

## **REACTIONS GIVEN TO PEER DISTRESS AMONG 3 TO 4-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN BASED ON THE OPINION OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS**

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Understanding of the other person's emotional state and responding to it are important elements of social interactions. Prosocial responses derive from affective reactions to the other person's emotions. Children are responding to others' distress very early. They pay attention to crying in the first year of life, but at this age there is not any substantive response given yet. Because of the development of appropriate social and emotional skills in prosocial behaviour, the observer has corresponding skills to understand emotions, the ability of perspective-taking and the feeling of motivation to reduce the other person's negative mental state. Usually this appears at the age of 2 to 3 years, but in many cases delays can be observed. Children's reaction to adults' distress has been widely studied, but responses to other children's negative mental states have been investigated to a lesser degree. In our research we explored the opinion of parents and teachers, those persons who are in the immediate environment of 3- to 4-year-old children (N=57) regarding the response to another child's distress. The ongoing investigation is a part of a larger research project where, while observing children's prosocial behaviour in groups, we became aware that we don't have enough possibility to document such behaviour during the individual observation of children. During the observation of a child for a certain period, those situations don't arise which could be appropriate to observe children's reaction to peer distress. To investigate these, we elicited parents' and teachers' opinion with questionnaires. The instrument of the pilot study is a self-made questionnaire, based on previous observations and work by Phinney, Feshbach and Farver (1986). The questionnaire for parents and teachers includes 24 items about children's responses to another child's crying. The respondents evaluate the behaviour of children on 5 point Likert-scales based on given statements. We also used a family background questionnaire to investigate the effect of parental education, the influencing factors connected with the number of siblings and the role of people involved in child-rearing. According to the prior analyses, we assume that we will get detailed information about how 3- to 4-year-olds respond to another child's distress. Furthermore, we assume that parents and teachers also report positive behaviours regarding their children's responses. In the analyses the relations between the variables are discussed. The data analysis is in process, and the results will be presented at the conference.