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Marija R. Markovic,  
Anastasija S. Mamutovic,  
Zorica C. Stanisavljevic Petrovic,

*University of Nis, Serbia*

### **Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers, Vol. 10 (2)**

<http://www.ugr.es/~jett/index.php>

Date of reception: 24 February 2019

Date of revision: 10 July 2019

Date of acceptance: 28 November 2019

Markovic, M.R., Mamutovic, A.S. & Stanisavljevic Petrovic, Z.C. (2019). Parents´ attitudes towards children´s adjustment to a pre-school institution. *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers*, Vol. 10(2), pp. 137 – 151.



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Marija R. Markovic, [marija.markovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs](mailto:marija.markovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs)

Anastasija S. Mamutovic, [anastasija.mamutovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs](mailto:anastasija.mamutovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs)

Zorica C. Stanisavljevic Petrovic, [zorica.stanisavljevic.petrovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs](mailto:zorica.stanisavljevic.petrovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs)

University of Nis, Serbia

**Abstract:** The aim of this research study is to examine parents' attitudes towards the process of children's adjustment to a pre-school institution, as well as towards separation difficulties which are encountered when a child starts attending kindergarten. Research results provide answers to whether parents are familiar with the problems manifested in the children's adjustment process, as well as with the possibilities of successfully overcoming such issues. The research included 763 parents of pre-school children in the territory of Serbia. The differences in parents' attitudes have been analysed relative to their sex, education and age. In the course of research the authors resorted to a five-point Likert scale composed of 16 items grouped into the following categories: factors which influence the process of adjustment, indicators of a successfully completed adjustment process and methods for overcoming the issues raised in the process of children's adjustment to a pre-school institution. Parents believe that children's satisfaction when they attend kindergarten is a more significant indicator of a successfully completed adjustment process relative to the absence of crying and deprecation, as well as that for the purposes of overcoming the difficulties which occur when children start attending a pre-school institution parents most frequently introduce pre-school teachers to their child's habits and traits, and later talk with the child about events in the kindergarten. Research results indicate the presence of statistically significant differences in parents' attitudes relative to their sex, i.e. they indicate that the adjustment period is more stressful for mothers than for fathers

**Resumen:** El objetivo de la investigación es examinar las actitudes de los padres sobre el proceso de adaptación de los niños a la institución preescolar, y también las dificultades de separación que ocurren con el ingreso del niño en jardín de infantes. Los resultados del estudio proponen respuestas a las preguntas si los padres están familiarizados con los problemas que se manifiestan en el proceso de adaptación de los niños a la institución preescolar, y también preguntas sobre las posibilidades de su superación exitosa. El estudio involucró a 763 padres de niños en edad preescolar de Serbia. Se analizan las diferencias en las actitudes de los padres en relación con el género, el nivel de educación y la edad. En la investigación fue utilizada una escala de evaluación de Likert de cinco pasos, compuesta por 16 ítems agrupados en las siguientes categorías: factores que intervienen en el proceso de adaptación, indicadores de una adaptación exitosa y métodos para superar los problemas que surgen en el proceso de adaptación de los niños a la institución preescolar. Los padres lo consideran que la satisfacción de los niños cuando van al jardín de infantes representa un indicador muy importante de la finalización exitosa del proceso de adaptación en relación a la ausencia de llanto y resentimiento, y de que los padres, para superar las dificultades que ocurren cuando niños empiezan a ir en el jardín de infantes, a menudo se reúnen con maestros para familiarizarlos con los costumbres y las características de sus hijos, y luego hablan con sus hijos sobre los acontecimientos en el jardín de infancia. Los resultados del estudio indican que existen unas diferencias estadísticamente significativas en las actitudes de los padres con respecto al género, es decir, el período de adaptación es más estresante para las madres que para los padres

**Keywords:** Adjustment; Parents; Pre-school teachers; Pre-school children; Pre-school institution

**Palabras clave:** Adaptación; Padres; Maestros; Niños de edad preescolar; Institución preescolar

## 1. Introduction

The process of children's adjustment to a pre-school institution is a complex issue which invariably commands the attention of researchers who deal with early childhood years from the perspectives of various sciences, first and foremost pedagogy, medicine, psychology and sociology (Королева, 2018). As early as the 1950s it was established that a child's adjustment to a pre-school institution represents a source of stress and anxiety the roots of which can be traced to the child's separation from parents and family ambience for several hours a day, as well as to the child's integration into a peer group monitored by an unknown adult – a pre-school teacher (Morgoulis, 1956). In the process of adjustment to a pre-school institution children may produce various reactions. Some children tend to adjust more rapidly and their reactions may be mild, even imperceptible. On the other hand, some children may react more intensely to the separation or stay in a large group, as well as to a situation different from the atmosphere of family upbringing.

A child's attendance at kindergarten requires that a family modifies established roles and shares responsibilities for the child's development and progress with pre-school teachers, i.e. competent professionals employed in pre-school institutions (Jelić, Stojković and Markov, 2018; Mirabile, Oertwig and Halberstadt, 2018). Children's adjustment indubitably represents a developmental stress for parents and children alike. Nevertheless, few research studies deal with a correlation between parental stress and children's adjustment process, or with inquiring into parents' attitudes towards the adjustment process in general (Damjanović, Mihić and Jestrović, 2014).

A child's attendance at kindergarten represents a significant change in a daily routine. A child leaves his/her home in order to become a part of a peer group cared for by a pre-school teacher. Thus, a child is displaced from a safe family harbour only to find himself/herself in the new environment, in a peer group, in an institution the rules of which may seem unfamiliar to a child. Accordingly, one can encounter difficulties in adjusting to an average rhythm of a group and in interacting with peers, whereby a child craves contact with parents (Santelices, Pérez, Rivera, Gomez and Farkas, 2012). The separation of a child from his/her parents, a change of place and encounter with the new setting and peers requires the child's additional engagement in the process of developing new social and emotional bonds and relationships with peers and pre-school teachers (Ortiz, 2013; Boyce, Obradović, Bush, Stamperdahl, Kim and Adler, 2012). Furthermore, in order to successfully integrate into the new environment a child requires important social skills which remain significant even in later periods of his/her life (Jones, Greenberg and Crowley, 2015; Gunindi, 2013). It is generally believed that children's adjustment to a pre-school institution is important from the perspective of children's development and successful preparation for primary school (Nix, Bierman, Domitrovich and Gill, 2013; Katz and McClellan, 1997). Perceived in this context the period of adjustment appears to be very significant for a child, its development and progress, as well as for parents and pre-school teachers. For the purposes of a successful adjustment of children to the new setting a very important role is played by parents who can facilitate the difficulties a child encounters in this period by means of their behaviour and knowledge.

## 2. Theoretical approach

The adjustment process refers to the ability of an individual to adjust to ever-changing environmental conditions (Николаева and Белова, 2018). The tendencies manifested in children's behaviour at an early stage of adjustment to a pre-school institution are maintained over a certain period of time. However, in a long-term perspective, children who were included into the programme of adjustment at a pre-school age achieve better results at school with respect to verbal abilities, concentration and socialisation (Denham, Bassett, Brown, Way, and Steed, 2013; Denham, Bassett, Mincic, Kalb, Way, Wyatt and Segal, 2012; Lubowiecka, 2000, according to Brzezińska, Czub and Ożadowicz, 2012). Strategies of adjustment imply specific cognitive and behavioural activities a child resorts to in order to successfully cope with the new role, as well as to adjust to the pre-school setting, which for him/her represents a deviation from

the established rhythm of his/her family routine (Brzezińska, Czub and Ożadowicz, 2012). The process of a child's adjustment to the pre-school environment is under the influence of a series of subjective and contextual factors. Subjective factors comprise children's traits such as age, sex and temperament, while contextual factors comprise the properties of family and pre-school settings. The aforementioned factors interact and influence the type of adjustment to a pre-school institution. Thus, one can distinguish between easy, medium and difficult adjustment of a child (Klim-Klimaszewska, 2006, according to Brzezińska, Czub and Ożadowicz, 2012).

A child's age and level of development have a significant impact on the process of adjustment, and it is manifested through specific forms of behaviour a child resorts to in order to cope with the adjustment difficulties. Children's behaviour can take different forms and it may be expressed in either positive or negative manner (Garner and Waajid, 2012; Sęk and Brzezińska, 2010).

Adjusting to new living conditions and training for interaction with peers are significant for children's proper development and health. Child's behavioural deviations such as stubbornness, whims, refusing to eat, changes with respect to one's emotional moods and appetite are common occurrences when a child changes the environment. Consequently, parents and educational staff at pre-school institutions face numerous challenges at the beginning of the adjustment process (Bicheva and Muravyeva, 2017). The primary task of pre-school teachers is to reduce the children's anxiety which surfaces during the period of adjustment, as well as to secure favourable conditions for attending kindergarten (Gersamia and Imedadze, 2015; Buyse, Verschueren and Doumen, 2011). Hence, the process of a child's adjustment to a pre-school institution includes both cognitive and social adjustment (Akçinar, 2013; Zupančič and Kavčič, 2011). Furthermore, emotional adjustment represents a very important aspect which enables one to mitigate the stress and difficulties a child may encounter (Rhoades, Warren, Domitrovich and Greenberg, 2011).

A child who spent his/her first years of life in a family home with parents perceives a pre-school institution as a great stress and shock. A child is expected to successfully overcome numerous challenges and adjust to the rules of life in the community (Cowan, Cowan, Schulz, and Heming, 1994). An effective manner to alleviate the stress in children during the adjustment process is to organise various games which can help children learn how to communicate and build mutual trust. However, pre-school children often face difficulties with becoming included in play with their peers, whereby the role of pre-school teachers becomes crucial because they intervene in the process and afterwards try to engage all children in the process of play (Gersamia and Imedadze, 2015). As indicators of a successful adjustment process one states the presence of socially desirable forms of behaviour, happiness and satisfaction, positive forms of behaviour and absence of emotional disquietude and risk behaviour (Masten and Reed, 2002).

In the context of adjustment one also mentions developmental tasks which impose themselves as desirable in certain periods of growing up, and which are determined by social and cultural norms. It is expected that a child adopts adequate social patterns of behaviour during the pre-school period and masters basic knowledge and skills necessary for the primary school period, according to the institutional curriculum (The basis of the programme of pre-school education, 2018). Aside from the external and proscribed tasks a child is expected to master, internal adjustment is also very significant as it relates to psychological and emotional well-being of a child in opposition to disquietude and anxiety (Grijak, 2018).

Should the adjustment programme respect children's habits, needs and developmental characteristics kindergarten could become a safe harbour for children and parents alike.

In that context some authors suggest that at the very beginning, in the period of adjustment of the youngest children, one should form special groups in order to provide children with attentiveness and release the stress due to children's presence in a large peer group (Stojić, Divljan and Avramov, 2010). Admission into kindergarten is a very important phase in a child's life and in the life of his/her entire family. Thus, it is very important to offer psychological and

pedagogical support for parents, as well as to strengthen their competences to mitigate the symptoms of adjustment (Lukyanova, 2018).

The process of adjustment itself is conditioned by a series of factors. The quality especially significant for a successful adjustment of children to a pre-school institution is their relationship with parents, specifically the mother-child relationship (Nur, Aktaş-Arnas, Abbak and Kale, 2018; Velikić, Filipović, Bačić and Bogosanović, 2010). Furthermore, levels of co-operation with parents are highly significant, primarily the existence of a functional co-operation between parents and pre-school teachers. Essentially, quality co-operation and partnership development between parents and pre-school teachers even beyond the process of adjustment are crucial for the well-being of children, parents and pre-school teachers (Višnjić Jevtić, 2014; Ljubetić, 2014; Pedro, Miller and Bray, 2012; Hindin and Mueller, 2016).

Bearing in mind the importance of parents' role in the adjustment process it is very important to examine their perceptions, in order to search further for suitable solutions for the purposes of a more successful adjustment of children to pre-school institutions.

### **3. Research methodology**

Admission into a pre-school institution instigates a transformation of an established order in the lives of children and parents and it constitutes a significant phase in the family dynamics. A successful children adjustment process to a pre-school institution demands a thorough preparation of children and parents, as well as respect for individual characteristics of each and every child. Accordingly, the aim of this research is to examine the attitudes of parents regarding the process of children's adjustment to a pre-school institution, as well as regarding the possible separation difficulties which occur when a child starts attending kindergarten. The research provides answers to the issues of parents' awareness of the problems revealed in the process of children's adjustment to a pre-school institution, as well as of the possibilities of their successful resolution. In accordance with the stated goal and problem, for the purposes of this research the following research tasks have been defined:

1. To examine the attitudes of parents regarding the factors which influence the process of children's adjustment to a pre-school institution;
2. To examine parents' attitudes regarding the indicators of a successfully completed process of children's adjustment to a pre-school institution;
3. To ascertain which methods and educational procedures parents use to facilitate the process of their child's adjustment to a pre-school institution.

For the purposes of this research study a general hypothesis was formulated which implies parents' partial familiarity with the characteristics of the process of children's adjustment to a pre-school institution. Specific hypotheses were formulated in the following manner:

1. It is assumed that parents believe that the process of adjustment is conditioned by individual traits of each child;
2. It is assumed that parents believe that the process of adjustment is successfully completed if a child feels joy when attending kindergarten;
3. It is assumed that parents customarily introduce pre-school teachers to the traits and habits of their children to facilitate the process of children's adjustment to a pre-school institution.

The research sample constituted 763 parents of pre-school children from urban and rural areas in the territory of Serbia whose attitudes towards the process of adjustment have been analysed relative to their sex, age and level of education. In the course of their research the authors applied a scaling technique as well as an intentionally constructed instrument, a five-point Likert assessment scale intended for examining parents' attitudes towards children's adjustment to a pre-school institution. The data obtained through the research have been processed by using the SPSS - statistical data processing software package. As far as statistics parameters are

concerned, the authors resorted to descriptive statistics, T-test and F-test. The research results have been presented in a form of texts and tables. The research was conducted in the course of 2018.

#### 4. Research results with discussion

The presentation of research results follows the set tasks and research hypotheses: firstly, the authors present the data regarding parents' attitudes towards the children's adjustment to a pre-school institution (Table 1); these are followed by the data regarding statistically significant differences in parents' attitudes relative to parents' sex (Table 2), parents' age (Table 3), and, finally, parents' level of education (Table 4).

**Table 1.**  
Parents' attitudes towards children's adjustment to a pre-school institution

	<b>M</b>	<b>Sd</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
The adjustment process depends on individual traits of pre-school children	4.59	0.60	0.1	0.7	3.3	31.2	64.7
The adjustment process depends on children's age	4.30	0.85	0.7	3.1	12.2	33.0	51.0
The adjustment process depends on the family ambience in which a child lives	4.35	0.88	1.3	4.6	5.8	33.6	54.8
In the process of children's adjustment the role of pre-school teachers is more important than that of parents	4.33	0.85	0.8	2.9	12.1	30.4	53.9
The adjustment process should optimally last up to three months	4.17	0.93	2.0	3.0	15.6	34.9	44.6
Children's adjustment constitutes the stress for parents and children alike	4.32	0.84	1.0	3.1	9.0	36.0	50.7
I am familiar with the procedures which facilitate children's adjustment	4.48	0.65	0.1	1.0	4.8	38.5	55.4
Our pre-school teacher has introduced me to the difficulties which can occur when a child is admitted to kindergarten	4.65	0.61	0.7	0.5	2.2	25.4	71.2
The adjustment process is over when a child stops crying and complaining when attending kindergarten	4.24	1.03	2.8	5.6	11.0	25.8	54.8
The adjustment process is over when a child attends kindergarten with joy.	4.60	0.69	0.7	1.6	3.5	24.8	69.5
Refusing to eat and sleep, crying and frequently becoming ill accompany the process of adjustment	4.33	0.79	0.9	2.6	7.5	40.5	48.5
In order to facilitate the adjustment process I talked with my child about the events at kindergarten	4.63	0.56	0.1	0.7	1.8	30.3	67.1
In order to facilitate the adjustment process I have introduced pre-school teachers to the traits and habits of my child	4.64	0.59	0.4	0.8	1.4	28.3	69.1
In order to facilitate the adjustment process I have allowed my child to take his/her favourite toy to kindergarten	4.24	1,01	3.4	3.5	11.3	29.0	52.8
The adjustment process will be easier with children who previously had an adequate relationship with their parents	4.39	0.88	1.4	3.1	8.9	27.4	59.1
At the beginning of the adjustment process I stayed with my child in the kindergarten	3.35	1,53	16.1	23.1	5.5	19.8	35.5

Table 1 shows parents' attitudes towards the factors which determine the adjustment process, the difficulties which might occur in the adjustment process, as well as the possibilities of successfully overcoming them.

The first three items on the assessment scale, *The adjustment process depends on individual traits of pre-school children*, *The adjustment process depends on children's age* and *The adjustment process depends on a family ambience in which a child lives* refer to the factors which influence the process of adjustment. The average response (M) regarding the presented assertions shows that parents believe that the adjustment process is first and foremost conditioned by individual traits of pre-school children (M-4.59), and later by the family ambience in which a child grows (M-4.35). Children's age, according to the beliefs of parents' who constituted the research sample, is least likely to influence children's adjustment process to a pre-school institution (M-4.30), but its influence is not irrelevant bearing in mind that the parents expressed partial agreement with the assertion examining the impact of a child's age upon the adjustment process.

A child's transition from a family setting to an institutional system of functioning which implies the respect for new rules and norms depends on parents and pre-school teachers who need to harmonise their educational procedures and methods of adjusting children to a pre-school institution. Research results show that 84.3% of the respondents believe that in the process of children's adjustment to a pre-school institution the role of pre-school teachers is more significant than that of parents. It is assumed that parents consider pre-school teachers to be more competent participants in the children's adjustment process, primarily due to their pedagogical education and experience in working with children who encounter a pre-school setting for the first time in their lives. Furthermore, parents rely on pre-school teachers to apply the procedures in their work with children which have proved to be beneficial in practice.

Regardless of whether a child adjusts to a pre-school institution more easily or with some difficulties, the adjustment process is characterised by the optimal length of time. Research results show that parents believe that one month is sufficient to mitigate or altogether eliminate the symptoms which occur in the adjustment process (M-4.17). The assertion that children's adjustment represents a stressful period for parents and children alike was fully or partially confirmed by 86.7% of parents, while the minority of respondents believe that children's adjustment to a new environment does not constitute a stressful period for the development of children and functioning of parents (1% at all and 3.1% partially).

The research results indicate that the majority of parents are familiar with the methods and procedures which can facilitate children's adjustment to a pre-school institution (M-4.48), as well as that pre-school teachers introduce them to difficulties which can potentially occur when children start attending the pre-school institution (M-4.65).

In order to ascertain the manner in which parents assess that the children's process of adjustment to a pre-school institution is over the following two items have been offered: *The adjustment process is over when a child stops crying and complaining when attending kindergarten* and *The adjustment process is over when a child attends kindergarten with joy*. The research results show that parents believe that children's joy when attending kindergarten is a more significant indicator of a successfully completed adjustment process (M-4.60) than when they stop crying and complaining (M-4.24).

The research results show that 89% of parents believe that refusing to eat and sleep, as well as crying and being frequently prone to colds are normal side effects of the process of adjustment to a pre-school institution.

In order to examine the methods and educational procedures which parents resort to in order to facilitate children's adjustment to a pre-school institution, the respondents have been offered the following assertions: *In order to facilitate the adjustment process I talked with my child about the events in kindergarten*, *In order to facilitate the adjustment process I have introduced pre-school teachers to the traits and habits of my child*, *In order to facilitate the adjustment process I*

have allowed my child to take his/her favourite toy to kindergarten, At the beginning of the process of adjustment I stayed with my child in the kindergarten. The research results show that for the purposes of overcoming the difficulties which occur when children start attending kindergarten parents most frequently introduce pre-school teachers to the habits and traits of their children (M-4.64), and then they talk with their child about the events in kindergarten (M-4.63). On the other hand, a somewhat smaller percentage of respondents believe that carrying a favourite toy to kindergarten is a proper procedure in children's adjustment process (partially 29%, fully 52.8%). Likewise, the research results show that one half of the respondents stayed with their children in the kindergarten in order to support them in the process of adjustment (55.3%), as well as that in the assessment of the propriety of such an action parents are mostly hesitant (M-3.35). The largest number of parents expressed their partial (27.4%) or full (59.1%) agreement with the assertion that the adjustment process would be easier with children who prior to attending the kindergarten had an adequate relationship with their parents, while minority among parents fail to perceive the connection between children's prior experiences in their respective families and the process of adjustment to a pre-school institution (4.5%).

**Table 2.**  
Statistically significant differences in parents' attitudes relative to their sex

	Sex	M	sd	t	df	p
The adjustment process depends on individual traits of pre-school children	Female	4.63	0.56	2.58	761	0.01
	Male	4.50	0.67			
The adjustment process depends on children's age	Female	4.35	0.83	2.55	761	0.01
	Male	4.18	0.87			
Children's adjustment constitutes a stressful period for parents and children alike	Female	4.36	0.83	2.00	761	0.04
	Male	4.22	0.87			
Crying, frequently becoming ill, refusing to eat and sleep often follow children's adjustment	Female	4.39	0.76	3.40	761	0.00
	Male	4.18	0.85			
At the beginning of the process of adjustment I stayed with my child in the kindergarten	Female	3.42	1.56	1.90	761	0.05
	Male	3.19	1.46			

Table 2 shows data on statistically significant differences in the attitudes of parents relative to their sex regarding the children's adjustment process to a pre-school institution. The research results show that mothers of pre-school children believe to a greater extent than fathers (M-4.50 and M-4.18) that the adjustment process is determined by individual traits (M-4.63) and children's age (M-4.35). Likewise, the research confirmed that the children's adjustment process to a pre-school institution was a more stressful period for mothers (M-4.36) than for fathers (M-4.22). In accordance with the aforementioned there is a research result which shows that mothers more often stay with children in kindergartens at the beginning of the adjustment (M-3.42), as well as that mothers are better introduced to difficulties which occur when children start attending a pre-school institution (crying, refusing to eat and sleep, becoming ill – M-4.39) than fathers (M-3.19 and M-4.18).



**Table 3.**  
Statistically significant differences in parents' attitudes relative to their age

	Age	M	sd	t	df	p
The adjustment process depends on children's age	from 35	4.37	0.83	2.57	761	0.01
	to 35	4.20	0.86			
In the process of children's adjustment the role of pre-school teachers is more important than that of parents	from 35	4.43	0.83	3.77	761	0.00
	to 35	4.19	0.86			
The adjustment process should optimally take up to three months	from 35	4.23	0.97	2.42	761	0.01
	to 35	4.07	0.85			
Children's adjustment is stressful for parents and children alike	from 35	4.38	0.87	2.44	761	0.01
	to 35	4.23	0.79			
I have been introduced to the procedures which facilitate children's adjustment	from 35	4.55	0.62	4.00	761	0.00
	to 35	4.36	0.67			
The pre-school teacher has informed me about the difficulties which may occur when children start attending kindergarten	from 35	4.71	0.58	3.10	761	0.00
	to 35	4.57	0.65			
The adjustment process is over when a child stops crying and complaining when attending kindergarten	from 35	4.36	0.97	4.10	761	0.00
	to 35	4.05	1.08			
Refusing to eat and sleep, crying and frequently becoming ill accompany the process of adjustment	from 35	4.44	0.72	5.00	761	0.00
	to 35	4.15	0.86			
At the beginning of the process of adjustment I stayed with my child in the kindergarten	from 35	3.46	1.54	2.40	761	0.01
	to 35	3.19	1.51			

Table 3 shows data on statistically significant differences in parents' attitudes relative to their age regarding the children's adjustment process to a pre-school institution.

The research results show that parents who belong to the responding population younger than 35 mostly believe that the children's adjustment process to a pre-school institution is conditioned by children's age (M-4.37), unlike parents over 35 (M-4.20). Likewise, the research results show that with the increase in the respondents' age they tend to observe the role of parents as more significant (M-4.43) in comparison to the role of a pre-school teacher (M-4.19) in the children's adjustment process to a pre-school institution.

In order to ascertain through the research the optimal period of the adjustment process from the standpoint of parent population, the respondents were offered a time interval of three months for the purposes of assessment. Parents who belong to the respondent category below 35 expressed a stronger agreement with the stated assertion (M-4.23) in comparison to parents over 35 years of age (M-4.07).

The research results indicate that a child's attendance of a pre-school institution and adjustment to it constitute a bigger stress to younger parents (M-4.38) in comparison with parents who belong to the category of parents older than 35 (M-4.23). As a result, there is a sound logic in the research result which shows that for the purposes of overcoming the stressful adjustment period parents below 35 are more eager to be informed about the procedures which facilitate the adjustment period than parents above 35, whether it be done individually (M-4.55 and M-4.36) or with the support of a pre-school teacher (M-4.71 and M-4.57). The absence of tears and complaint in children when attending the kindergarten is a more significant indicator of a successfully completed adjustment process, according to the opinion of younger parents (M-4.36) in comparison to the elderly ones (M-4.05).

In accordance with the stated research result which shows that the younger population of parents is more frequently informed about the procedures which facilitate the adjustment process one can also state the research result which indicates that the aforementioned category of parents more easily recognise the adjustment process indicators such as cry and refusal of food and sleep (M-4.44) in comparison to parents over 35 years of age (M-4.15). When assessing the assertion *At the beginning of the process of adjustment I stayed with my child in the kindergarten* both categories of respondents showed some hesitance. However, average response indicates that the stated educational procedure is more frequently practiced by the younger population of parents (M-3.46) than by the elderly ones (M-3.19).

**Table 4.**  
Statistically significant differences in parents' attitudes relative to their education level

	Education level	M	sd	F	df	p
The adjustment process depends on individual traits of pre-school children	Secondary school	4,58	0,60	6.24	2	0.00
	College diploma	4,70	0,51			
	Faculty degree	4,49	0,66			
The adjustment process depends on children's age	Secondary school	4,30	0,85	3.64	2	0.02
	College diploma	4,40	0,80			
	Faculty degree	4,17	0,88			
The adjustment process depends on a child's family ambience	Secondary school	4,34	0,83	5.69	2	0.00
	College diploma	4,50	0,87			
	Faculty degree	4,20	0,96			
In the children's adjustment process the role of pre-school teachers is more important than that of parents	Secondary school	4,37	0,80	14.0	2	0.00
	College diploma	4,50	0,76			
	Faculty degree	4,05	1,0			
The adjustment process should optimally take up to three months	Secondary school	4,28	0,89	12.2	2	0.00
	College diploma	4,20	0,93			
	Faculty degree	3,87	0,94			
Children's adjustment is stressful for parents and children alike	Secondary school	4,35	0,86	5.38	2	0.00
	College diploma	4,40	0,77			
	Faculty degree	4,14	0,87			
I have been introduced to the procedures which facilitate children's adjustment	Secondary school	4,52	0,62	4.96	2	0.00
	College diploma	4,51	0,62			
	Faculty degree	4,34	0,72			
The adjustment process is over when a child stops crying and complaining when attending kindergarten	Secondary school	4,38	0,94	23.6	2	0.00
	College diploma	4,36	0,96			
	Faculty degree	3,78	1,16			
The adjustment process is over when a child attends kindergarten with joy	Secondary school	4,64	0,67	8.26	2	0.00
	College diploma	4,69	0,60			
	Faculty degree	4,42	0,80			
Refusing to eat and sleep, crying and frequently becoming ill normally accompany the process of adjustment	Secondary school	4,42	0,72	15.4	2	0.00
	College diploma	4,40	0,71			
	Faculty degree	4,04	0,96			
In order to facilitate the adjustment process I have introduced pre-school teachers to the traits and habits of my child	Secondary school	4,61	0,62	3.76	2	0.02
	College diploma	4,74	0,45			
	Faculty degree	4,60	0,66			
In order to facilitate the adjustment process I have allowed my child to take his/her favourite toy to the kindergarten	Secondary school	4,33	0,93	8.93	2	0.00
	College diploma	4,31	0,93			
	Faculty degree	3,95	1,21			
The adjustment process will be easier with children who previously had an adequate relationship with their parents	Secondary school	4,42	0,83	4.74	2	0.00
	College diploma	4,49	0,83			
	Faculty degree	4,22	1,02			

Table 4 shows data on statistically significant differences in parents' attitudes relative to their level of education and regarding the children's adjustment process to a pre-school institution.

The parents who constituted a sample in the study to assess the factors which influence the children's adjustment process to a pre-school institution have been offered children's traits and age, as well as family ambience. When assessing the aforementioned factors the greatest level of agreement was expressed by the category of parents with college diplomas, immediately followed by the category of parents with secondary education. The lowest level of agreement has been noticed in the category of parents who hold faculty degrees. On the basis of an insight into respondents' average response, one can assert that parents with college diplomas (M-4.70), secondary education (M-4.58) and faculty degrees (M-4.49) consider the adjustment process to be mostly determined by individual traits of pre-school children. The research results show that respondents with academic degrees consider the role of parents more significant than the role of pre-school teachers in the process of children's adjustment to a pre-school institution (M-4.05), while parents with secondary education (M-4.37) and college diplomas give priority to the educational staff of a pre-school institution in the process of children's adjustment (M-4.50). When assessing the assertion *The adjustment process should optimally take up to three months* parents with faculty degrees expressed the lowest level of agreement, i.e. hesitation in their assessment (M-3.87), while parents with secondary education (M-4.28) and college diplomas (M-4.20) expressed partial agreement. Parents of all education levels expressed partial agreement with the assertion that the adjustment process was stressful for both parents and children. However, average response indicates that parents with a lower level of education (secondary education: M-4.35 and college diploma: M-4.40) are under bigger stress in the process of adjustment than parents with faculty degrees (M-4.14), as well as that they more frequently seek information regarding the procedures which can facilitate children's adjustment (secondary education: M-4.52 and college diploma: M-4.51) in comparison to parents with faculty degrees (M-4.34).

The absence of crying and complaints when children attend a pre-school institution is a partial indicator of a successfully completed process of adjustment according to parents with secondary education (4.38) and college diplomas (4.36), while parents with faculty degrees expressed hesitation in assessing this assertion (3.78). The following indicator of a successfully completed process of adjustment offered to parents to assess was children's joy in attending the kindergarten. When assessing this indicator all three categories of parents expressed partial agreement. However, again a larger degree of agreement was expressed by the categories of parents with secondary education (M-4.64) and college diplomas (M-4.69) in comparison to parents with faculty degrees (M-4.42).

In the course of research the authors established a following tendency: with the increase in the level of education it becomes harder to recognise normal occurrences in the process of children's adjustment such as cry, refusal of food and sleep, etc. The research conclusion has been drawn on the basis of parents' average response in assessing the assertion *Refusing to eat and sleep, crying and frequently becoming ill normally accompany the process of adjustment* which was most affirmatively assessed by parents with secondary education (M-4.42), followed by parents with college diplomas (M-4.40). The lowest level of agreement was noticed in parents with faculty degrees (M-4.04). Providing pre-school teachers with information regarding a child's habits and traits, as an educational procedure which can facilitate the adjustment process of children to a pre-school institution, is most frequently resorted to by parents with college diplomas (M-4.74), and followed by parents with secondary education (M-4.61). Parents with faculty degrees are less likely to provide pre-school teachers with the stated information (M-4.60). When it comes to methods and educational procedures which are used in order to overcome problems which occur when children start attending kindergartens, the research study shows that parents with a lower level of education (secondary school: M-4.33 and college diplomas: M-4.31) allow their children more frequently to take their favourite toys to kindergarten to facilitate the adjustment process than parents with faculty degrees (M-3.95). All three categories of respondents in this research study have noticed the significance of functional family relationships for children's adjustment to a pre-school institution, expressing a

partial agreement with the assertion *The adjustment process will be easier with children who previously had an adequate relationship with their parents.*

## 5. Conclusion

Leaving the family ambience for the first time, being separated from parents and encountering a larger number of unknown faces occurs when a child starts attending a pre-school institution. Aside from the fact that this is a traumatic period for children who are terrified of the new situation, one also needs to bear in mind that parents face the stress as well, along with a number of doubts and questions: *Is my child going to adjust to the new environment? Is he/she going to be accepted by his/her peers? Is he/she going to experience emotional difficulties due to daily separation?*

On the other hand, every year pre-school institution employees encounter children who enter the institutional environment of a pre-school setting for the first time. Thus, their experiences are valuable when it comes to recognising the side effects of the adjustment process, as well as their knowledge of methods applied to facilitate the process of adjustment. Furthermore, in practice there are different types of adjustment for every child which makes the individual approach extremely important when a child begins attending a pre-school institution.

Since the quality of the adjustment process to a pre-school institution reflects later in life on the adjustment to a school environment, as well as to changes which occur in the process of growing up, it is very important to provide a child with such conditions in a pre-school institution which imply less stress and anxiety. In that context, the co-operation between parents and pre-school teachers and the development of a partnership are preconditions for a successful process of adjustment. It is very important that they mutually inform each other, bearing in mind that on the one hand there are parents who can provide pre-school teachers with information about their child, while on the other hand pre-school teachers can introduce parents to the children's idiosyncrasies in the process of adjustment. The research results indicate that parents are merely partially introduced to the process of adjustment. Thus, this research raises the question of reasons for an insufficient awareness of parents and the possibilities of their pedagogical education in the domain of children's adjustment to a pre-school institution.

Research results indicate a larger level of stress in mothers than in fathers in the process of adjustment, larger capabilities for recognising the indicators of the adjustment period and a more frequent gathering of information on side effects which are reflected in the process of adjustment to a pre-school institution.

Regarding the level of education of parents, the research indicates a tendency of parents with faculty degrees to consider the parents' role more significant than the role of pre-school teachers in the process of children's adjustment to kindergarten. They rarely inform themselves about the characteristics of the adjustment period, they rarely share information about their child with a pre-school teacher and they feel less stressed when a child starts attending a pre-school institution. On the other hand, they experience more difficulties in recognising the characteristics of the adjustment period, as well as the optimal time interval of the process of adjustment.

The limitations of the conducted research are reflected in the fact that the field of children's adjustment to a pre-school institution has been observed solely from the parents' perspective. However, this fact does not decrease the significance of the research, since the obtained data can constitute a starting point for researchers who will deal with the related topics in the future, i.e. with the issues of pre-school teachers' competences in the process of children's adjustment to kindergarten or with the co-operation between families and pre-school teachers in the process of children's preparation for school.

## 6. Notes

This paper is a part of the following projects: *Sustainability of Identity of the Serbs and National Minorities in the Border Communities of Eastern and South-eastern Serbia* (179013) – with first author as participant, which is carried out at the University of Nis – Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, and *Tradition, Modernization and National Identity in Serbia and the Balkans in the Process of European Integration* (179074) – with third author as participant, which is carried out at the University of Nis – Faculty of Philosophy.

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