

Hungarian Research on the Mental Well-being of Early Primary School Children Conducted within the MindPlay Project

Background and Aim of the Research

The Hungarian national report of the MindPlay project has been completed. It examined experiences related to the mental well-being, safety and early support of early primary school children, particularly children aged 6–9, in Hungary, using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The aim of the research was to explore the emotional, behavioural, social and attention-related difficulties observed among children, the current practices of early identification and support, as well as the competence gaps and development needs that appear among teachers, school principals, special education/development professionals and parents.

The research also examined expectations regarding child-friendly MindPlay tools to be developed within the project, which should be easy to apply in practice.

Participants

A total of **106 people** participated in the questionnaire survey, from the following target groups:

- **50 teachers**
- **23 parents**
- **17 school principals or school leaders**
- **16 school psychologists, counsellors and development professionals**

A total of **50 people** participated in the focus group research, from the following target groups:

- **20 teachers**
- **12 school principals, institution leaders or deputy leaders**
- **6 parents**
- **12 development teachers, special education teachers and itinerant special education teachers**

Key Research Findings

One of the most important findings of the research is that mental health and behavioural problems are not isolated phenomena in everyday school life. Based on the questionnaire responses, **66% of teachers encounter such difficulties on a daily basis**, while a further **30% encounter them on a weekly basis**.

The most frequently reported problems include **concentration difficulties, social conflicts, aggressive or hostile behaviour, hyperactivity and impulsivity, anxiety, psychosomatic complaints and withdrawal**.



Based on the focus group discussions, participants identified children's increasing impatience, difficulties in emotional and behavioural regulation, the frequency of peer conflicts, the impact of excessive screen time, decreasing frustration tolerance, and the fact that children often find it difficult to distinguish playful situations from real aggression as particularly important challenges.

The research also highlighted that supporting children is not solely a pedagogical issue: it requires cooperation between the school, the family and support professionals. Strengthening early identification, improving communication between schools and parents, and providing practical support for teachers and professionals emerged as key areas.

Expectations Regarding the MindPlay Tools

Participants consider a MindPlay tool useful if it supports early identification, pedagogical decision-making and development adapted to children's age-specific characteristics at the same time. An important expectation is that the tool should not function as a clinical diagnostic system, but should provide support in everyday pedagogical practice for recognising and interpreting problems and selecting appropriate pedagogical responses.

The MindPlay tool should support the following main functions:

- ❖ **Early identification and decision support:** it should help identify emotional, behavioural, attention-related and social difficulties, and provide guidance on further pedagogical or professional steps.
- ❖ **Game-based and interactive operation:** it should make children's reactions, cooperation, self-regulation and social functioning observable in a motivating, age-appropriate form for the 6–9 age group.
- ❖ **Visual and easy-to-understand structure:** it should support children's involvement and teachers' quick application through image-based, easily interpretable tasks.
- ❖ **Structured feedback:** it should provide clear information that can be interpreted from a pedagogical perspective regarding the child's condition, development and support needs.
- ❖ **Simple and quick usability:** it should be easy to introduce into everyday school practice and should not require lengthy preparation, special technical knowledge or significant additional time.
- ❖ **Digital and physical accessibility:** it should be digitally based, while also being physically usable, for example through printable or tangible elements supporting classroom application.

Practical support for teachers and professionals emerged as key areas.

A Note of Thanks

The successful implementation of the research was significantly supported by the openness, professional commitment, and collaborative spirit of the parents, teachers, school leaders, special education teachers, and developmental specialists who participated in the survey. The responses clearly demonstrated that supporting children's mental well-being is a shared responsibility, and that stakeholders are willing to engage in genuine, solution-oriented partnerships to address emerging challenges.

The active participation and constructive contributions of respondents, aligned with the project's objectives, enabled the research to generate findings grounded in real needs and lived experiences.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all participants for their valuable support, time, and dedicated involvement, which were instrumental to the successful completion of the survey.

The Hungarian Team of MindPlay project



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