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THE CONDITIONS OF THE HEALTH EDUCATION PROCESS OF CHILDREN AT THE PRESCHOOL AGE IN TERMS OF SAFETY RULES COMPLIANCE

INTRODUCTION

Health education in kindergarten aims, amongst others, to provide children with maximum security by properly organizing a learning space and engaging children in safety rules compliance. Security can be defined as a set of conditions which ensure an elimination or a limitation of a negative impact of various environmental factors on a human organism (Żuchelkowska, 2013, p. 137). When entering a new kindergarten a preschooler comes into a new, previously unknown environment. Accustomed to a safe and well-known home space, a child feels insecure and foreign in a new setting. The adaptation period to the new conditions is varied and depends on factors related to kindergarten's activity and to individual characteristics of a child. It is important to elicit child's interest in a surrounding reality and his or her willingness to learn about the area, the playground, and the kindergarten yard. During a walk around the building and in the adjacent area, organized within the first days of a child's stay in the kindergarten, pupils identify and learn to follow the safety rules of using the premises and appliances located in the facility.

SAFETY RULES COMPLIANCE BY CHILDREN AT THE PRESCHOOL AGE

An important factor of education for safety is to undertake specific activities regarding a safe and mannered participation of children in road traffic. "Road traffic safety" refers to a group of issues related to a non-endangered participation of children as pedestrians in road traffic. Whereas, road traffic culture in regard to children as pedestrians, is defined as their competent behavior, maintaining order on the road as well as in a public and private transport, respecting and protecting the appliances,

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road signs and road signals as well as the vehicles passing along the road which they use as passengers (Frątczakowie, 1996, p. 50).

Children at the preschool age have an insufficiently developed spatio-temporal orientation and an exuberant imagination. Therefore, they are unable to determine the velocity of their walk and the time needed to move from one side of the street to the other. They also have difficulty in evaluating the speed of a moving vehicle and the distance between its location and the place where they wish to cross the road (Bachrach, 1981, p. 34). Thus, in road traffic education, it is necessary to develop cognitive processes such as a visual and auditory perception, attention, spatial and temporal imagination, as well as to shape psychomotor skills, the ability to predict the consequences of the decisions and choices made. It is also important to develop volitional character traits, which are reflected in the skills and habits of managing the behavior on roads in accordance with the mandatory traffic regulations (Żuchelkowska, Wojciechowska, 2000, p. 52).

During the preschool period, introducing children to the traffic regulations should include the following educational content:

- a knowledge of how to get to school and individual's address;
- road traffic participants (a pedestrian, a passenger, a driver);
- general rules of being a pedestrian;
- maintaining safety while playing near streets;
- the types of road signs (warning signs, prohibition signs, information signs, direction signs and town signs);
- the rules of behavior at bus stops and in public transport;
- moving on roads under unfavorable weather conditions;
- basic means of car, rail, water and air transport.

In preschool education, it is also crucial to introduce children to caution and safety in contact with fire and teach them a readiness to cooperate with adults when it comes to fire prevention. Children at this age enjoy playing with matches and lighters or watching burning candles and bonfires. However, they do not realize the dangers that can be caused by playing with fire. Therefore, they require to be warned and refused to play with fire as well as to be told about predicting the consequences and making decisions in order to prevent fires. Another important issue is to shape children's skills of caution and safety when using devices and objects that can ignite fire and teach them correct reactions in the case of a fire. Such activities are aimed at engaging children in preventing fire and reacting appropriately when they notice it. Children should also be aware that a fire can be caused by a lightning, as well as by malfunctioning electrical or gas appliances. Fires are also dangerous for people and animals because they can hurt, burn, and even kill (Żuchelkowska, Wojciechowska, 2000, p. 56).

Many children experience accidents during play, especially when it is organized independently at home or in a yard. The reason for it is that children do not predict the effects of their actions and while being excited and uncontrolled they become an unconscious threat to themselves and to others. Therefore, children should observe the principle that both inside and outside the building they should move without jostling others, and that quick and careless running around the kindergarten room, hallway, stairs or locker room can lead to an accident. When playing in kindergarten or backyard areas, it is necessary to follow the rules of a safe play. If, however, an accident occurs, a child should immediately request adults to provide first aid to the injured.

Everything that lives, moves, makes sounds, is colorful attracts the interest of a small child. However, children do not realize that unknown plants and animals can be dangerous to their health and life. Some potted plants grown at home and in a kindergarten can have poisonous properties for children. They can cause gastrointestinal discomfort, breathing difficulties, swelling of the mouth and tongue, skin allergies. Therefore, they should be eliminated from any child's environment (Żuchelkowska, Wojciechowska, 2000, p. 58).

Safety education of preschoolers also means predicting the effects of coming into contact with medicines, various chemicals and technical objects that may be dangerous for a child. Introducing children to a safe and skillful use of the mentioned items and making them aware of the need to inform adults about possible threats must be pursued with the participation of parents.

THE RESEARCH METHOD

The aim of the research was to detect relationships and dependencies between material, educational and developmental conditions in a family, didactic and material conditions in a kindergarten, local environment, gender and the preparation of children finishing preschool education to comply with safety rules. This is a section of a wider research concerning the preparation of children at the preschool age for health promotion.

The scientific research concept was based on the method of a diagnostic survey and pedagogical tests. The techniques used in the survey were: an observation, interviews with the teacher and the parents. The test technique was also practiced in the study. The research sample consisted of 320 children who attend nine different kindergartens in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship.

TEST RESULTS PRESENTATION

The efficient functioning of a family is essential in health education of the younger generation because a family plays the most decisive and fundamental role in acquiring the most important health experiences in a child's development. The scope of

knowledge and health experiences of a child in a family is very varied and includes: a concern for health, an introduction to a rational organization of life in a modern civilization meaning an ability to organize time to work and rest, a usage of a leisure time for relaxation, entertainment, enrichment and development of interests and passions, an introduction into hygiene and safety of everyday life, a nutritional hygiene, a prevention of addictions and disorders of the neurotic type, a development of interests in sport and tourism, a formation of interpersonal skills and interacting with other people (Izdebska, 1972, p. 15).

In the course of the research, the classification of the test sample was made on the basis of the origin of a family with very good development and educational conditions in the number of 90 people, with good conditions – 188 people and those with poor residential environment conditions – 42 people.

After analyzing the data collected during the study, the following results were obtained.

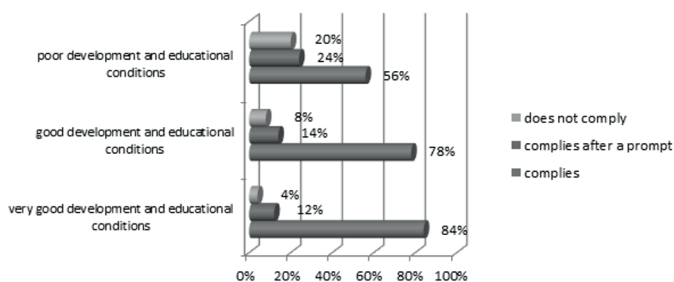


Figure 1. Family environment and safety rules compliance

Source: study of author.

It transpired that children from homes with a very good developmental and educational conditions comply with the safety rules in the number of 84%. Those who follow the rules after a prompt makes 12% and the ones who do not comply with the rules add up to 4%. Considering the issue of compliance with safety rules in the families with good conditions, the results are similar to those with a very good family situation, however, with a small reduction of the group observing the rules (78%), and with a minimum increase of persons who need to be reminded about the basic safety rules (14%). Children who do not comply with these rules in the well conditioned families make 8%. The proportions in the results achieved by children who come from families with poor educational conditions are clearly changing. And so, those who apply the safety rules add up to 56%, a prompt about the need to comply with them is required by 24%, and as many as 20% of the respondents do not follow these rules despite the reminders.

A child who complies with the safety rules is able to move on the roads, is well-oriented in pedestrian (and often even drivers) traffic regulations, knows the mechanized appliances that the household is equipped with and is aware of how to use

them. Such child also knows the necessity of notifying an adult in case of a possible threat such as broken glass, fragmented electrical installation, water leak, etc. When choosing a place to play the child also bears in mind to maintain security. It is possible when parents devote a lot of attention to the child and introduces him or her to regarding the danger in some life situations. It also involves caution in dealing with strangers, animals or plants. A child who is aware of the safety rules recognizes that containers of an unknown origin should not be touched because they can contain dangerous chemicals, and also the child respects the prohibition of self-medication.

In the course of the research, it was also attempted to determine to what extent gender diversity affects compliance with safety rules by girl and boys.

The research consisted of a group of 156 girls and 164 boys.

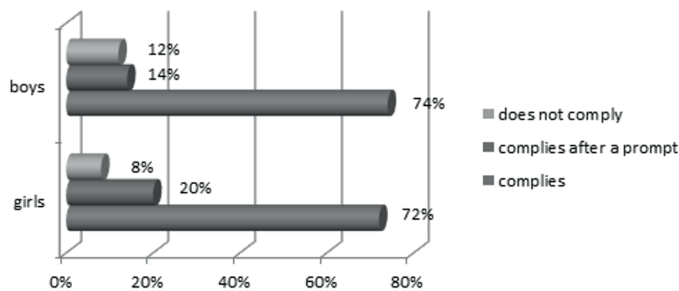


Figure 2. Gender and safety rules compliance

Source: study of author.

Analyzing and comparing the results of the research it can be concluded that the group of boys both complies and does not comply with the safety rules in a greater number. 72% of the girls and 74% of the boys were among the group following the safety principles. A greater number of boys who comply with the safety rules may result from the boys' interest in technology, shaped under the influence of male role models. Some of the children in the research sample do not remember about observing the safety rules and require constant reminding and controlled by the adults. It applies to 20% of the girls and 14% of the boys. However, 8% of the girls and 12% of the boys do not comply with these rules at all. It may be the consequence of succumbing to incorrect patterns of behavior and persuasions from older peers or colleagues to which boys are more likely to give in to than girls.

In the course of the conducted research, there was also an attempt to inquire to what extent a local environment determines the framework for applying the safety principles for preschool children. For the development of a child is conditioned not only by genetic and environmental factors of a family background but also by factors occurring in wider environmental circles, including the local environment.

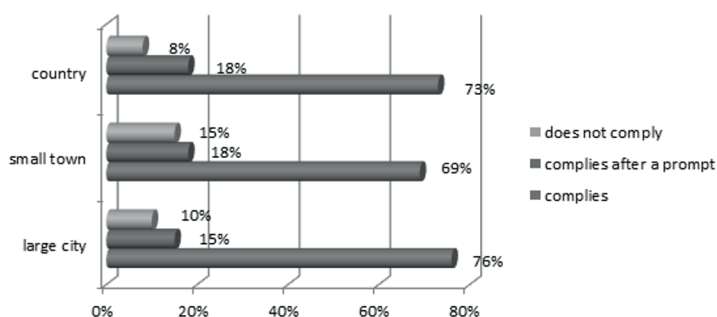


Figure 3. Local environment and safety rules compliance

Source: study of author.

It emerged that 76% of the children coming from an urban environment, 69% from a small town and 73% of the respondents living in a countryside comply with the safety principals in a kindergarten, on their way to kindergarten, at home and in various typical or unusual situations. Both the children from a city and those from a countryside know and apply the rules of behavior on the roads, both in a built-up and non-built-up areas, as well as on pedestrian crossings. Children are sensitive to particularly difficult and dangerous situations, which include: unnoticeable turns, roadworks, entering the road from behind a stationary bus or from behind a parked car which hinders visibility, passing next to exit gates, etc. They are also aware of a danger of an accident when they enter the road suddenly and when they run across it. Especially children of a rural origin, who often walk on roads without sidewalks, are implemented to be especially careful at dusk and under difficult weather conditions. Their clothes and backpacks are equipped with lights, badges or reflective patches. The examined children efficiently recognized the important for pedestrians road signs placed on posts next to the road (so-called vertical signs) and signs painted on the road (horizontal), with particular emphasis on pedestrian crossing signs.

Children from rural households are prepared for the dangers of approaching an agricultural machinery. It is important for children to be warned by adults to keep sensible caution when meeting strangers. To not get into their cars, to not enter unknown people's apartments, to not accept gifts from them. Children know that they can be harmed not only by some people but also animals or plants may be the sources of danger. Forest animals are particularly threatening because they can be infected with rabies. Also, eating toxic plants including mushrooms can cause serious poisoning and even death. In difficult situations, children know that they need to get help from adults immediately.

Not all children are so well prepared to comply with safety rules. Among the research sample, 15% coming from a large city, 18% from a small town and 18% of the children from a countryside require a prompt of the caring for safety principles of them, of others and of the environment. Most often they forget about the possi-

bility of hurting someone, for example breaking a limb, punching someone in the eye while playing with their friends. They often choose a place to play which is not always safe. Sometimes, driven by curiosity, they undertake construction activities with the use of dangerous, sharp tools and matches. The group of children who do not take any steps to maintain safety comes in 10% from an urban environment, in 15% from a small town and in 8% from a rural environment. The fewest children who do not comply with the safety rules originate from a countryside. This is due to the fact that there are many dangers for a small child on a farm, which is why parents place a special emphasis on making their children cautious in contact with various substances and machines.

A kindergarten in which children spend many hours a day must be optimally adapted to their needs and should have conditions for a comprehensive and harmonious personality development of each pupil. When preparing children to comply with safety rules, a kindergarten must create a safe and child-friendly environment which meets preschooler's basic needs. The need for security is one of the fundamental human needs. E Jundziłł (1998) mentions the need for safety, an emotional contact and a success as the three basic mental needs of a child. Satisfying the need for safety is a guarantee for an elimination of anxiety from all kinds of child's activity. The sense of safety for children in a kindergarten depends on the atmosphere in the institution, the way of its management, interpersonal relations and cooperation between a kindergarten and parents.

Considering the preschool environment conditions, the kindergartens were divided into three research categories, namely: the kindergartens with very good didactic and educational conditions, the ones with good didactic and educational conditions and those with poor didactic and educational conditions.

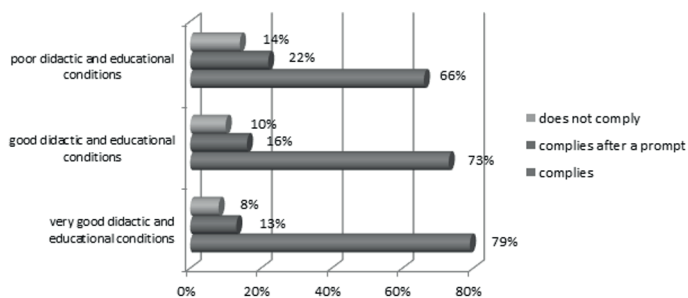


Figure 4. Preschool environment and safety rules compliance

Source: the study of author.

The research results proved that 79% of the children from the kindergartens with very good conditions, 73% from the ones with good conditions and 66% of the children from the institutions with poor educational and didactic conditions comply with the safety rules. In the process of introducing the pupils to observing the safety

rules, teachers put emphasis on shaping imagination and awareness of the existing dangers on the road. During excursions, children watched the traffic, its intensity in various places. They used the rules of pedestrian traffic in practice and named the road signs they encountered. The teachers also organized bus or tram rides combined with boarding instructions, using the ticket, holding to the rails, giving up their seats for older passengers. The children from this group remember to be cautious about unknown objects, animals, and phenomena and in case of danger, they are aware of the need to inform adults about possible threats. They have a friendly attitude towards animals while maintaining some caution. It is important for children to be aware of the dangers of playing in unauthorized places, that is, near roads or water bodies. This threat becomes more alarming in winter, so it is essential to be able to assess the situation and be cautious when playing on snow and ice and possess the ability to imagine the effects of an inappropriate behavior. The research results show that 13% of the children attending kindergartens with very good conditions, 16% of the children from the institutions with good conditions and 22% of the children from a poor educational and didactic preschool environment conditions need to be reminded about the safety rules' compliance. Children do not always pay attention to the safety of their colleagues. Sometimes they hit them while playing in a hall or on a kindergarten playground. They react positively to teacher's remarks and apologize for their bad behavior. During walks and trips, they require a warning from a teacher only in certain situations. What can be disturbing is the fact that despite the various methods practiced by teachers to familiarize the children with safety rules compliance, 8% of the children from the kindergartens with very good conditions, 10% of the children from the kindergartens with good conditions and 14% from the poor educational and didactic preschool conditions disregard these principles and put themselves and others in situations which can be a risk to their health. It indicates that the children have a poor awareness of the dangers of not following the established rules of behavior in a group, in a class, in a cloakroom in a hall, in a bathroom and during physical activities. Children require a special attention during organized walks when unexpectedly they can run onto the road. When choosing a place to play, they don't take into account the consideration for safety. They like to impress their peers with risky activities.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the factual material collected, it was observed that there are various factors which influence preschool children in shaping the idea of safety rules. These factors include child's family environment. The better the educational and developmental conditions in a family, the better the preparation of children to comply with safety rules. The respondents coming from very good as well as good educational and developmental family background conditions are very well and well prepared to apply

the safety rules in life. This is determined, among others, by factors such as parents' education, family status and economic and social conditions.

The process of education for the safety of preschool children is affected by gender. It became apparent that more boys comply with the safety rules but also a large group of them, greater than girls', do not follow these rules. On the one hand, it results from their higher interest in motorization and technology, and on the other hand from boys having more difficulty in complying with specific principles and rules.

A local environment is another determinant of preparing children to comply with safety rules process. The large-city and urban environment favor the development of knowledge and skills which help to avoid threats at home and in a kindergarten while playing with peers. It is connected with better conditions for intellectual, cultural and social development in a city in comparison with a countryside.

It was also established that there is a dependence between children's preparation for safety and a preschool environment. Children attending kindergartens with very good and good educational and didactic conditions show higher knowledge and a greater amount of skills and habits related to safety rules compliance in various life situations.

When maintaining safety in a preschooler's life, there should be applied the principle of reason and not causing a child to panic. Otherwise, a child may feel more threatened than he or she really is. Tension caused by fear of danger can cause abnormal reactions from children in health or life threatening situations. Therefore, children need to be shown what behaviors in a given situation can protect them from unpleasant consequences and threats (Żuchelkowska, Wojciechowska, 2000, p. 60).

The close cooperation between the most important educational entities is crucial for the process of introducing children at the preschool age to security principles compliance, being: between children and their parents, between kindergartens and a local environment. The greater the effectiveness of this cooperation the greater the compatibility between the goals of education for safety implemented in a kindergarten and the impact of a family environment.

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Keywords: education for safety, preschooler's safety, preschool education

Abstract: In a small child education, an important place is occupied by the need to shape active attitudes towards personal and public security as well as acquiring knowledge about what favors and what endangers health. The article presents the results of a research conducted in the kindergartens in Bydgoszcz, concerning the assessment of safety rules compliance by preschoolers in various interlocking contexts. The study covered such safety areas as: road traffic safety, fire prevention, safety at the time of undertaking various forms of activity including play, safety in contact with plants, animals as well as medicines and chemical agents. As a result of the collected research material analysis it was established that the level of safety rules compliance is generally high, and is differentiated by such factors as: family environment, gender, local environment and educational and didactic conditions in a kindergarten.

UWARUNKOWANIA PRZEBIEGU EDUKACJI ZDROWOTNEJ DZIECI W WIEKU PRZEDSZKOLNYM W ZAKRESIE PRZESTRZEGANIA ZASAD BEZPIECZEŃSTWA

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja do bezpieczeństwa, bezpieczeństwo przedszkolaka, wychowanie przedszkolne

Streszczenie: W edukacji małego dziecka ważne miejsce zajmuje konieczność kształtowania czynnych postaw wobec bezpieczeństwa własnego i innych oraz przyswajania wiedzy o tym, co sprzyja, a co zagraża zdrowiu. Artykuł jest prezentacją wyników badań prowadzonych w bydgoskich przedszkolach dotyczących oceny przestrzegania zasad bezpieczeństwa przez przedszkolaków w różnych kontekstach zależnościowych. Badaniem objęto takie obszary bezpieczeństwa, jak: bezpieczeństwo ruchu drogowego, profilaktyka przeciwpożarowa, bezpieczeństwo w czasie podejmowania różnych form aktywności, w tym zabawowej, bezpieczeństwo w kontakcie z roślinami, zwierzętami oraz lekarstwami i środkami chemicznymi. W wyniku analizy zebranego materiału badawczego ustalono, że poziom przestrzegania zasad bezpieczeństwa jest na ogół wysoki, a różnicują go takie czynniki, jak: środowisko rodzinne, płeć, środowisko lokalne oraz warunki wychowawczo-dydaktyczne w przedszkolu.