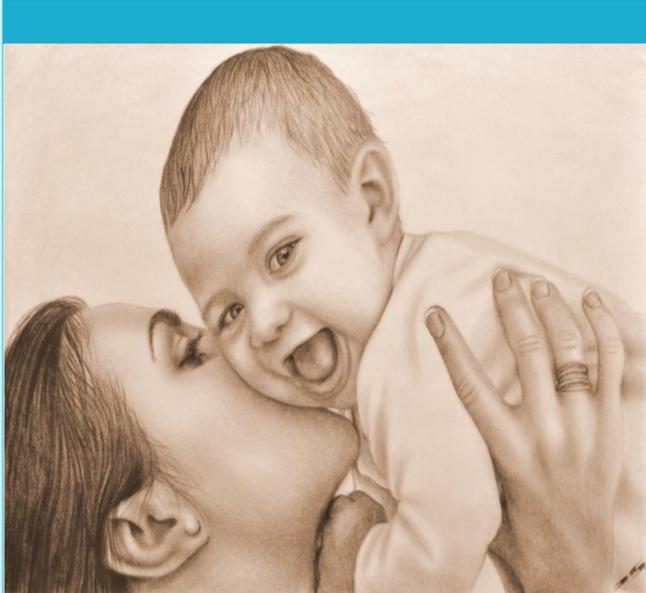


THE ASSESSMENT OF ATTACHMENT BEHAVIOR DURING ADAPTATION TO KINDERGARTEN REGARDING GENDER AND AGE DIFFERENCES

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Introduction

The transition of children from family home to a kindergarten represents the most frequent first separation from parents and as such, a development crisis for the entire family. The way in which children will adapt to kindergarten and establish new relationships with both peers and early childhood educators will largely depend on their previous experiences with parents. From the perspective of the attachment theory, which is the theoretical framework of this research, the early childhood educator can provide the children with support for comfort in this stress situation. This is very important, since coping with the transition period has the significant effects on the mental health of children, later in life. In addition, certain gender and age differences may occur, which, in addition to other specificity of attachment behavior, is also important to observe and adapt to working with children of early and preschool age. Therefore, this paper focuses on exploring the attachment behaviors of children in adapting to kindergarten, and their gender and age differences.

Method

Subjects

Total of 160 early and preschool educators rated the attachment behavior of 408 children (girls=141, boys=179) aged from 1 to 6.6 years ($M = 3.23$) during adaptation period in kindergarten.

Measure & Procedure

An Attachment Style Checklist was used to assess the attachment behaviors in the preschool environment through four dimensions: attachment, emotions, overall behavior and play.

Results

Statistical analyses revealed that 246 children exhibit patterns of secure attachment and positive emotional states; 288 children show positive behaviors and 220 children show adequate play and interaction with peers. In other words, the estimates of the largest number of children (ranging from 220 to 288) point to secure forms of attachment. Means and standard deviations of each attachment dimension are presented in Table 1:

Dimensions	Min	Max	M	SD
Attachment	1	5	2.84	.46
Emotions	1	5	2.85	.43
Overall behavior	1	5	2.96	.52
Play	1	5	2.92	.36

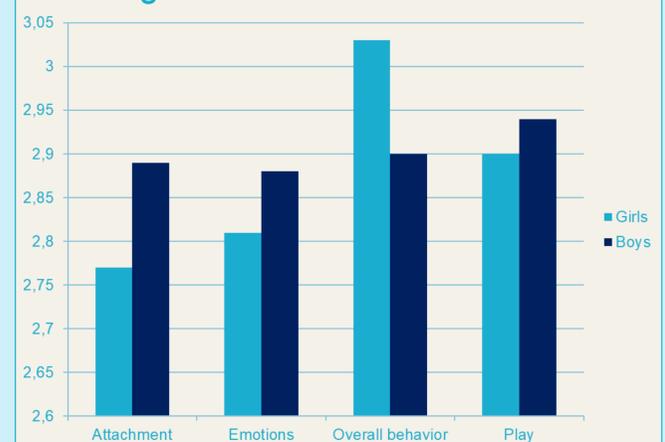


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Results & Conclusion

Dimensions	gender	N	M	SD	t	p
Attachment	boys	179	2.89	.45	2.36	<.05
	girls	140	2.77	.45		
Emotions	boys	179	2.88	.41	1.55	>.05
	girls	140	2.81	.45		
Overall behavior	boys	179	2.90	.50	-2.14	<.05
	girls	140	3.03	.55		
Play	boys	179	2.94	.33	.99	>.05
	girls	141	2.90	.39		

Assessment of gender and age-related attachment behaviors showed that there is no significant correlation between the focus variable and the age of children, and that there are significant gender differences in the dimensions of attachment and overall behavior of children. The boys are rated as those who have significantly more unsecure attachment than girls did, and the girls were rated as those with significantly more negative behavior than the boys did (Table 2, Figure 1). The findings indicate significant implications for improving the work of educators during the adaptation of children in kindergarten.



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