

## **SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL ADAPTATION OF SYRIAN-ARMENIAN CHILDREN DIFFICULTIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION PROCESS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This article analyses and reveals the socio-psychological difficulties of adaptation of Syrian-Armenian children during elementary school educational activities. The effectiveness of social-psychological adaptation in the educational process is conditioned not only by the correct choice and application of educational programs, methods, means, but also by the pedagogues who implement the whole systematic educational process. The problem of the adaptation of Syrian-Armenian children in the educational process of primary classes can be called one of the most important problems of the school. It needs extensive research in terms of pedagogy and psychology and practical work in this direction. In order to study and identify the difficulties of adaptation in the educational process of Syrian-Armenian children, we have carried out research and corrective works from previously developed psychological tasks. The positive results of the research can be used to work with Syrian-Armenian children in educational institutions, reducing their social and psychological adjustment problems in the educational process.*

**Keywords:** *social-psychological adaptation of Syrian-Armenian children, educational activities, social-psychological difficulties of adaptation, anxiety, primary school age, adaptation.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the modern world, the process of adaptation of migrants has a complicated structure. It requires taking into account a number of factors such as a regional component, a social status, a family migration path, learners' age group, adaptability, school-cultural environment, the experience of intercultural interaction. Despite the increasing public and public efforts to

address the problem of migrant adaptation, the issue remains topical as it relates to national security and the country's stability. (Lavrinec E.A. 2017).

The mass influx of Syrian-Armenians faced to new challenges to Armenia, due to the fact that there were no appropriate policies to address the problems. For the study of the latter, we researched about the personality-age peculiarities of the junior schoolchildren in the works of I.Yu. Kulagina (Kulagina I.Yu. 2001), L.I. Bozhovich (Bozhovich L.I. 2008), A.I. Lipkina (Lipkina A.L. 1976), A.L. Wenger (Wenger A.L. 1994), A.Z. Zak (Zak A.Z. 1984). On the issue of school readiness, there has been done analysis of professional literature of the works of L.A. Wenger (Wenger A.L. 1985), L.I. Bozhovich (Bozhovich L.I. 1999), L.U. Vygotsky (Vigotsky L.S. 2005). Besides, we have researched the four types of social-psychological adaptation of A.K. Bolotova (Bolotova A.K. 1994), the problem social-psychological adaptation according to A. Maslow (Maslow A. 1997), Z. Freud, A. Adler (Sablin V.S. 2004).

Now let's look through some of the characteristics of junior high school students of I. You. Kulagina (Kulagina I.Y. 2001), such as their high emotional arousal. The teacher's touching words, bright colours, watching a movie, reading a fairy tale completely captivate children's attention. In contrast, the long and tedious emotionless verbal narration, the instructional sermons, tire the distraction of the primary school student. One of the characteristics of primary school students is imitation. Children of this age love to repeat and reproduce the movements and behaviours of adults. The first object of their imitation is the teacher, who becomes the highest authority for them. Unfortunately, children also imitate negative phenomena, so adults should avoid negative behaviours.

According to L.I. Bozhovich (Bozhovich L.I., 2008), junior high school student development is connected to school progress, both good and bad grades. In addition to the social motives, the main motive in the learning process is the motive of scoring highly. High grades are another source of encouragement for the young pupil, the basis of his emotional well-being is the subject of pride.

## DISCUSSION

Thus, if a child in the educational process begins to rejoice in the fact that he has learned something, so he has developed adequate motivation for the structure of educational activity.

According to M.M. Bezrukikh (Bezrukikh M.M. 2000), when a child learns successfully, he is praised by both teachers and parents, and he is as an example for other children. Moreover, in the classroom where the teacher's opinion is not only decisive but the only authoritative opinion, high or low grades provide the appropriate status.

At the same time, poorly scoring students develop compensatory motive. These are

secondary motives for educational activities, which allow to establish oneself in other spheres, such as sports, music, painting, etc. (Bugaeva N.N. 2009). According to A.I. Lipkina (Lipkina I.A. 1976), when the need of self-affirmation is satisfied in a certain field of activity, low progress does not become a source of anxiety for the student. The problem of progress, the evaluation of educational performance is central in primary school. The development of educational motivation depends on the assessment, and it is on this basis that in some cases difficult feelings and school maladaptation are followed. L.A. Wenger mentions (Wenger L.A. 1994) that school grades also have a direct effect on self-esteem. The children, focusing on the grade, consider themselves as the best among their classmates as excellent, "two recipients", "average", etc., attributing appropriate qualities to the representatives of each group. At the beginning of education, the assessment of progress, in fact, is the assessment of the person, determining the social status of the child. High self-esteem is established in excellent students. Failures of low-achieving and low grades of the students reduce self-confidence (Obukhova L.F. 1996, p. 76). But even when the child compensates for his low academic progress with success in other fields, the feeling of inferiority, the acceptance of the status of "falling behind" faces to negative consequences.

The complete development of a person supposes the formation of a sense of competence, which E. Erickson (Erickson J.G. 2000) defines the main innovation of this stage. Educational activity is the leading activity for a primary school student and if the child does not consider himself competent in it, so his personal development is distorted.

Meanwhile, new relationships are established between the children during the joint educational activity. They begin to pay close attention to the behaviour of a child sitting on the same bench next to them, interacting with classmates who sympathize with them or who they have the same interests with (Zak A.Z. 1984).

School readiness for a successful start to school determines a more conducive environment for children to develop. (Kulagina I.Yu. 2001) (Lavrinec E.A. 2017). But there are other development options that require corrective work.

When enrolled in school, it is sometimes found that a certain component of development is underdeveloped. According to pedagogues, in the process of teaching a child it is easier to develop intellectually than personal features. According to L.I. Bozhovich (L.I. Bozhovich 1999), old interests and motives lose their motivation, afterwards they are replaced by new ones. From now on, what is connected with the educational activity becomes more valuable than what is connected with the game. The junior high school student is interested in playing, he will probably play for a long time, but the game ceases to be the main content of his life. The important thing is how the child feels the system of relationships in which he is included,

whether it is a stable or strongly changing relationship. The perception of one's own place in the system of relations changes, that is, the social situation of development changes, the child appears on the verge of a new age stage (Vygotsky L.S. 2005).

Thus, in this period, blaming the child for failures, insulting, rudeness will create a complex of "not being smart" in him - self-confidence, which can accompany him throughout his life. And, of course, we shouldn't forget about the problem of social-psychological adaptation of primary school students, which also has its impact on the educational activities of primary school students. According to A. Maslow, psychological adaptation is the optimal interaction between a person and his environment. The goal of such adaptation is to achieve positive mental health (Maslow A. 1997).

In F. Freud's and A. Adler's work adaptation is presented from the point of view of the analysis of a person's defence mechanisms. Adaptation includes "conflict-related situations" and "ego-free" conflict processes (Sablin W.S. 2004). In other words, a well-adjusted person lives without a functioning disorder, with a balanced state of mind. The person is changed in the process of adaptation, the environment also changes.

Thus, socio-psychological adaptation is built on the interaction of a person and group, during which the person acts normally with the internal-external environment without serious long-term conflicts, i.e., fulfils his role, satisfies his social needs, self-affirms.

It is necessary to mention about the absence of unclear time limitation for the process of social-psychological adjustment. In this case, the ability to adaptation can be judged by its flow rate (Shabanova M.A. 1998).

The problem of adaptation of Syrian-Armenian children in the primary school education process can be considered as one of the most important problems of the school. On the way of the adaptation to the new educational reality, Syrian-Armenian children have to overcome a number of obstacles due to the difference of worldview, new social environment, communication with peers, language problem (from Armenian to Eastern Armenian), as well as teaching.

The presence of traumatic factors of migration in the social environment does not allow children to develop sustainably and safely.

The main condition for the effectiveness of the process of adaptation of the children in migrant families is the maximum possible satisfaction of their real needs. In this case, facing the needs of material well-being, comfortable living conditions, acquisition of knowledge, attitude, belonging to a certain group, social-psychological security, and confidence in the future.

The novelty of the work lies in the fact that the socio-psychological difficulties of Syrian-

Armenian children in Armenia are not studied enough in elementary education, in particular. Also, there are no scientific researches carried out yet. In the process of adapting to the new educational reality, Syrian-Armenian children have to overcome a number of obstacles which are caused by various concepts: the perception of the world, a new social environment, connecting with peers, language differences (from Western Armenian to Eastern Armenian, Russian), and coursework.

Among Syrian-Armenians children, especially school-age children, have great difficulty in adapting to a new environment, as the latter have two challenges: overcoming not only the new living and environmental conditions, but also the adaptation of the new educational environment to school curricula. In this case to the differences between the new cultural environment and the existing curricula the gap between the new language and the teaching of Russian is added. Unfortunately, we do not have secondary schools with the specialists-pedagogues with skills, experience of working with Syrian-Armenian children, which in turn makes the problem more difficult.

## **RESEARCH ORGANIZATION**

Adaptation work with Syrian-Armenian children should be consisted of four main components.

1. Special educational programs aimed at the learning of Eastern Armenian by Syrian-Armenian children: This is a really big problem, taking into account the difference between the grammatical-syntactic categories of Western Armenians and Eastern Armenians and the peculiarities of pronunciation.
2. The problem of compulsory teaching of Russian as a second foreign language: In this case schools have a lot to do, particularly in terms of making changes in the content of curricula specifically for Syrian-Armenian children.
3. Communications: The pedagogical-psychological staff of the schools should carry out serious work to improve the communication between the Syrian-Armenian children and their classmates.
4. Cultural diversity: The Syrian-Armenian child should be properly introduced to the cultural differences between the Armenians of the Diaspora living in Armenia (Bolotova A.K. 1994).

Thus, the process of social-psychological adaptation of children has been and still remains in the centre of attention of educators and psychologists. After all, the level of their educational process depends on the successful process of adaptation. The effectiveness of social-psychological adaptation in the educational process is conditioned not only by the right

choice, development, application of educational programs, methods, means, but also by the pedagogues who are involved in the whole systematic educational process.

Adaptation of children in general is a very complex long process that takes place in three directions (Morris C. 1967).

- Psychological adaptation - the child's psychological adaptation and readiness is manifested in the fact that he enjoys going to school, doing homework, and telling about school. The opposite attitude is evidenced by the child not adapting to school.

- Physical adaptation - the adaptation process to school is accompanied by the stress in the child's body. Medical research shows that children who lose weight abruptly have frequent headaches and low blood pressure and are in the process of physiological maladaptation.

- Social adaptation - this is an ongoing process of entering an individual's new social environment.

Thus, social adjustment is a condition for successful socialization of the child, which takes place in three main directions: activity, communication and awareness.

## RESEARCH BASES AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of our study is to identify the social-psychological difficulties of Syrian-Armenian children in the educational process of elementary grades. As a result of the change in the social environment of Syrian-Armenian primary school students, social-psychological difficulties of adaptation are revealed in the educational process, so far the identification of these difficulties and the implementation of corrective work will help to reduce their difficulties.

We have conducted the research with 80 Syrian-Armenian children aged 7-8, 40 girls and 40 boys.

In order to achieve our goal, we have used the following methods:

1. N. G. Luskanova "School Motivation Assessment"

(<https://psylist.net/praktikum/00173.htm>)

2. B. Phillips "Diagnosis of school anxiety level "

([http://www.miu.by/kaf\\_new/mpp/162.pdf](http://www.miu.by/kaf_new/mpp/162.pdf))

3. "My attitude towards school subjects" table, formed by us.

4. We have also implemented a training program formed by us.

The results of N.G. Luskanovait s assessment of school motivation show that there is no high level of motivation - 0%, about 5% has a good level of school motivation, about 15% has a positive attitude towards school, about 55% has a low level of school motivation, and about 25% has a negative attitude towards school. According to N.G. Luskanova's method, we have particularly singled out the questions of classmates about the relationship and attitude towards

Syrian-Armenian children, as the child's relationship is an integral part of his adaptation in the team. According to our data, Syrian-Armenian children have a negative attitude towards their classmates. To the question "Do you have many friends in the classroom", 60% have answered that they do not have, 40% – few, and many friends, no one has – 0%.

In other words, most of the respondents do not have friends in the classroom, which in turn makes it difficult for them to adapt to both at school and in the educational process.

The next question, which is related to the previous question, is the following. "Do you like your classmates?" Overall, 10% of participants like their classmates, 60% - not so much, and 30% do not like their classmates. It was found out from the above results that Syrian-Armenian children have a problem communicating with their classmates. Most of the respondents do not have friends in the class, so they do not like him or his classmates, that is why they do not have friends in the class.

Due to the fact that their motivation to go to school is low, therefore their educational motivation is also low. After N.G. Luskanova's school motivation assessment methodology, we have conducted B. Phillips's "School Anxiety Level Diagnosis" methodology for identifying participants' level of anxiety at school.

Analysing the results of the methodology, we have found out that about 25% of the total participants the level of anxiety is normal, about 60% have high level of anxiety and about 15% have not very high level.

Thus, about 60% of the majority of participants have a high level of anxiety at school.

Now let's analyse B. Phillips method "Diagnosis of school anxiety" by syndromes. About 25% of participants have a normal level of anxiety at school. High levels are distinguishable in 45% of participants. There is a very high level of about 30%. About 25% of those surveyed have had normal levels of social stress. About 75% have a high level of social stress. No one has a very high level of social stress – 0%. A normal level of frustration for the need to succeed is about 30% of those surveyed but about 65% of them have a high level. At the same time a very high level is seen at about 5% of the participants. Fear of self-expression is in the framework of the norm of 15%. A high level of fear of self-expression is expressed about 30% of the participants. 55% of the students have a very high level of fear of self-expression. About 25% of participants are afraid of testing their knowledge. A high level of fear of knowledge testing is expressed about 5%. About 70% of them have a very high level of fear of knowledge testing.

Fear of not agreeing with the opinions of others is within the norm of 0%, a high level is about 35% and only about 65% have a very high level of fear of not responding to the opinions of others! Low physiological resistance to stress management is in the range of about 15%, a



high level is present in about 20%, and a very high level is present in 65% of those surveyed.

The syndrome of the problems and fears while communicating with teachers is normal in about 15%, the high level is present in 65%, and the very high level is present in 20%.

It should be mentioned that high, very high levels of anxiety, in turn, make it difficult for a child to socialize psychologically both at school and in the educational process. Such levels of anxiety cause children to fear self-expression, problems and fears with teachers, fear of knowledge testing, which in turn is a major obstacle to their socio-psychological adjustment. As our task is to study the peculiarities of the Syrian-Armenian children's adaptation to the educational process, and as the teaching process is based on the subjects, so it is possible to find out the attitude of the students towards those subjects. To solve this problem, we have formed an typical table, which allows us to understand their attitudes about this or that subject, what they like, what they find difficult. All will allow us to identify the difficulties of Syrian-Armenian children adapting to educational subjects. Let's look through the table below.

"My attitude towards school subjects"

Table 1.

N	Subjects	I like this subject very much	I am not interested in it	I don't like it; it is difficult for me
1.	The Armenian language	15%	10%	75%
2.	Mathematics	50%	20%	30%
3.	Russian	0%	15%	85%
4.	English	85%	15%	0%
5.	Science	10%	15%	75%
6.	Reading	10%	10%	80%
7.	Physical Education	80%	10%	10%
8.	Handicraft	75%	15%	10%
9.	Music	20%	10%	70%
10.	Chess	50%	30%	20%
11.	Art	85%	15%	0%

Looking at Table 1, we can distinguish between those who like Syrian-Armenian children and those who do not. The 75% of the students-participants do not like this subject, find it difficult, 15% of them like it, and 10% are indifferent towards it. In our opinion, the negative attitude towards the subject lies in the pronunciation, written, syntactic and grammatical differences between Western Armenian and Eastern Armenian. Basing on the science, self-reading and music are directly related to the mother tongue, and, therefore, it turns out that they are equally difficult for them too. The 75% of the respondents find the subject science



difficult, self-reading goes to 80%, music to 70% of those who dislike them.

Syrian schools, unlike Armenian schools, do not teach Russian. It is a completely new, unfamiliar language for them. The picture we get while investigating are the followings: 85% do not like it, it is difficult, and 15% are indifferent. The table shows the complete opposite picture related to the English language. The reason is that in Syria they have passed that language, they are familiar with the language. 85% of them like the subject, 15% are indifferent. What refers to the subjects that are related to other types of activities such as painting, games, physical culture, chess, technology - children have a positive attitude. Afterwards we can conclude that the subjects related to written-oral language are difficult for most children and the subjects that are related to other types of activities like games, physical education, painting, fine arts, etc., they have no difficulty, they like those subjects. Their difficulty is related to the native languages especially how to read, pronounce, write.

## RESULTS

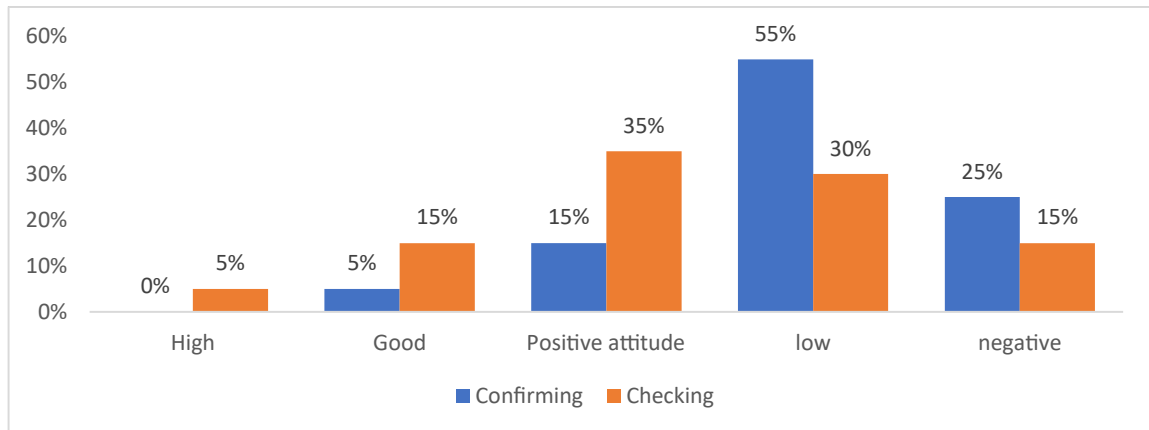
Thus, at the confirmation stage, studies show that Syrian-Armenian children have difficulty adjusting to the educational process. The following stage is a training program. The aim of the training program is to build collaborative capacity with classmates, to increase school learning motivation, and to develop mental processes. We have singled out the following issues for the implementation of the training program are the followings:

- To develop the necessary positive motivation in children;
- To develop self-analysis and self-reflection in schoolchildren;
- To give students the opportunity to build on their strengths to use it in the learning process;
- To give children the opportunity to recognize their weaknesses and try to correct them;
- To develop mental processes.

After the training program, we have conducted a checking study using the methods used in the preliminary study. The purpose of the checking study is to determine the effectiveness of the training program to reduce the difficulty of adapting Syrian-Armenian children to the educational process. Next, we will present the results of the certification and test stages through the comparative analysis.

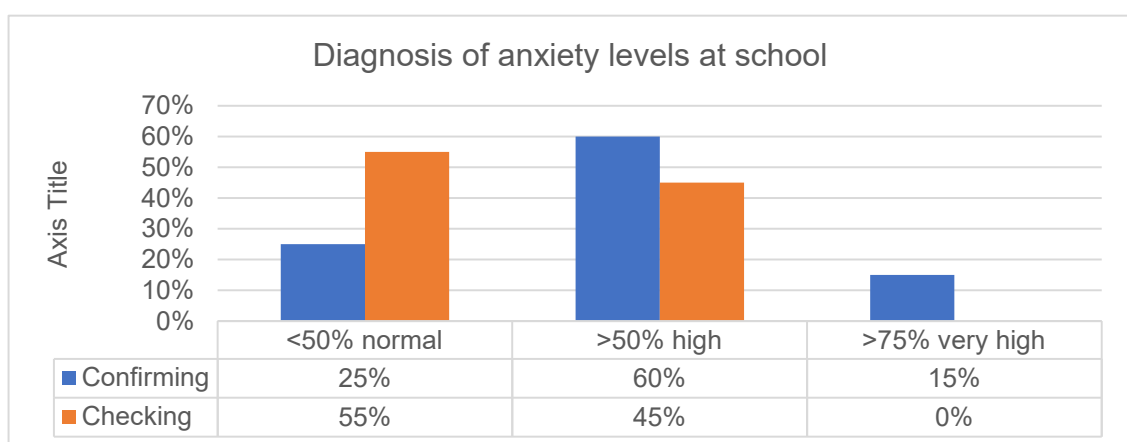
The comparative analysis of the results of N.G. Luskanova's "School Motivation Assessment" methodology shows a significant change in the results. We did not have a high level of school motivation in the certification phase, but in the test phase it has become 5%. It was around 5% in the good school motivation phase and 15% in the test phase. 15% of respondents had a positive attitude towards the school, but then it has become 35%. About

55% had a low level of motivation in the certification phase, but 30% in the test phase. What is more 25% had a negative attitude towards the school, but we have managed to reduce their number to 15%. The results show that we have managed to improve the attitude of children towards school, raising their level of school motivation.



**Figure 1. Comparative analysis of the results of N.G. Luskanova's "School Motivation Assessment" methodology**

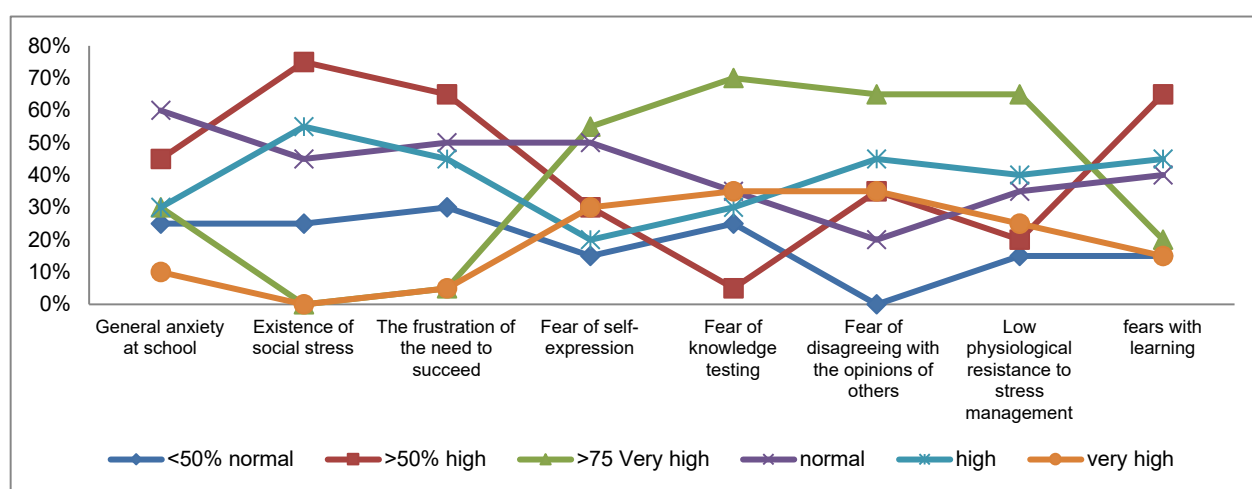
The results of a comparative analysis of B. Phillips's school-level anxiety diagnostic methodology show that there has been a positive change. In the assurance phase we had a very high level of anxiety of 15%, which in the test phase became 0%. About 60% were diagnosed with high levels of anxiety, which dropped to 45% during the testing stage. In the assurance stage, the normal anxiety level was around 25%, and in the control stage, the number has increased to 55%.



**Figure 2. Comparative analysis of B. Phillips "Alarm level determination at school" method**

Now let's present comparative analysis of the results of the B. Phillips method "Diagnosis of school anxiety" by syndromes. Thus, the diagram shows the results of the confirming stage

in blue and the test stage in green. The confirming stage was dominated by the high level, which was converted to the normal level in the test stage, becoming 60%. The prevalence of social stress syndrome was high at 75%, which we managed to reduce to 45%. The frustration of the need to succeed was at a high level in 65% of participants, but in the test stage, the prevailing level became normal about 50%. In the experimental experiment, the fear of self-expression was at a very high level of 55%, but in the test stage this figure changed to 30%, and the prevailing level of fear of self-expression became 50%. Fear of knowledge testing was very high at 70%, which was reduced to 35% during the testing phase. 65% of the participants were afraid of not responding to the surrounding opinions, which increased to 35% during the test stage. Fear of teachers had a high level of the syndrome in 65% of participants, and in the test stage it has become to in 35%.



**Figure 3. Comparative analysis of the results of B. Phillips "School Anxiety Diagnosis" method by syndromes**

Summing up the analysis of the comparative results, we can conclude that the training program we have used served its purpose and was efficient, which was to reduce the difficulties of social-psychological adaptation of Syrian-Armenian children in the educational process through the use of the program.

Thus, the hypothesis put forward by us has been proved that as a result of the change in the social environment of Syrian-Armenian primary school students, social-psychological difficulties of adaptation are revealed in the educational process, so the identification of difficulties and the implementation of corrective work will help them reduce difficulties.

## CONCLUSION

To summarize, the adaptation to the environment is the process of adapting the structure and function of organisms and organ systems. It is not only the ability to succeed in a given

environment, but also the ability for personal, psychological and social development in the future. And, of course, let us not forget that the main condition for the effectiveness of the process of adaptation of the children of Syrian-Armenian families is the maximum possible satisfaction of their real needs.

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