

Psychological Characteristics of Primary School Students' Adaptation to School

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Abstract. This article analyzes the results of research on the adaptation of primary school students to school, the methodological foundations of the program, and the empirical level of effectiveness.

Keywords. Adaptation, motivation, social, psychological, emotional-volitional, ability, emotional component, adequate

Special attention is being paid worldwide to scientific research focused on improving children's ability to adapt to school, particularly through the development of their learning readiness and the realization of their individual capacities. In this regard, there is an increasing need to conduct studies aimed at ensuring the involvement of teachers, psychologists, educators, and parents by fostering the socio-psychological characteristics of primary school students' adaptation to school, as well as creating mechanisms that contribute to the holistic development of the child's personality.

Among Uzbek psychologists, scholars such as T.M. Adizova, Sh.R. Barotov, M.G. Davletshin, U.S. Jumayev, N.S. Jo'rayev, Sh.R. Samarova, N.M. Majidov, R.A. Mavlyanova, U. Masharipova, R. Safarova, M. Hamdamova, B. Xodjayev, Q. Husanboyeva, E.G'. G'ozyiev, and Sh. Yusupova have conducted scientific research on the development of thinking in students during school adaptation, learning motivation, and aspects related to speech development that enhance the academic activity of primary school pupils.

Researchers from the Commonwealth of Independent States, including I.N. Agafonova, M.M. Bezrukikh, L.I. Bozhovich, L.A. Venger, L.S. Vygotsky, V.V. Davydov, V.N. Druzhinin, I.V. Dubrovina, Y.Y. Kravtsova, L.M. Kovaleva, V.E. Kogon, A.N. Leontiev, I.L. Levina, V.S. Mukhina, T.A. Nezhnova, V.M. Safronova, A.G. Khripkova, J. Švancara, and D.B. Elkonin have explored the scientific aspects of social adaptation, the concept of school readiness, socio-psychological factors influencing primary school children's adaptation to school, socio-psychological characteristics of readiness for formal education, cognitive activity related to school readiness, children's intellectual potential, age-related crises, and the main causes of maladjustment to school.

The aim of our research is to identify the socio-psychological characteristics of primary school students' adaptation to school. In determining the socio-psychological characteristics of primary school students' adaptation to school, we also utilized assessment methods such as the Kern–Jirásek School Readiness Test, the Schulte Table, and the "10 Words" methodology.

Based on the analysis of group differences in the Kern–Jirásek School Readiness Test (Figure 1) using the Mann–Whitney U test, the following results were observed. In the "Draw-a-Person" task, the mean rank in the experimental group was 102.29, while in the control group it was 88.56 ($U = 3860.000$; $p < 0.05$). In the "He Ate the Soup" task, the mean rank in the experimental group was 94.17, compared to 96.86 in the control group ($U = 4384.500$; $p < 0.05$). In the "10 Dots" task, the mean rank in the experimental group was 90.85, whereas in the control group it was 98.31 ($U = 4065.500$; $p < 0.05$). In the "Verbal Test," the mean rank in the experimental group reached 106.01, while in the control group it was 85.56 ($U = 3519.000$; $p < 0.01$).

It can be observed that in the "Draw-a-Person" task, the mean rank of the experimental group (102.29) was higher than that of the control group (88.56). Similarly, in the "Verbal Test," the experimental group (106.01) demonstrated higher mean ranks compared to the control group (85.56), indicating statistically significant differences (see Figure 1).

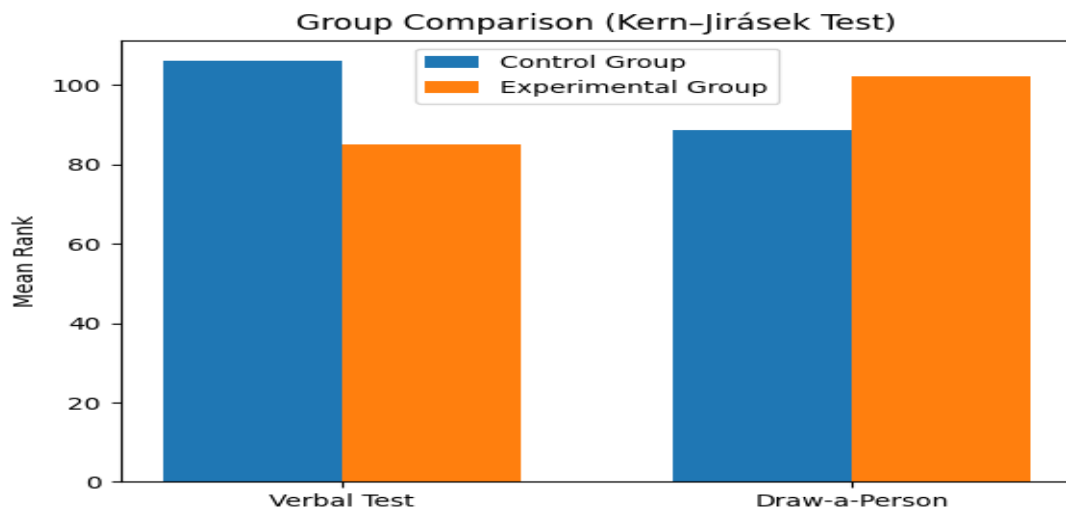


Figure 1. Group differences in the Kern–Jirásek School Readiness Test (based on the Mann–Whitney U test).

In the next stage of our research, age-related differences in primary school students’ adaptation to school were examined using the Kruskal–Wallis test.

Differences were identified based on M.R. Bityanova’s methodology, “*Assessment of a Child’s Adaptation to School.*” According to the “Adaptation” scale, the mean rank was 52.40 for children aged 6.7–7.0, 49.14 for those aged 7.1–7.4, and 44.78 for those aged 7.5–8.0 ($H = 1.074$; $p > 0.05$). On the “Moderate Adaptation” scale, the mean rank was 45.28 for ages 6.7–7.0, 46.62 for ages 7.1–7.4, and 53.78 for ages 7.5–8.0 ($H = 1.752$; $p > 0.05$). On the “Maladaptation” scale, the mean rank was 47.70 for ages 6.7–7.0, 47.59 for ages 7.1–7.4, and 55.40 for ages 7.5–8.0 ($H = 6.533$; $p < 0.05$).

The results obtained using the above methodology indicate that students aged 7.5–8.0 demonstrated relatively higher scores. This can be explained by the fact that successful adaptation to school depends not only on a child’s chronological age and their cognitive and physical readiness, but also on their personal and socio-psychological preparedness. In other words, a child entering school must be ready to assume a new social role—that of a student—which involves specific rights, responsibilities, and expectations (see Table 1).

Table1.

Age Group Differences in Assessing Children’s School Adaptation (Based on the Kruskal–Wallis Test)

Scale	Age Groups	N	Mean Rank	H	p
Adaptation	6,7-7,0 years	20	52,40	1,074	0,584
	7,1-7,5 years	47	49,14		
	7,5-8,0 years	29	44,78		
	Total	96			
Moderate Adaptation	6,7-7,0 years	20	45,28	1,752	0,416
	7,1-7,5 years	47	46,62		
	7,5-8,0 years	29	53,78		
	Total	96			
Maladaptation	6,7-7,0 years	20	47,70	6,533	0,038*
	7,1-7,5 years	47	44,59		
	7,5-8,0 years	29	55,40		
	Total	96			

Note: * $r \leq 0,10$; ** $r \leq 0,05$; *** $r \leq 0,01$

According to the results of the “Schulte Table” method, the mean rank was 41.60 for children aged 6.7–7.0, 45.88 for those aged 7.1–7.4, and 57.50 for those aged 7.5–8.0 ($H = 5.216$; $p < 0.05$). Based on the methodology used to study students’ learning motivation, it was observed that students aged 7.1–7.5

demonstrated higher results. At this age, the speed of attentional shifting, the ability to select relevant information in complex conditions, and overall task performance become more developed.

Among primary school students, age-related differences were identified in attention distribution and switching, which can be explained by the uneven development of attentional processes in accordance with the physiological maturation of the nervous system.

According to the “Schulte Table” results, the level of development of attention distribution in primary school students, along with the predominance of volitional control over the perception of visual imagery and the influence of the “novelty effect,” contributed to the emergence of differential patterns in both intrinsic and extrinsic learning motivation.

Furthermore, the data obtained from the study were analyzed to determine the relationships between school adaptation methodologies using Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient.

Initially, M.R. Ginzburg’s methodology, “*Assessment of Students’ Learning Motivation*,” was applied to determine the level of students’ learning motivation. Based on this approach, the study focused on identifying students’ learning motivation, their attitudes toward school, and their emotional responses to learning-related situations. This made it possible to detect certain motivational difficulties in children.

Using M.R. Ginzburg’s methodology, significant correlations were identified between students’ internal state ($r = 0.601$; $p \leq 0.01$), school anxiety ($r = 0.206$; $p \leq 0.01$), and performance in the “Draw-a-Person” task ($r = 0.273$; $p \leq 0.01$). These findings indicate that higher levels of learning motivation are associated with better internal psychological states, higher levels of school-related anxiety, and more developed drawing and fine motor skills.

Children who frequently experience anxiety and worry, as well as numerous fears, tend to differ from their peers. Such children are typically highly sensitive and emotionally responsive.

Moreover, the characteristics of students’ learning motivation are directly related to the psychological climate within the classroom. In particular, the development of achievement motivation is strongly influenced by the emotional connection established by teachers with their students. Care, encouragement, and praise from teachers foster a sense of self-worth and respect for others in students. This can be explained by the fact that when students feel valued, their self-confidence increases, which in turn promotes independence and active engagement in learning (see Table 2).

Table2.
Correlation Relationships Between School Adaptation Methodologies (Based on Spearman’s Rank Correlation, n = 210)

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)
M.R. Ginzburg’s “Assessment of Students’ Learning Motivation”	1.000
N.I. Gutkina’s “Assessment of Students’ Internal Position”	0.601**
School Adaptation (Lüscher Method)	0.037
A.M. Prikhozhan’s “Assessment of School Anxiety”	0.206**
Adaptation	0.102
Moderate Adaptation	-0.055
Maladaptation	0.104
Draw-a-Person	0.273**
“He Ate the Soup”	0.128
10 Dots	-0.009
Verbal Test	-0.094
Schulte Table	-0.074
10 Words	0.049

Note: * $r \leq 0,10$; ** $r \leq 0,05$; *** $r \leq 0,01$

A child’s successful learning at school largely depends on their level of motivational readiness for school. In primary education, learning motivation is characterized not only by the student’s ability to engage in and regulate the learning process, but also by its role in fostering the holistic development of the student’s personality. In particular, the formation of learning motivation in students is not limited to developing interest, curiosity, and engagement in academic subjects; it also encompasses the internalization of socially accepted norms and values within their consciousness.

Using N.I. Gutkina’s methodology, “*Assessment of Students’ Internal Position*” (see Table 3), significant correlations were identified with school anxiety ($r = 0.194$; $p \leq 0.01$) and performance in the “Draw-a-Person” task ($r = 0.269$; $p \leq 0.01$). These findings indicate that the higher the level of a student’s internal position, the higher the levels of school anxiety and the more pronounced the characteristics observed in the “Draw-a-Person” task. Such students may become anxious even over minor issues. They often demonstrate low self-esteem and tend to stand out through passive behavior compared to their peers. Anxious children are highly sensitive to their failures and react strongly to them. Therefore, in the process of primary school students’ adaptation to school, it is important that they successfully establish their role and place within the school environment.

Table 3.
Correlation Relationships Between School Adaptation Methodologies (Spearman’s Rank Correlation, $n = 210$)

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)
N.I. Gutkina’s “Assessment of Students’ Internal Position”	—
School Adaptation (Lüscher Method)	0.001
A.M. Prikhozhan’s “Assessment of School Anxiety”	0.194**
Adaptation	0.174
Moderate Adaptation	-0.099
Maladaptation	0.035
Draw-a-Person	0.269**
“He Ate the Soup”	0.073
10 Dots	0.039
Verbal Test	0.100
Schulte Table	-0.035
10 Words	0.047

Note: $r \leq 0.10$; ** $r \leq 0.05$; *** $r \leq 0.01$

Using A.M. Prikhozhan’s methodology, “*Assessment of School Anxiety*,” significant correlations were identified with the “Draw-a-Person” task ($r = 0.424$; $p \leq 0.01$) and the “He Ate the Soup” task ($r = 0.153$; $p \leq 0.05$). These findings indicate that higher levels of school anxiety are associated with higher performance in the “Draw-a-Person” and “He Ate the Soup” tasks, reflecting the development of characteristics necessary for successful school learning (see Table 4).

Table 4.
Correlation Relationships Between School Adaptation Methodologies (Based on Spearman’s Rank Correlation, $n = 210$)

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)
A.M. Prikhozhan’s “Assessment of School Anxiety”	—
Adaptation	-0.017
Moderate Adaptation	0.071
Maladaptation	0.125

Draw-a-Person	0.424**
“He Ate the Soup”	0.153*
10 Dots	-0.047
Verbal Test	0.019
Schulte Table	0.055
10 Words	-0.064

Note: $r \leq 0.10$; ** $r \leq 0.05$; *** $r \leq 0.01$

School anxiety is a relatively mild form of emotional instability, which manifests as heightened excitement, excessive restlessness in learning situations and in the classroom, negative self-perception, and the expectation of negative evaluation from teachers and peers. The range of manifestations of school-related neuroses is quite broad, which makes it difficult to establish clear diagnostic criteria.

Table 5.

Correlation Relationships Between School Adaptation Methodologies (Spearman’s Rank Correlation, $n = 210$)

Variables	Draw-a-Person	“He Ate the Soup”	10 Dots	Verbal Test	Schulte Table	10 Words
Draw-a-Person	1	0.161*	0.060	0.022	0.106	0.191**
“He Ate the Soup”		1	0.082	0.046	0.127	-0.009
10 Dots			1	0.248**	0.287**	0.202**
Verbal Test				1	0.275**	-0.055
Schulte Table					1	0.352**
10 Words						1

Based on the obtained empirical data, certain correlation relationships were identified between the “Draw-a-Person” method and other assessment methodologies using Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient. In particular, during the process of students’ adaptation to school, significant correlations were found between the “Draw-a-Person” task and the “He Ate the Soup” task ($r = 0.161$; $p \leq 0.05$), as well as the “10 Words” task ($r = 0.191$; $p \leq 0.01$). These findings indicate that logical thinking and memory processes play an important role in school adaptation (see Table 5).

In tasks involving the copying of dot patterns (“10 Dots”), significant relationships were identified with the Verbal Test ($r = 0.248$; $p \leq 0.01$), the Schulte Table ($r = 0.287$; $p \leq 0.01$), and the “10 Words” task ($r = 0.202$; $p \leq 0.01$). This suggests that the development of the sensorimotor domain—particularly fine motor skills and visual-motor coordination—is closely related to students’ adaptation to learning activities. Furthermore, cognitive processes such as sensation, perception, speech, attention, memory, and thinking, which support overall cognitive functioning, demonstrate a relatively high level of interrelation.

During the Verbal Test, a significant correlation was observed with the Schulte Table ($r = 0.275$; $p \leq 0.01$), indicating a close relationship between these variables. In primary school students, the speed of attentional switching and the stability of attention—along with familiarity with symbols and numbers (e.g., counting from 1 to 15)—play a crucial role in the learning process. Additionally, fundamental skills such as letter recognition, syllable formation, word reading, and the ability to read short sentences are essential personal characteristics for successful learning. These abilities also have a social dimension, enhancing interpersonal interaction and engagement in various classroom activities.

A strong correlation was also identified between the Schulte Table and the “10 Words” task ($r = 0.352$; $p \leq 0.01$). This indicates that attentional switching and stability are closely linked to the development of memory processes in primary school students. The ability to listen attentively and recall words is particularly important for school adaptation. Moreover, the number of correctly recalled words reflects the level of

development of mnemonic processes and enhances students' capacity to engage effectively in different types of learning activities.

Thus, based on the conducted empirical research, it was determined that developing a structured program to support primary school students' adaptation to school is both necessary and appropriate. The effectiveness of the adaptation program developed by us has been empirically confirmed, demonstrating its practical value and justifying its implementation in educational practice.

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