



HEALTH DEMANDS OF CHILDREN IN THE PROCESS OF ADAPTATION TO THE DAY CARE CENTER: NURSING CONTRIBUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: adaptation to the day care center needs to be analyzed from the perspective of health as a key element for the protection of a healthy childhood. **Objectives:** to describe the intervening factors in the process of adaptation of children to the day care center and to analyze the health demands in this process. **Methods:** this is a descriptive qualitative research conducted in a municipal day care center in Rio de Janeiro/RJ, Brazil, with seven early childhood education professionals, through semi-structured interviews. Data were submitted to thematic analysis. **Results:** the findings showed that family, environment, reception, attendance at the day care center and food are factors that interfere with the adaptation of the child to the day care center. There are demands on child and family health for which it would be important to have the participation of health professionals, including nurses. However, the understanding of health is still linked to the biomedical model of the health-disease process. **Conclusions:** adaptation in the day care center is influenced by multidimensional factors that include interpersonal relationships established in this environment. The actions of nurses in day care centers still need to gain strength and political and social visibility.

Keywords: Child Health. Day care center. Child development. Health promotion. Nursing.

INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, day care centers started with a purely welfare nature and it was only with the Law 9.394/1996 of the Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB) that they were recognized as part of early childhood education for children up to three years old. Therefore, day care centers assumed a relevant role in basic education, as their purpose is the comprehensive and harmonious development of children in their physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects, with the family and community⁽¹⁾.

The goal of merely keeping children became very small before the new issues that permeate day care centers, such as caring and educating, which simultaneously and inseparably affect the daily life of this scenario and directly influence child development. This is understood as a complex, active and unique process of each child, expressed by continuity and changes in

motor, cognitive, psychosocial and language skills, being the result of the interaction of the child with the environment and the relationships that exist in it⁽²⁾.

Promoting children's development and well-being during their early years, especially in early childhood, has been linked to positive health outcomes, well-being and learning in adulthood⁽³⁾. However, there are risk factors that may produce undesirable and detrimental results for child development. These risk factors can be biological, such as prematurity, low birth weight and complications in pregnancy and childbirth; related to the family, such as conflicts, mental health problems of the caregiver, and fragile interaction and affective bonds; and/or environmental, such as low socioeconomic status and poor parental education⁽⁴⁾.

As the environment is signaled as influential in child development, the interference of the day care center and the relationships established in

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this setting need to be considered for child health promotion. However, this process is endowed with subjectivity, uniqueness and complexity. Thus, this interference can be protective when it offers influences favorable to child development or influences that bring risk, when they are potentially harmful⁽²⁾, especially in the moment when the child is experiencing the transition from home to the day care center.

Studies show that quality interactions between educators and children in early childhood education have significant effects on reducing behavioral problems and increasing social skills⁽³⁾. However, the transition to out-of-home childcare, especially to the day care center, poses a number of challenges for children, including complex peer interactions and extended separation from parents⁽⁵⁾.

Therefore, adaptation in this space needs to be analyzed from the perspective of health as a key element for the protection of a healthy childhood, since it promotes repercussions on the child's physical, affective, cognitive and social development. This complexity may be closely associated with the individual differences of the infant or young child, the quality of the bond they maintain with their parents, the conditions of the care environment, the number of children per professional, the time of separation, the degree of deprivation, and family feelings and behaviors^(2,4,6).

In the phase of adaptation to the day care center, the child may present various manifestations, such as crying, changes in sleep, shouting, moodiness, passivity and aggression, as well as physical reactions such as fever, diarrhea and vomiting. It is noteworthy that these different signs may indicate problems in adaptation, even in the absence of crying⁽⁷⁾. As an example of the implications of this process on child health, a US study found that during the 10-week transition to a new child care setting, children experienced a significant increase in cortisol (a hormone released by the body in response to physiological stress) between mornings and afternoons on childcare days compared to the typical daytime decline observed at home⁽⁵⁾.

Thus, it is inferred that there are factors that facilitate and/or hinder the process of adaptation of the child in the day care center and,

consequently, may interfere with the health and the development itself of the child. This aspect points to the need for these factor to be considered by health professionals. The constant dialogue between the health and education field in matters related to day care is necessary, and it must be done through a joint work that can fully meet the needs of the children and their families⁽⁸⁾. However, research in the health area, including nursing, about the child's transition from home to a day care center is still incipient⁽⁹⁾.

Yet, in order to promote an environment that addresses the health needs of children and their families, the participation of nurses is considered important. Through care and educational practices with children, families and education professionals, nurses can contribute to the adaptation of children to day care centers.

Given the above, as child development is conditioned to internal and external stimuli/factors, recognizing that adaptation in the day care center is a multidimensional process and that there is a literary shortage on the subject, especially in nursing, the following guiding question emerged: What factors facilitate and/or hinder the process of adaption of children in the day care center from the perspective of early childhood professionals? In this directive, the present study had the following objective: to describe the intervening factors in the process of adaptation of children in day care centers and analyze the health demands in this process.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive research with a qualitative approach developed in the 2nd semester of 2017, whose description was based on the Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ)⁽¹⁰⁾. Data production took place in a municipal day care center in Rio de Janeiro/RJ, in the Campo Grande neighborhood. This kindergarten unit is composed of about 25 education professionals (kindergarten teachers and educating agents) who serve approximately 196 students from 0 to 3 years of age who are part of the nursery, preschool 1 and preschool 2 classes. Every year

they receive children and families experiencing the process of adaptation in the day care center.

The research technique chosen was semi-structured interviews with use of digital media recording, whose script had the following questions: 1) In your opinion, what would be the adaptation of a child in the day care center?; 2) How does the adaptation of the child in this day care center (people involved, objectives and methodology) happen?; 3) How do you participate in the adaptation of the child in this day care center?; 4) What factors do you think interfere with this process (facilitating and/or difficulting factors)?; 5) What do you think about the participation of a health professional during this process? Why?

The research participants were early childhood education professionals working in the day care center for at least six months. These characteristics were the criteria for inclusion in the study. The selection of participants occurred from the contact with the head of the institution, who provided the list of professionals of the unit. Then, the professionals who were eligible were personally invited to participate in the interview, after receiving explanations about the research and its objectives from the principal researcher. Some professionals who reported shame refused to participate. However, among the participants who accepted, there was no withdrawal. Upon acceptance, a meeting was scheduled in a private place of the institution to conduct individual interviews with each of the participants.

The collected data were subjected to content analysis from the perspective of thematic analysis, with three steps. In the pre-analysis, the transcribed empirical content was subjected to repeated readings for an initial understanding of the material and primary classification, using the colorimetric tools in the text editor. In the second step, the content was effectively categorized in an analytical framework based on the clustering of textual fragments and phrases that kept the same cores of meaning, that is, the same central ideals. Also in this step, the different cores of meaning were grouped into two broad themes, which constitute the thematic categories of the research, based on a new colorimetric classification. In the third step, inferences and interpretations were made and compared/related to the scientific literature⁽¹¹⁾.

The thematic grouping by colorimetric classification with allocation of the nuclei of meaning and, later, of the themes extracted from the empirical material in analytical tables in the text editor allowed the detection of theoretical saturation of the data, that is, the identification of the reincident findings and the consistency of the statements, indicating the termination of the fieldwork in view of the absence of new elements in the collected data⁽¹²⁾.

The project was approved by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee, according to CAAE: 65892816.4.0000.5243 and Opinion: 2.074.480. Data were collected after all participants signed the Informed Consent Form (ICF) and were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of the information, according to the recommendations of Resolution 466/12 of the National Health Council. An alphanumeric code (E1, E2, E3 and so on) was used so that the participants were not identified during the research, thus ensuring anonymity.

The analysis of data resulted in the following thematic categories: **1) Factors intervening in the process of adaptation of the child in the day care center; 2) Adaptation in the day care center as a process that involves health demands.**

RESULTS

Seven female early childhood education professionals participated in the study, of which six were teachers with higher education and one was an educating agent with high school.

Factors intervening in the process of adaptation of the child in the day care center

The speeches of the interviewees made it possible to identify factors that interfere with the process of adaptation of the child in the day care center, namely: family, environment, reception, attendance to the day care center, and food. Such factors, in the professionals' view, can both facilitate or hinder the process. Thus, it is inferred that the adaptation of the child in the day care center is a complex and multidimensional process.

Regarding the family, the statements demonstrated the duality of this component, as a

factor that sometimes facilitates, but sometimes hinders adaptation.

We have a mother involved, this is something that also creates a difficulty in the adaptation of the child. But we work a week, if necessary, we work another three days of adaptation [...], because something that interferes too much, too much, is the constant presence of parents. When he keeps cherishing the child, 'poor thing, my son'. This makes it very difficult because the child is one thing with his mother, without her is another. (E3)

Sometimes you have that mother who suffers, she is suffering a lot to leave the child. This can create a problem. Or the opposite, the mother who leaves the child and doesn't want to know, she goes away, she doesn't want to stay a single minute more [...] Many times the mother herself has this difficulty, and this generates a strong insecurity in the child in this process of adaptation. (E4)

At first, the adaptation is done more with the family than with the child, because if the family passes a sense of security to the child, this child comes confident too. So, we do a work turned to the family, for this family to pass credibility and trust our work. (E1)

The statements highlight the fundamental role of the family in all the process of adaptation, and point to the extent to which they, the parents, can influence the process, either facilitating or hindering it, especially when it comes to promoting security or insecurity for the child. Hence the importance given by professionals to the presence and participation of the family in this process, evidenced as a potentially facilitating factor, as can be seen in the following excerpt.

We also try to make parents present in this period of adaptation, because for a baby it is also a very rough moment. They are breastfeeding children, there is still a very strong connection with their parents [...] So when the family member is there, and the family member participates, when the child's guardian is there together, keeping close with the children for some time, with the educators and their peers, is fundamental in my view, and it's something that I think makes it easier. (E2)

Moreover, it was possible to notice that the insertion of the child in the day care center was permeated by the need to adapt to a new space, new people and new sounds, and to a new

routine, that is, a new and unknown environment.

Adaptation of the child in the day care center are those, those first days when the child will be separated from the mother, separated from her family to know another space, a space that is not her home. It is another space where there are many people, there are other children and the sounds are different. There are many things she will have to know and, of course, she will find it strange. So she needs some time to adapt to this space. (E4)

The child's entry into space and a new routine. (E5)

Like I said, there are colors, smells, very different situations [...] from the situations she lives at home. So it is this difference that she has to get used to gradually, and it takes time and every child has her own time. There are children who will adapt quickly, easily, but others will not. (E4)

These statements show that adaptation takes time and that this adaptive period varies from child to child. In this scenario, the performance of early childhood education professionals in the adaptive process is directed to both family members and children, especially for their reception.

In this directive, the reception promoted by the preschool professionals is stressed as a factor that facilitates the adaptation process. Furthermore, another important point highlighted by the participants is the need for regular attendance.

The loss of days of adaptation [...] does not help the children to be at ease. They miss these days of adaptation when parents feel that it is not necessary to bring their child to get involved and interact with others. (E7)

What I see is the absences, because the missing the days here prevent the children to experience the daily routine here. (E6)

The goal to provide playful strategies (songs, dances, toys, magazines, books) and a tasty diet was also present in the speeches of the professionals as facilitating factors, with the aim of promoting the interest of the children and facilitating their adaptation process.

Through daily contact, a routine that includes songs, dances, caring, educating and others. (E6)

It is leaving the child at ease, presenting to her

toys, magazines, books, and talking to her, playing with her. This makes the child more comfortable. (E3)

Even with regard to food too [...] in those early days, you can even offer very delicious things. (E4)

By adopting playful resources, the professionals seek to facilitate the process of adaptation of the child in the day care center.

Adaptation in the day care center as a process that involves health demands

As for the health demands of children in the day care center, which, therefore, imply the need for the participation of health professionals, the statements showed that this would play an important role, both for the health of children and for the professionals too. Despite of this, the unit, scenario of this study, does not count on the presence of health professionals.

I think it is critical to have a health professional in the day care center involved with the health issues present here, with the health of people here, not just of children, but of the teachers as well. And today we don't such a professional here. [...] We have some occasional visits from health workers from the municipal posts, but it is insignificant, it is too rare. Those visits do not address the health issues of the day care center. (E2)

Furthermore, the education professionals interviewed highlighted adaptation as a process that involves different demands of child and family health for which it would be important to have the participation of a health professional.

The participation of a health professional would be a very good idea, because when the child comes in here, we make a survey of the health history of the child, and we ask some questions about her health, and having a professional who understands this issue is fundamental. It would be of great value. (E3)

However, in the statements about the importance of the participation of a health professional, any of the participants specified which professional should be inserted in this process. They only highlighted the type of desirable participation in the early childhood education environment, especially focused on prevention of health problems, accidents, and diseases in childhood.

It would be excellent the participation of a health professional in this process because the child has this contact with each other, they leave the family axis, she ends up acquiring some diseases. (E3)

The participation of a health professional is necessary because he could explain about the possible diseases that may occur during the permanence in the institution. (E6)

Well, I think it's very important because we know that where there are children, there is constant danger, and we are the ones who have to help many times. (E7)

Likewise, such a professional could act as a mediator in the health education of families, especially at the moment of the transition from home to the day care center, providing, for example, guidelines related to breastfeeding.

And in the adaptation, this would be another factor favoring security for everyone, for the children, and even for breastfeeding mothers, this professional could be inserted in the educational part of these problems that some mothers face in breastfeeding, or to leave the child in day care center, how is this mother going to breastfeed the child? or not, [...] so I really believe that a health professional in the day care center is extremely necessary. (E2)

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study showed that although there is a duality regarding the influence in the adaptation of the child in the day care center, the family is fundamental in the process. This agrees with the Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood Education, which recommends the presence of family members during the adaptive period, respecting the time of each child to adapt to this space⁽¹³⁾.

A study pointed out that the family positively influences the adaptive process when effective and frequent communication and cooperation between parents and educators is established. This is because this relationship will make it possible not only a stronger connection between contexts, but also caregivers will be empowered and encouraged to do their work, being more responsive and attentive to the children's behavior⁽¹⁴⁾.

A systematic literature review concluded that the day care center increases children's

intelligence coefficient and has beneficial effects on behavioral development and school performance⁽¹⁵⁾. Thus, the family needs to be instrumental in recognizing the benefits of this space for their children in order to act as a facilitator in the adaptive process.

Another result of the present study was that the environment affects the adaptation process. It is understood that the environment involves not only physical but also relational aspects for the child. An Austrian study points out that the quality of interactions offered by caregivers is crucial during the transition to day care, and for this reason, caregivers need to be well trained to assess different indicators of children's well-being and to respond specifically to a variety of possible signs of suffering⁽¹⁶⁾.

The unfamiliar environment implies challenging situations for the child that may affect their well-being. Therefore, educators should work from the perspective of providing an environment capable of stimulating the child's well-being, as this will influence not only adaptation but also learning⁽¹⁷⁾.

Children are able to behave effectively when the environment is healthy and provides them with balanced conditions in terms of emotional, physical and social aspects. Furthermore, concern for well-being enables educators to identify the feelings experienced by the child and thus to work on issues that need to be reviewed to ensure a meaningful provision of care⁽¹⁷⁾.

However, an American study pointed out that teachers in more chaotic child care environments have fewer coping strategies and emotional regulation skills. In turn, such context is associated with lower levels of children's positive responses⁽¹⁸⁾ and may negatively interfere with the process of adaptation to day care. Thus, training professionals to deal with this type of reality is fundamental.

Reception was also considered a factor that facilitates the adaptation process. It can be said, as reported by the interviewees, that reception is related to the bond established between the child and the educator, the way this professional demonstrates to the child that she is welcome to the place, hitherto unknown to her.

In this logic, the importance of establishing positive and welcoming relationships is in line

with the literature, which indicates that the child (baby) needs a relational environment where it can feel safe. Due to its motor immaturity, the child needs care to establish a daily life, where the adult is the partner responsible for inserting the child in various contexts. This will allow the child to establish relationships that contribute to the construction and knowledge of the own identity, the outside world, and meanings⁽¹⁹⁾.

In order to establish these facilitating relationships, since the very moment of reception, it is important that the child attends the day care center on a daily basis. As evidenced in the speeches of some interviewees, absences appear as obstacles in the adaptation process.

Regarding the use of playful strategies as facilitators of adaptation to the day care center, a study pointed out that playing promotes the comprehensive development of children, once they get to know the world in which they are inserted through playful moments⁽²⁰⁾. Thus, such strategies favor the socialization and, consequently, development of the child.

Children have a specific routine in each phase of childhood. Thus, any change will be a challenge for both the family and the child who is in the process of adapting to day care. These changes that involve routine situations, such as eating, sleeping and dressing, require adaptation to the new scenario that is different from that experienced at home. To this end, the staff in the day care center need to have sensitivity and need to adopt actions to stimulate and create opportunities for involvement, learning and development for children⁽²¹⁾.

This highlights the importance of preparing and integrating education and health professionals, among them nurses, when dealing with this complex process, whether in the day care center, health unit or community, in order to support and strengthen families in this transition.

The data indicated that professionals recognize adaptation as a process that involves health demands and for this reason, it would be important to have the work of a health professional in collaboration with the day care team. However, there is an invisibility of nursing professionals in the statements of the deponents. This finding is contrary to a study conducted in São Pedro da Aldeia, in the state of Rio de

Janeiro, for the important role of nurses in day care was mentioned in this study, emphasizing their actions to promote and assist child health⁽²²⁾.

In this context, an investigation conducted in the United States of America showed that parents of young children and their teachers should be instrumentalized in healthy behaviors in the childcare environment⁽²³⁾, reinforcing the importance of interaction between the family and education and health care professionals in this educational and caring space.

A study developed in the field of nursing education in Portugal also emphasized the importance of the integration between education and health in day care centers and preschools, being nurses the agents indicated for this integration in view of their broad and holistic academic formation, aiming mainly at health promotion, growth, development and the acquisition of healthy habits. Also relevant are actions to prevent diseases and health problems and actions in case of emergencies during possible accidents. The actions involve articulation with health services, day care and family, resulting in greater safety for children⁽⁹⁾.

In this line of thought, another study highlighted that nurses need to be involved in building the integration between care and education, aiming at the health promotion of children who are in a phase of great vulnerability, in order to promote integral growth and development in an environment with the lowest possible risk of illnesses and accidents⁽²⁴⁾. This was precisely presented by the participants in the present study, although they did not make specific mention of nursing professionals in their speeches.

The reports of the professional educators also indicated an understanding of health mainly linked to the absence of diseases. They said that the performance of health professionals in day care center would be aimed at preventing and/or combating physical injuries. Therefore, the predominance of a thought based on the biomedical model of the health-disease process, of curative nature, was evident in their speeches. This, in turn, denotes the need for greater visibility of the role of nurses as health promoters in this space, because their presence

in day care centers across the country is still scarce.

The insertion of nurses in day care centers for childhood education cooperates for a favorable space for child development. Nurses have the care to the human being in a holistic way, mainly aiming at health promotion, as the essence of their professionals training. Therefore, it is considered that they are able to carry out health care and education actions with children and their families in early childhood education institutions⁽²²⁾, and particularly during the adaptation process.

Moreover, in the educational field, health should be worked on in order to deconstruct the biologicist character, advancing to a more comprehensive and contextualized understanding within the social, economic, cultural and individual determinants that influence the lives of children and their families.

It is necessary to build comprehensive health practices in early childhood education, including prevention, promotion, protection and rehabilitation of health, both individually and collectively, with a working relationship based on multiprofessional practice and interdisciplinarity⁽²⁵⁾. It is in this context that nurses should be inserted. As a member of the health team, they stand out as professionals duly qualified for the development of this work.

CONCLUSION

According to the results obtained, the adaptation of children in day care centers is influenced by multidimensional factors, which include family, environment, care, attendance, and food. It was observed that, among the factors, there was a predominance of those that facilitate such adaptation over those that hinder it. Thus, there were mentions of a real need for the presence of the family and promotion of a welcoming environment permeated by playful interventions, because these things encourage children to develop their skills and facilitate the process of adaptation.

There are demands on child and family health for which it would be important to have the participation of a health professional in this scenario, including nurses, although they were not directly cited for the exercise of this role.

Another point observed is that the understanding of health in this scenario is still linked to the biomedical model of the health-disease process. This finding reinforces the need for integration between the education and health field in day care centers, and especially during the phase of adaptation, with the effective participation of a

health professional, either in the space of the day care center itself or in the health services available in the community. In this sense, it is noteworthy that the performance of nurses in day care still needs to gain strength and political and social visibility.

AS DEMANDAS EM SAÚDE DE CRIANÇAS NO PROCESSO DE ADAPTAÇÃO NA CRECHE: CONTRIBUIÇÕES DA ENFERMAGEM

RESUMO

Introdução: a adaptação na creche precisa ser analisada sob a ótica da saúde como um elemento-chave para a proteção de uma infância saudável. **Objetivos:** descrever os fatores intervenientes no processo de adaptação da criança na creche e analisar as demandas em saúde nesse processo. **Métodos:** pesquisa descritiva, de abordagem qualitativa, realizada em uma creche municipal do Rio de Janeiro/RJ, Brasil, com sete profissionais de educação infantil, por meio de entrevista semiestruturada. Os dados foram submetidos à análise temática. **Resultados:** os achados apontaram que família, ambiente, acolhimento, frequência na creche e alimentação são fatores que interferem na adaptação da criança na creche. Há demandas em saúde da criança e da família para as quais seria importante ter a participação de um profissional de saúde, incluindo o enfermeiro. Contudo, a compreensão de saúde ainda é vinculada ao modelo biomédico do processo saúde-doença. **Conclusões:** a adaptação na creche é influenciada por fatores multidimensionais que incluem as relações interpessoais estabelecidas nesse ambiente. A atuação do enfermeiro na creche ainda precisa ganhar força e visibilidade política e social.

Palavras-chave: Saúde da Criança. Creche. Desenvolvimento Infantil. Promoção da Saúde. Enfermagem.

LAS DEMANDAS EN SALUD DE NIÑOS EN EL PROCESO DE ADAPTACIÓN EN LA GUARDERÍA: CONTRIBUCIONES DE LA ENFERMERÍA

RESUMEN

Introducción: la adaptación en la guardería necesita ser analizada bajo la óptica de la salud como un elemento-clave para la protección de una infancia saludable. **Objetivos:** describir los factores intervenientes en el proceso de adaptación del niño en la guardería y analizar las demandas en salud en ese proceso. **Métodos:** investigación descriptiva, de abordaje cualitativo, realizada en una guardería municipal de Rio de Janeiro/RJ, Brasil, con siete profesionales de educación infantil, por medio de entrevista semiestructurada. Los datos fueron sometidos al análisis temático. **Resultados:** los hallazgos señalaron que familia, ambiente, acogida, frecuencia en la guardería y alimentación son factores que interfieren en la adaptación del niño en la guardería. Hay demandas en la salud del niño y de la familia en las que sería importante tener la participación de un profesional de salud, incluyendo al enfermero. No obstante, la comprensión de salud aún es vinculada al modelo biomédico del proceso salud-enfermedad. **Conclusiones:** la adaptación en la guardería es afectada por factores multidimensionales que incluyen las relaciones interpersonales establecidas en este ambiente. La actuación del enfermero en la guardería aún necesita ganar fuerza y visibilidad política y social.

Palabras clave: Salud del niño. Guarderías infantiles. Desarrollo infantil. Promoción de la salud. Enfermería.

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