

## **Adjustment of Babies to Daycare: Aspects that Facilitate Adjustment or not<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract:** For many children, daycare is the first regular experience of receiving non-maternal care, so that special attention should be paid to the adjustment period. This study's objective was to investigate, from the mothers' perspectives, the aspects that facilitated or did not facilitate the adjustment of six-month-old babies to daycare. Twenty mothers participated in this study. They were interviewed one month after their babies started attending a daycare facility. The answers were examined using qualitative content analysis. The factors that potentially facilitated adjustment included: the mothers' peace of mind; the babies' individual characteristics; and the caregivers' qualification. Aspects that did not facilitate adjustment were insecurity on the part of mothers and if the babies became ill. The results reveal how complex adjustment of six-month-old babies to daycare can be, as aspects concerning child development, the relationship established between mother and infant and between caregiver and infant, as well as the dynamics of the daycare center itself, are involved.

**Keywords:** daycare adjustment, child day care center, childhood development

## **Adaptação de Bebês à Creche: Aspectos que Facilitam ou não esse Período**

**Resumo:** A creche representa a primeira experiência regular de cuidado não materno para muitas crianças, de modo que especial atenção deve ser dirigida ao período de adaptação. O objetivo deste estudo foi investigar, a partir do relato materno, os aspectos que facilitaram ou não a adaptação de bebês à creche aos seis meses de idade. Participaram 20 mães que foram entrevistadas um mês após o início da adaptação dos filhos à creche. As respostas foram examinadas através de análise de conteúdo qualitativa. Como possíveis facilitadores da adaptação foram ressaltados a tranquilidade materna, aspectos individuais dos bebês e a qualificação profissional das educadoras. Quanto aos aspectos não facilitadores foram ressaltados o sentimento de insegurança materna, bem como o adoecimento do bebê. Salienta-se para a complexidade da adaptação à creche aos seis meses de idade por envolver aspectos específicos do desenvolvimento do bebê, da relação mãe-bebê e educadora-bebê e da dinâmica da creche.

**Palavras-chave:** ajustamento escolar, creches, desenvolvimento infantil

## **Adaptación a la Guardería: Factores que Facilitan o no este Período**

**Resumen:** El jardín infantil es la primera experiencia regular de cuidado no maternal para muchos niños, por lo que debe prestarse especial atención al periodo de adaptación. El objetivo de este estudio fue investigar los factores que facilitaron o no la adaptación de los bebés al jardín infantil a los seis meses de edad. Se incluyeron 20 madres entrevistadas un mes después del inicio de la adaptación del niño. Las respuestas fueron examinadas a través de análisis cualitativo de contenido. Como posibles facilitadores se destacaron la tranquilidad de la madre, aspectos individuales de los bebés, y la calificación de los docentes. Con respecto a los aspectos que no facilitan la adaptación fueron destacados el sentimiento de inseguridad de la madre, y que el bebé se enferme. Los resultados apuntan a la complejidad de la adaptación al jardín infantil a los seis meses de edad, referidos a aspectos del desarrollo del niño, la relación madre-hijo y profesor-bebé, y la dinámica del jardín infantil.

**Palabras clave:** adaptación escolar, jardines infantiles, desarrollo infantil

The need for childcare grows considerably every year. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2015), the number of children enrolled in daycare centers (ages from zero to three

years old) and in preschools (ages from four to five years old) increased by 64% worldwide between 1999 and 2012. The Brazilian context has followed this trend, as enrollment in daycare centers increased by 42% in Brazil from 2007 to 2013 (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira [INEP], 2014). The goal of the Brazilian Federal Government is to provide daycare service to 50% of the children aged between zero and three years old by 2024 (Observatório do Plano Nacional da Educação [PNE], 2014), indicating that expressive growth is expected in the number of

<sup>1</sup>Financial Support: Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES, Grant No. 23038.009963/2010-27) and National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq, Grant No. 150512/2017-1).

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children attending daycare centers over the next several years. Therefore, special attention should be paid to the amount of time required by a child to adapt to daycare, considering that such a childcare setting is often the first regular experience a child has receiving non-maternal childcare (Datler, Ereky-Stevens, Hover-Reisner, & Malmberg, 2012).

Note that there is no consensus among authors in regard to the term “adjustment period” itself. Vasconcellos, Seabra, Eisenberg and Moreira (2012), for instance, talk about “daycare entry process” instead of adjustment period, while other authors use the term “transition to daycare” (Ahnert, Gunnar, Lamb, & Barthel, 2004; Datler et al., 2012; Peixoto et al., 2014; Zhang, 2015). In this study, the term “daycare adjustment period” or simply “daycare adjustment” is used, because these are the terms most frequently used in daycare centers and even in the literature (Bang, 2014; Bossi, Soares, Lopes, & Piccinini, 2014). Note, however, that when we use the term “period”, we do not consider that adjustment takes place in a predetermined period of time. Adjustment is understood here as a process, as it is reinitiated whenever situations emerge, such as when children return after weekends, vacations, and whenever children become ill, caregivers are replaced, or a new peer arrives, among other situations (Vitória & Rossetti-Ferreira, 1993). Additionally, the adjustment process does not involve child and family only. The daycare center and its caregivers are involved in the process because the particularities of each baby have to be addressed; allowing a more flexible routine during this time is important.

Therefore, when we consider a child’s first year of life, gradual adjustment to daycare (staying just a few hours initially and then gradually increasing the number of hours), demonstration of affection, individualized attention, respecting the pace of each child, as well as allowing the mother or another affective figure to accompany the process during the first days of adjustment, are important measures (Ministério da Educação e Cultura [MEC], 1998; Vasconcellos et al., 2012). Such aspects, however, are often neglected in such services, with the result that the context of a daycare may be stressful to young babies.

In this sense, several Dutch studies (Albers, Beijers, Riksen-Walraven, Sweep, & de Weerth, 2016; Ahnert et al., 2004; Bernard, Peloso, Laurenceau, Zhang, & Dozier, 2015) investigated cortisol levels (hormone released by the body as a physiological response to stress) among infants and children during adjustment to daycare, pre-school or other contexts of collective childcare (e.g. home-based childcare). These studies report that the environments where collective care is provided tend to be stressful to children, as cortisol levels measured in these environments were usually higher than when measured at home, suggesting that children experience a daycare context to be highly stressful. Such aspects corroborate what psychoanalysis recommends as the ideal childcare for babies (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1977; Winnicott, 1969/1994), which is usually provided at home and prioritizes the mother-infant relationship. Such ideal childcare differs in many aspects from that provided in a daycare collective environment, which highlights the importance of studies conducted in such contexts,

considering the expressive increase perceived in recent years in the number of infants cared for in daycare centers.

Based on the previous discussion, greater attention should be paid to infants when they start attending a daycare service in the first years of their lives, a time in which an extremely close bond is established between mother and baby. For instance, when we consider the first six months of age, which is the focus of this study, according to the separation-individuation theory (Mahler et al., 1977), infants are at the peak of mother-baby symbiosis and would go through the first sub-phase of a process called differentiation. This sub-phase begins around the 5<sup>th</sup> month of life and is characterized by the baby’s ability to remain alert with greater curiosity to interact with the environment. Motor development, which at this point is stronger, allows the baby’s body to be firmer, enabling the baby to sit on his/her mother’s lap and observe her face and compare her with other people. This observation allows the baby to realize differentiation of his/her own psyche from his/her primary caregiver. Mahler et al. (1977) considers that the presence of the mother is extremely important for an infant’s emotional development in terms of achieving psychological separation-individuation over the developmental process.

Therefore, together with the separation-individuation process, a corollary moment takes place for the mothers themselves (Colarusso, 1990). The mother’s own separation-individuation process is reissued and she re-signifies the relationship established with her own parents. Colarusso stresses that these aspects affect the mother-infant relationship, considering the separation-individuation process to be characterized by great complexity as it involves both the psychological world of the infant as that of his/her mother.

Note that the separation-individuation theory investigates the context in which maternal care is provided to babies and does not address childcare provided in collective environments outside the home, such as that of a daycare. In reality, there are few studies seeking to understand the experience of babies cared for by their mothers and of those cared for in daycare centers, based on the theory proposed by Mahler et al. (1977). One such study was conducted by Bossi et al. (2014), who investigated the adjustment of 13 babies to daycare during the separation-individuation sub-phases, namely: differentiation (from four to seven months), exploration (10 to 15 months), and re-approximation (19 to 21 months). Mothers and fathers living in Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil took part in interviews addressing the adjustment of their children to a daycare facility. The results review different responses of babies (e.g., crying, becoming ill, refusing to eat) and parental feelings (e.g., insecurity, mistrust, peace of mind) during the adjustment period and sub-phases of the separation-individuation process. Depending on the daycare context and the father-mother-baby relationship, the responses of babies and parental feelings contributed to promoting the adjustment of children to daycare or hindered adjustment or even stopped this process from occurring.

Different responses on the part of infants and young children are also highlighted by studies addressing daycare adjustment, which may be expressed in the form of yelling, crying, bad moods, appetite changes, resistance to sleep,

regressive behavior, isolation, passivity, aggressiveness, or health problems (Bossi et al., 2014; Datler et al., 2012; MEC, 1998; Vasconcellos et al., 2012). These manifestations may vary according to the child's temperament, the strength of the bond established between mother and infant, and age when daycare adjustment is initiated, among others. The reason for the variation is that these manifestations do not occur as a consequence of daycare adjustment only; they are expected over a child's development, considering a child's psyche is not completely developed.

Other studies also report that parental feelings may influence adjustment, so that parents need to reflect on such feelings and, whenever possible, daycare centers or pre-schools should take these feelings into account. The study by Bossi and Piccinini (in press) addressing three mothers and their six-month old babies in the process of daycare adjustment living in the city of Porto Alegre, reports that some maternal feelings seemed to favor the adjustment process. The mothers' feelings of tranquility and security in regard to the care provided by the daycare staff contributed to rapid adjustment (during the initial two weeks) without prolonged crying or other manifestations that would indicate the child was distressed (e.g., isolation, becoming ill, etc.). One can say that the responses of the babies also influenced the mothers' feelings because a relationship is established between mother and child from the beginning of life, so that the feelings of both are mutually influenced (Winnicott, 1969/1994).

In addition to the babies' and parents' aspects, the characteristics of caregivers and the quality of care provided by the daycare center, such as adult-child ratio, physical structure, routine planning, affective care, and staff qualification, tend to influence the adjustment of babies (Rapoport & Piccinini, 2001). The reason is that caregivers are supposed to provide emotional support to babies in the sense they act as substitute mothers when they meet a baby's needs, avoiding potential psychological harm due to maternal absence.

Thus, considering the previous discussion, this study's objective was to investigate how six-month-old babies adjust to daycare. In the report of mothers, we sought to identify aspects that facilitated or did not facilitate adjustment. The age of six months was chosen because most mothers in the study took a six-month maternity leave and opted to start preparing their children for daycare at the end of their leave. For this reason, we have to discuss adjustment to daycare in this age group because this is the age when a larger number of children are enrolled in daycare centers after maternity leave was extended from 120 to 180 days for some fields in which both public and private companies adhered to the "citizen company" program established in 2010. Note that this study focuses on the perceptions of mothers regarding the adjustment of their six-month old babies to daycare, which is not a very common approach, considering that studies tend to address older babies and children (Ahnert et al., 2004; Datler et al., 2012; Zhang, 2015), usually adopt observational approaches (Ahnert et al., 2004; Almeida & Rossetti-Ferreira, 2014; Datler et al., 2012), or consider the reports of daycare or pre-school caregivers (Bang, 2014;

Peixoto et al., 2014).

## Method

### Participants

Twenty mothers of six-month old babies (55% boys) in the process of adjusting to daycare participated in this study. All mothers lived in Porto Alegre or in its metropolitan area; most were first-time mothers (70%), were married or in a stable union with the infant's father; were aged between 28 and 42 years old; and had from high school (11 years of schooling) to a graduate degree (25 years of schooling) in terms of education.

The mothers were selected among those who took part in a longitudinal study called "Impact of daycare on the socio-emotional and cognitive development of children: a longitudinal study from the age of six months old to the end of pre-school years – CRESCI (Piccinini, Becker, Martins, Lopes & Sperb, 2011). The objective of that study was to investigate the impact of daycare on the socio-emotional and cognitive development of children from the age of six months old to their pre-school years. More specifically, the purpose was to compare children who attended a daycare with children who did not and then relate the results to the quality of the daycare and family environments. The participants in this longitudinal study were selected from two public daycare services available in the city of Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil. The adult/child ratio of these facilities was one adult for every four babies. Specifically for this study, all the mothers whose six-month old babies were adjusting to a daycare were selected.

### Instruments

*Interview on the adjustment of babies to daycare – mother's version* (NUDIF/CRESCI, 2011a): adjustment to daycare was investigated with this instrument, which was applied one month after the babies started adjusting to a daycare. It involves a structured interview applied in a semi-direct fashion; that is, it is composed of sets of questions addressing various aspects of the adjustment period and its effects on the baby and family, such as: (1) the responses of the baby in this period; (2) changes in behavior after the baby started attending daycare; and (3) mothers' feelings. Special attention was paid to questions that addressed the aspects that facilitated or did not facilitate adjustment of six-month old babies to daycare.

*Form addressing the families' demographic data* (NUDIF/CRESCI, 2011b). In addition to the interview held with the mothers, data contained in this form, which was applied in the study's first phase, were used to characterize the participants.

### Procedure

**Data collection.** In accordance with the procedures established for the CRESCI Project, the mothers were invited to participate in the study even before the babies started attending daycare. At this point, the mothers received

clarification concerning the study's objective, signed a free and informed consent form and filled out the *Form addressing the families' demographic data*. One month after the babies started attending daycare, the mothers were asked to respond to the *Interview on the adjustment of babies to daycare – mother's version* instrument. These interviews lasted 60 minutes on average and was audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

**Data analysis.** The responses to the interview addressing the adjustment of babies were investigated according to qualitative content analysis (Laville & Dionne, 1999). The reports of mothers, concerning the aspects that facilitated or did not facilitate adjustment of babies to daycare, were considered. Following Laville and Dionne, the interviews were explored and analyzed seeking to extract reports concerning daycare adjustment. Even though it is not a rigorous method, there are aspects that should be taken into account in order to maintain the rigor of the qualitative analysis. Based on the aforementioned authors, we followed the steps: (1) the interview's transcription was checked and compared to the interview's audio; and (2) interviews were independently and completely read by two of this study's authors in order to establish the mothers' reports that addressed aspects that facilitated or did not facilitate adjustment of babies to daycare. Doubts or disagreements were discussed by the two authors until consensus was reached (cf. Roller & Lavrakas, 2015); otherwise, a third author was consulted.

## Ethical Considerations

The CRESCI Project was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the *Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul* (Protocol No. 2010070) and the participants signed free and informed consent forms. The participants received clarification regarding the study's objective, were assured of the confidentiality of their identities and data, as well as the voluntary nature of their participation. In order to preserve the participants' identities, the reports are identified by the letter "M" (standing for mother) followed by the number of each case.

## Results

The mothers' reports addressing aspects that facilitated or did not facilitate adjustment of babies to daycare, particularly those concerning the mothers, babies or daycare, are presented here.

Most mothers (80%) reported personal aspects that facilitated the adjustment of babies to daycare. Being reassured the baby would adapt and trust the daycare was safe for the baby were the most frequent reports: "So I guess that us being calm considerably helped her to be happy there (in daycare)" (M6); "There were many mothers who became nervous; some would cry concerned with their children and I even felt guilty (she felt guilty because she was not worried) because I would leave her there feeling reassured" (M7).

Five mothers stressed they trusted the daycare staff and that it was a factor that facilitated adjustment. One of

these five mothers noted that having previously left her older daughter in the same daycare facility substantially contributed: "First, because I already know this daycare, I trust and like it. And second, they (staff) are well qualified" (M1). In this same direction, two mothers mentioned they received good references: "I know other people whose children are here, so I had already heard about this daycare and was very calm about it" (M16). Another mother mentioned that her own personal positive experience was a facilitator in the separation process: "I've always been different; I've always liked to go to school myself, so I had very positive expectations (in regard to the adjustment process)" (M17).

Many mothers (50%) on the other hand reported their own aspects that did not facilitate the adjustment of their babies to daycare. For instance, five mothers reported they felt anxious the first times the baby attended daycare, whether because they did not know if their children would like the new setting or because they had not accompanied the adjustment in the nursery room: "At the beginning we get a little distressed, like, feeling a bit anxious whether he's ok, enjoying it, or having fun. But, my perception is that he's fine, he's doing very well" (M9).

There was also one mother who felt guilty for leaving her daughter in daycare and attempted to compensate for the baby's distress by meeting all her desires at home. This aspect was stressed by the mother as a factor that did not facilitate the child's adjustment because when she would get to the daycare, there was no exclusive person to meet all her demands: "I felt really bad in the first days, so when we'd get back home I'd do everything she wanted. I'd allow her to suckle my breasts or stay on my lap for as long as she wanted. In the first week that was what happened to compensate for her crying" (M19).

In this same direction, two mothers mentioned a feeling of insecurity related to leaving the baby in daycare: "I felt a bit insecure for a while, a little anxious" (M4). Finally, two mothers stressed their desire not to be separated from their babies: "Very complicated (the first days in daycare); one reason is because you miss the baby a lot, you know? Because you're used to spend all this time with the baby so you think that she's also missing you, you know?" (M15).

In regard to the babies, most mothers (85%) reported aspects of the babies that facilitated daycare adjustment. Aspects concerning the babies' personality and temperament were the most frequent such as "*the baby is sort of independent*" (M14), happy, sociable, receptive, has good humor, calm, open to discoveries, and does not experience stranger anxiety around unfamiliar people: "I guess that because she is calm, go with people, does not have stranger anxiety" (M11); "I guess that because of the way he is, like, he's never cried when in the lap of an unfamiliar person, has always been very social, plays with everyone, and will sit in anyone's lap. So, it helped him in daycare, you know?" (M9). One mother mentioned the baby's characteristic of being able to adapt rapidly to different environments: "I guess he maybe adapts faster than others [babies]" (M5).

Other frequent reports refer to the babies not having stranger anxiety and consequently accepting caregivers and daycare: "She's never became anxious around people, not

even once” (M19); “She’s never became anxious because of the environment or caregivers” (M4). In this sense, two mothers highlighted the age their babies started attending daycare (six months old) was an aspect that facilitated adjustment and helped them to avoid becoming anxious when in contact with unfamiliar people: “Because of his age I guess, he was six and half months old when he started daycare, so it’s not an age children experience stranger anxiety” (M2). In this same sense, three mothers stressed their babies socialized with other people outside their family environment before they started attending daycare: “I guess it facilitated life with family at home, going out with my sister, nephews, friends. I encouraged that because I had already planned for him to attend daycare” (M17).

Similarly, the fact the baby did not cry during the adjustment period was highlighted by eight mothers: “The baby has never cried from the first day on, like, that was what they [caregivers] reported. He always stayed very well” (M6); “They never needed to call me; he’s never cried” (M8). One of the mothers reported that her daughter cried less over time and managed to stay well in daycare: “What I liked most was how she advanced in her adjustment. For instance, today she stayed a bit longer or cried a little less, or stayed longer on the stroller, took a sun bath and didn’t cry” (M19). In the same direction, four mothers highlighted the baby’s wellbeing while in daycare, reporting the baby was able to play, eat, interact during play, and kept their sphincter functioning routine: “Because he would poop so many times a day, he still poops, he’s never stopped pooping or peeing, or anything, because it could have an influence on it, but he eats well and suckles well” (M5); “In the second week [of adjustment], when I asked ‘did he cry?’, ‘no, he played, sucked his bottle, and ate fruit’” (M20).

Three mothers also reported their babies did not become ill during the adjustment period, which enabled them to keep attending daycare the entire period: “She never had a fever, did not need to be absent, you know?” (M14). One mother also stressed that having been successful in introducing solid food facilitated adjustment: “I guess that the fact she likes foods, that she’d started eating solid foods regularly, food besides breastfeeding, facilitated the process, because she’d stay well-fed there [daycare]” (M11).

On the other hand, most mothers (80%) reported aspects of the babies that did not facilitate daycare adjustment. Becoming ill was frequently reported, especially getting a cold, the flu, conjunctivitis, bronchiolitis and viruses: “He had bronchiolitis during the adjustment ... He ended up staying one week at home, the last week of adjustment, and we were afraid he’d not be able to go back” (M5). Additionally, nine mothers highlighted that their babies were anxious with the new environment, which was accompanied by crying. Among these mothers, one stressed that her baby’s excessive crying prevented her from staying for the entire time scheduled for the first days: “There was a day she stayed only 45 minutes because she was crying a lot” (M19). Another mother stressed that the fact her baby did not want to interact with the caregivers in the beginning did not facilitate the process: “In the beginning, when I would bring him close [to the caregivers] he’d dodge” (M20).

Additionally, five mothers stressed the babies would refuse food or show a need to breastfeed: “She still refuses bottles and some foods she was expected to try, so she more frequently refuses than accepts foods” (M18). Another aspect two mothers highlighted was the fact their babies were unable to nap in daycare: “He was unable to nap for long periods, you know? He would take short naps and I’d notice he’d come back tired or a little grumpy” (M7).

In regard to daycare, most mothers (80%) reported aspects of the daycare that tended to facilitate the adjustment of babies. Characteristics of the caregivers such as being affectionate, receptive and well qualified for childcare were the most prevalent reports: “Then, he started to wave his little arms when they’d call him, because they are very affectionate and playful” (M20).

The daycare facility, in the sense they had appropriate room for the babies, was highlighted by seven mothers: “I think that the environment allowed him to have a space to play” (M7); “I guess it’s a well lit area, there is a door that goes to the street, there are lots of toys; there are mattresses on the floor. I guess that it prevents them from feeling closed or hemmed in, so they feel like playing and interacting” (M16). In this same direction, three mothers emphasized the organization and flexibility in terms of daycare hours, which facilitated adjustment: “People were very understanding and dealt with the differences among children. And they’d be tolerant, like if I’d have to arrive at a given time, to take her to daycare a bit later because she’s still breastfeeding. They are very flexible, tolerant” (M14).

One mother also mentioned the possibility of the family accompanying the infant in the adjustment period, staying in the daycare to attend to the baby whenever necessary: “I was welcomed, like, because it’s is very good that they include the family in the child’s care, you know? This sort of adjustment process, I don’t think all daycare services allow it” (M20). Another mother stressed the availability of the staff to attend both to the baby and mother during this time of adjustment: “They [caregivers] wanted to promote integration, this meeting for the morning and afternoon shifts so the parents could know each other and talk, exchange their perceptions... It all went very well, they were always at our disposal” (M6). Finally, the attention the daycare service paid to the children’s food, in the sense of respecting the specificities of each baby, was stressed by one of the mothers: “And the food, they paid attention to the children’s nutrition, following a menu prepared by a nutritionist; I found it very good” (M12).

Nonetheless, no aspects of the daycare that did not facilitate adjustment were reported by the mothers. This may indicate the mothers were satisfied with the care provided to their babies at the service, which, as previously mentioned, presented one adult for every four children, but it may also be that the mothers did not want to mention any negative aspects of the service.

## Discussion

The results reveal various aspects that facilitated or did not facilitate adjustment of six-month-old babies to daycare, which concerned the characteristics of the mothers, babies, caregivers

and the daycare service itself. Thus, we note the complexity of the phenomenon under study because it involves not only the baby, but also other actors implicated in this period, such as the family and the staff (Bossi et al., 2014; MEC, 1998).

The most common feelings highlighted by the mothers, which were reported to facilitate the process was them being secure in relation to the baby's adjustment to daycare, influenced by the trust they had in the caregivers, previous experiences with their older children who attended the same daycare, or by the good references they received regarding the facility. These results are in agreement with the results reported by Bossi and Piccinini (in press), in which the mothers' sense of tranquility was linked to having knowledge regarding the daycare's quality of service, having received good references, and the affective treatment provided to the babies by the caregivers. Such aspects seemed to facilitate adjustment and enable that adjustment to occur in the first weeks in which babies were placed in the facility. Note that one mother mentioned that her own positive experience when she started attending school facilitated her separation from her child during the adjustment period. It seems that satisfactory aspects experienced during the mother's own process of separation-individuation were revisited in the relationship established with her child (Colarusso, 1990), which enabled mother and baby to experience adjustment without great distress.

There were maternal feelings, however, that did not facilitate adjustment, such as guilt and insecurity for having left the child in daycare, as well as anguish and concern during the initial days. Such feelings are expected during the period of adjustment of babies to daycare (Bossi et al., 2014; MEC, 1998), especially at the age of six months of age, a time when the symbiotic phase between mother and baby is strongly structured (Mahler et al., 1977). Therefore, considering this symbiosis and mutuality between mother and infant (Winnicott, 1969/1994), the mothers' feelings may influence the babies' response during the adjustment period, which may promote or hinder adjustment for both mother and baby.

Likewise, the mothers' feelings may be somewhat related to the responses of the babies during the adjustment period. In regard to the babies' aspects that facilitated adjustment, the mothers most commonly reported their babies' personality and temperament (e.g., being joyful, sociable, well-humored) and to the fact they did not present responses like crying, at least in most cases, which seemed to reassure the mothers their children were well cared for in daycare. Aspects related to the babies' ability to interact and play in daycare, as well as to maintain their eating and sphincter routines were also considered to be facilitating aspects. The literature (Bossi et al., 2014; MEC, 1998) shows that the crying response is the most common during adjustment, since this is the way children at different ages communicate. For instance, Bossi et al. (2014) investigated the adjustment of babies at different ages (four-seven, 10-15 and 19-21 months old) and reported that crying was present among children of all ages, though babies aged around six months old also presented other intense responses (e.g., isolation, becoming ill). The study also shows that crying did not impede the occurrence of adjustment because

crying subsided among most babies, suggesting that over time they managed to feel safer at daycare. Note, however, that the absence of crying does not necessarily mean the baby is not distressed, as babies tend to manifest distress in different ways (e.g., showing apathy, not eating properly, sleeping for long periods). These aspects are often neglected and not seen as an expression of suffering. In this study, the mothers reported other responses besides crying, such as becoming ill or refusing to eat, for instance.

Mothers also stressed the fact their babies did not experience stranger anxiety toward unfamiliar places or people, while some mothers believed that the age of six months old was appropriate for daycare adjustment. It seems that this characteristic of babies contributed to adjustment; however, we should note that the quality of the mother-baby relationship established to this point might have contributed to this interaction with the child's environment and was not transformed into acute anxiety when around unfamiliar people (Mahler et al., 1977). The reason is that six-month old babies may have already experienced stranger anxiety, a response that commonly takes place at eight months of age. Because children are in the sub-phase of differentiation of the separation-individuation process (Mahler et al., 1977), curiosity and comparison between the familiar and the unfamiliar prevails. When a baby finds him/herself in an unfamiliar place and does not have a reference of what is familiar (the mother or another affective figure), stranger anxiety may prevail, which is what happened in some cases.

Aspects of the babies that did not facilitate adjustment were also mentioned, especially becoming ill. However, one cannot state whether ailments took place due to a more intense contact with other people or that they were an emotional response of babies, or both. Nevertheless, this aspect appeared as a factor that did not facilitate adjustment because when babies were sick and could not attend daycare, the mothers became anxious. Such an aspect shows that adjustment should be seen as a process that needs to be restructured and reinitiated whenever a situation emerges (Vitória & Rossetti-Ferreira, 1993).

Stranger anxiety is something babies experience whenever in the face of a new environment, which is manifested through crying, difficulty interacting with the facility's caregivers, rejecting food, and having sleep problems, which were also highlighted by the mothers. Such responses are expected on the part of babies because these are the tools they use to communicate and signalize emotional and interaction issues. These responses, however, are not necessarily linked to having started to attend a daycare, as they are expected in the stage of development children are experiencing and due to their still under-developed psyche. These responses are documented in the literature addressing daycare adjustment among different age groups (Bossi et al., 2014; Datler et al., 2012; Vasconcellos et al., 2012). As these responses subside or are no longer used, a baby is considered to be well adapted to daycare. For this to happen, however, not only does the posture of mothers toward adjustment tend to influence the babies' responses, but so also does the behavior of caregivers toward mother and baby influence the process.

Additionally, it depends on the baby's own ability to adapt to a new context and everything that implies.

In this sense, the characteristics of the caregivers, such as being affectionate and attentive to babies, as well as how the daycare functions, such as having flexible hours and involving the family in the adjustment period, were considered important by this study's participants. The gradual adjustment of babies to daycare with the presence of their mothers or another affective figure is stressed in the literature as an aspect that facilitates adjustment and should be standard procedure in all daycare centers, which unfortunately does not happen yet (Ahnert et al., 2004; Bang, 2014; Peixoto et al., 2014). The reason is that a daycare center and its caregivers gradually become a reference for babies, which contributes to their wellbeing when attending the facility.

Note that the facilities that took part in this study were two public federal daycare centers, which represent only 0.2% of such facilities in Brazil (INEP, 2014). The arrangement established in other facilities concerning how the routine is organized, the physical structure provided, and the quality of the staff, may be different in other facilities, whether they are public or private. The adult-child ratio presented by the daycare facilities addressed here was one caregiver for each four babies, while the ratio most frequently found and determined by law is one adult for every six to eight babies aged from zero to one year old (MEC, 2013). Just this factor alone influences the care provided during adjustment, whether it will be more individualized or not. Such characteristics should be taken into account since the quality of the facility tends to influence the perceptions and feelings of mothers, as will the way welcoming of families and baby adjustment are organized. Therefore, it is relevant to discuss and rethink guidelines that allow up to eight babies to be cared for by one caregiver, because it somewhat restricts care procedures that consider the particularities of each child, an important characteristic when babies require their emotional needs to be met properly.

Finally, some of this study's limitations need to be reported. First, the use of interviews may have led to social desirability bias, which may have prevented mothers from reporting aspects of the daycare services that did not facilitate adjustment. Because mothers needed the service to care for their children and also needed to believe they had made a good choice, they may have restrained themselves from criticizing the facilities during the adjustment period. We suggest future studies to consider longer periods, applying new rounds of interviews three and six months after the adjustment of babies to daycare, which may bring new knowledge regarding the process. The reason for that possibility is that a daily routine is established over the adjustment period and mothers may be better prepared to offer criticism, as they will also have greater knowledge regarding the service. In this same sense, note that the interviews were held one month after the babies started adjustment to daycare, which was the period considered here as the period of adjustment (Rapoport & Piccinini, 2001). We did not keep in contact with the families in the subsequent months, which would have been interesting, since adjustment may suffer some setbacks throughout a child's development.

Additionally, note that the participants' high educational levels contributed to richer reports concerning their feelings toward and perceptions of their babies' adjustment to daycare. The model of analysis used, however, may not have captured these aspects in depth, but could have been achieved by a case study. The analysis performed separately in regard to the aspects associated with the mothers, babies and daycare services was only meant for didactic purposes, since in practice, these characteristics intertwine, so that the behavior of babies, the feelings of mothers and the responses of caregivers tend to mutually influence each other (Bossi et al., 2014). We also noticed that the mothers did not highlight aspects concerning the interactions of their babies with peers or those established with the caregivers during the adjustment period. These are important aspects mentioned in the literature (Amorim, Vitoria, & Rossetti-Ferreira, 2000) because these are relationships that take place in the daycare environment that are in addition to those already reported here. The absence of these aspects in the reports of mothers may due to the fact the babies were still too young and had a limited ability to move around, requiring their caregivers to put them close to each other in order to encourage potential interaction. Also, the fact that many mothers reported not being able to stay in the nursery room restricted their observations regarding interactions established among the children and caregivers.

This study's results reveal how complex the adjustment period is, involving aspects regarding the baby's stage of development, the mother-infant relationship, and the dynamics of the daycare itself, particularly the relationship established between caregiver and baby. It is reasonable to consider that the daycare facility has a great impact on aspects that facilitate or do not facilitate adjustment of babies in the sense that it can strengthen the first and weaken the latter, contributing to a more satisfactory adjustment of babies and families (as well as of caregivers). Similarly, the bond established between caregivers and infants enables caregivers to become affective figures for the babies, which in turn enables the separation-individuation process to continue despite the babies being away from their mothers. Thus, psycho-educational, reflexive, and sensitizing interventions should be considered in the context of daycare centers to welcome properly all those involved in the process, reassuring mothers, caregivers, and babies, as well. This way, mothers will tend to feel safer in regard to the care provided by the daycare staff and such a feeling will be transmitted and felt by babies. The caregivers themselves will benefit from these interventions and provide even more appropriate and encouraging childcare to the babies, as they feel welcomed and supported in the care they provide and in the interaction they establish with each baby.

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*Received:* Mar. 22, 2017

*1st Revision:* Sep. 15, 2017

*Approved:* Oct. 18, 2017

*How to cite this article:*

- Bossi, T. J., Brites, S. A. N. D., & Piccinini, C. A. (2017). Adjustment of babies to daycare: aspects that facilitate adjustment or not. *Paidéia (Ribeirão Preto)*, 27(Suppl. 1), 448-456. doi:10.1590/1982-432727s1201710