents is a source of fear; 20 percent think that a child feels insecure because of a contact with other children. They state that the fear of children is caused by new environment, 10 percent argue that children may be afraid of educators.

Summarizing the answers received from the respondents, it can be stated that the causes of fear of preschoolers are related to other persons, being in unfamiliar environments and misunderstanding in communication. Therefore, it is important to prepare children in advance for confrontations with worrying situations and people, the period of adaptation and preparation for a pre-school education institution should be taken into consideration. Close contact with a child improves the adaptation period.

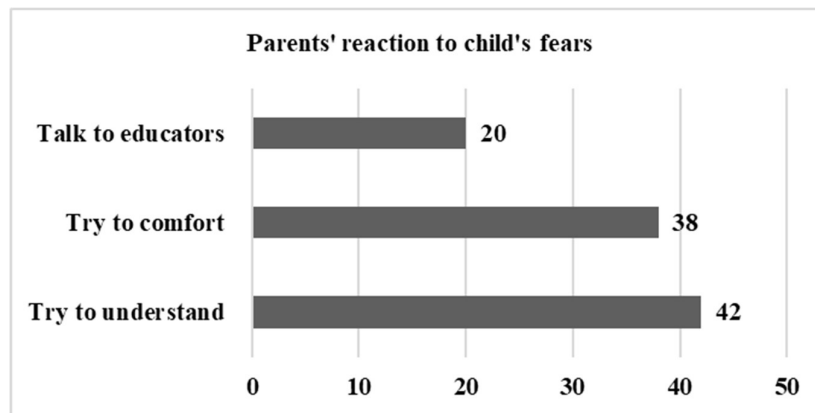


Figure 4. Parents' reaction to child's fears
Source: compiled by the author based on the data of the conducted research, 2023.

Respondents answered the question how parents react to the fears experienced by their children (see Figure 4): 42 percent indicated that they are trying to understand a child and his anxiety, 38 percent comfort a child experiencing fear, 20 percent talk to educators in order to help a child.

Parents try to figure out the causes of their children's fears and seek to help children in a difficult, new and complicated situation. Effective ways of parents' behavior: communication, manifestations of empathy, communication with family members and teachers create a closer connection in a family, help to find solutions to the problem (Rothaus, 2021; Gebhard, 2020; Sparenborg-Nolte, 2014; Bagdonas, 2014).

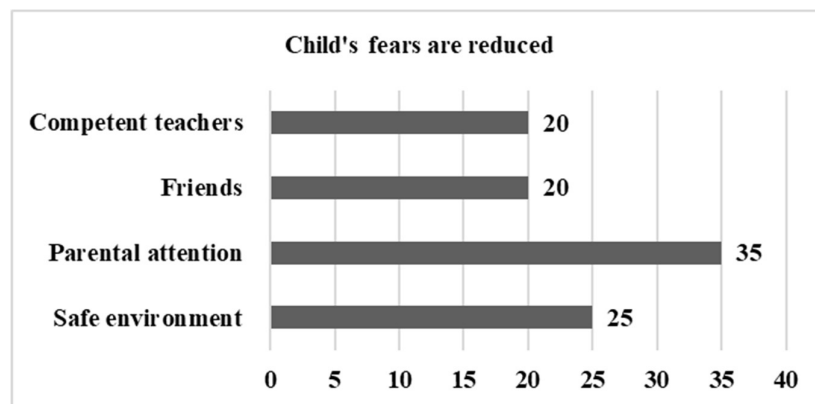


Figure 5. Possibilities to reduce fears
Source: compiled by the author based on the data of the conducted research, 2023.

When asked how parents reduce their children's fears (see Figure 5) the answers were the following – 35 percent of respondents indicated that children's fears are corrected by additional parental attention to children, 25 percent indicated that a safe environment ensures well-being of children, 20 percent points out that it is important for a child to have friends, 20 percent indicate that a teacher's competence is significant in the process of overcoming fears.

Summarizing the received answers, it can be stated that the following factors are especially important in the process of overcoming the fears of preschool children: attention and cooperation of teachers and a family, adaptation of educational environment to a child of a certain age and an appropriate communication. The respondents' answers is in compliance with scientific literature (Bagdonas, 2016; Kisser et al., 2011; Flake & Scheinichen, 2016; Gebhard, 2020; Sparenborg-Nolte, 2014) where the main fears of pre-school children, their sources of origin and possible solutions are indicated.

In order to find out personal experience of preschool children who have faced fears, 20 preschool children (5-6 years old) were interviewed. Interviews revealed that children recognize the experienced fears and can name them; children are aware of negative effects of fear; fears of each child are individual,

but most often children feel fear, anxiety and insecure when they appear in an unknown place or with strangers; children reveal their experiences to adults, usually to mothers but do not always seek for advice. Analysis of conversations with children revealed that statements of the research participants about the fears experienced by children correspond to the explanations about children's fears found in the scientific literature about the origin of fears, causes, intensity of fears and possibilities to overcome them (Posth, 2010; Kisser et al., 2011; Flake & Scheinichen, 2016; Fuhrmann & Contard, 2015).

Speaking about their fears children described this feeling as insecurity, uncomfotability, uncertainty when they face an unexpected, new situation, new people, unknown phenomena, fairy tales, film characters, hearing other people's stories or staying without parents. Children were not always able to describe what fear was, but realized that it was an uncomfortable feeling when they felt badly and had no one to ask for help.

Summarizing the results of the interviews with children, the following ways of overcoming the fears used by the children who participated in the interviews were identified: children would not be afraid if they felt safe, would stay with close people, would engage in their favorite activities; requesting help from an adult, speaking out; avoiding frightening situations (such as avoiding dogs); if they feel fear of dark, the lights should be left on, the door open, parents awakened when they wake up at night or to hide under a blanket; learning to behave in a situation that causes fear (for example, learning to do sports exercises); learning from other people's experiences in a similar situation (for example, mother was also afraid of height); telling fairy tales; rational explanation of the source of fear (for example, the absence of ghosts); encouragement to act (such as jumping into the pool as they know that a parent or a coach will catch them); being with a stronger person (for example, mother holds by the hand and takes to an unknown place); moderate watching TV or use of media. The results of the study confirmed the data of the studies discussed in the theoretical part (Rothaus, 2021; Gebhard, 2020; Sparenborg-Nolte, 2014; Flake & Scheinichen, 2016) on the fears experienced by children in preschool and possibilities to overcome them. Thus, the analysis of the interview data of preschoolers shows that children of this age experience various fears. These fears are natural and characteristic for a particular stage of a child's development. In this context, the relevance of cooperation between a family and teachers arises, as overcoming such fears is related to the competence of educators, preparation of an educational environment, adaptation of educational material, considering the individual characteristics of a particular child.

Conclusions

1. Preschoolers experience various fears: fears of strangers, places, things, phenomena. The fears of preschool children are specific in relation to a child's age and experience. Over time, many fears go away on their own. Due to family misunderstanding (parental indifference, special stressful situations), child's fears can turn into phobias. Children who experience fears become anxious, angry and have difficulty in concentrating. Children's fears are about separation from their parents, unfamiliar environments and individuals, animals, fictional things.

2. Parents acknowledge that their children face a variety of fears and they try to help their children to overcome these fears. Interviews with children revealed that children are most often confronted with fears of other children, animals, imaginary creatures, unknown situations and individuals. Children associate overcoming fears with the help of people close to them (parents and teachers).

3. Overcoming fears is promoted by close family relationships, opportunity to talk, mutual activities with other children, pedagogical help and keeping to the rhythm of the day. In this process, cooperation between a family and educational institution, development of competencies and attention to individual needs of a child is important. Overcoming fears is related to the joint efforts of parents and teachers, preparation of educational environment, proper presentation of educational materials. Fairy tales and games in preschool age is an effective means for reducing fear and anxiety in children.

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IKIMOKYKLINIO AMŽIAUS VAIKŲ BAIMĖS IR JŲ MAŽINIMO GALIMYBĖS

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojama ikimokyklinio mažiau vaikų patiriama baimės problema, Remiamasi mokslinės literatūros analize bei atlikto tyrimo duomenimis. Mokslinės literatūros analizė atskleidė, kad ikimokyklinio amžiaus vaikai dažniausiai patiria keletą baimių, būdingų jų amžiui, šios baimės daugeliu atveju praeina, jei nėra pastiprinamos suaugusiųjų ar aplinkybių. Pedagogams ir tėvams svarbu žinoti, kad užsitęsios baimės silpnina vaikų imunitetą, iššaukia vaikų ligas, agresiją, asocialaus elgesio požymius. Keliamą problema: kokias baimes patiria ikimokyklinio amžiaus vaikai ir kokios šių baimių mažinimo galimybės. Tyrimo tikslas – atskleisti vaikų patiriamą baimių reiškinį ir šių baimių mažinimo galimybes ikimokykliniame amžiuje. Taikyti metodai – mokslinės literatūros analizė, apklausa raštu ir žodžiu, gautų duomenų kiekybinė bei kokybinė turinio analizė. Tyrimas atliktas ikimokyklinio ugdymo įstaigose. Esminiai tyrimo duomenys: ikimokyklinio amžiaus vaikai patiria įvairias baimes, susijusias su atsiskyrimo nuo tėvų, susidūrimu su nepažįstamais asmenimis, naujomis aplinkomis, gyvūnais ir daiktais. Daugelis vaikiškų baimių su laiku praeina savaime. Tačiau jei šeimoje ir ugdymo įstaigoje

nekreipiama dėmesio, kai vaikas susiduria su išskirtinėmis situacijomis ir patiria ilgalaikes baimės, susijusias su atsiskyrimu nuo namų, su kitais asmenimis aplinkomis, gyvūnais, vaikiškos baimės gali pereiti į ilgalaikį nerimą, nekontroliuojamas fobijas. Tokios situacijos yra pavojingos vaiko raidai, trukdo siekti naujų kompetencijų, bendrauti su bendraamžiais bei socializuotis. Vaikų baimių mažinimas galimas tobulinant tėvų ir pedagogų kompetencijas, bendraujant su vaikais, išklausančių jų nuogąstavimus. Ikimokykliniame amžiuje tinkami metodai baimėms mažinti – žaidimų metodika, pasakų terapija, veiklos netradicinėse aplinkose, išvykos, ekskursijos, sporto veikla. Svarbu laiku išsiaiškinti esmines baimių priežastis, aptinkant baimių šaltinius ir mažinti jas bendromis šeimų ir pedagogų pastangomis.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: ikimokyklinis amžius, pedagogai, ugdymo aplinka, vaikų baimės.