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ASSESSING SCHOOLCHILDREN'S SOCIAL ADAPTATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND QUALITATIVE SYNTHESIS

Abstract

Social adaptation of schoolchildren is the result of successful integration into the educational environment and personal development. Numerous studies have been dedicated to examining the social adaptation of students. Nevertheless, the evaluation of schoolchildren's social adaptation within our country remains insufficiently explored. This article systematizes tools for measuring social adaptation, its structural components, and the pedagogical interpretation of assessment results. The systematic review was carried out using the PRISMA method. Articles from the Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar databases for the period 2015-2025 were reviewed. Fifteen empirical studies were selected for qualitative synthesis based on established selection criteria. The results of the systematic review showed that the assessment of social adaptation of students is mainly based on questionnaires. The structure of measuring social adaptation is different. In general, interpersonal, behavioral, and cognitive components are often found. However, in many studies, assessment serves a diagnostic function, and its application for supporting and fostering social adaptation is limited. Qualitative synthesis identified a need to develop an assessment model and associated tools designed to continuously promote the social adaptation of schoolchildren.

Key words: social adaptation, schoolchildren, assessment tools, questionnaires, interpersonal relationships, PRISMA, systematic review.

Introduction. Changes in the modern world, including digital transformation, social inequality, and cultural diversity, impact children's education and social relationships. Research indicates that issues such as cyberbullying, digital addiction, and social isolation within the school environment negatively affect students' social relationships and emotional well-being. One of the pressing issues in the educational process is the adaptation of students to the social environment. The social adaptation of students contributes to their successful socialization and the development of life values [1].

In scientific research, social adaptation is defined as a multifaceted process. In scientific research, social adaptation is defined as a multifaceted process associated with self-determination, integration into social systems, and the acquisition of social roles [2]. Furthermore, social adaptation is frequently interpreted as a dynamic process requiring cognitive flexibility, self-awareness, and the ability to interact with diverse social groups [3]. Consequently, social adaptation is closely linked to personal and social resources.

Researchers have demonstrated a strong link between social adjustment in schoolchildren and their academic achievement, motivation to learn, and emotional stability. Studies indicate that students with established balanced social relationships are more likely to actively participate in the learning process and effectively realize their potential [4]. Consequently, social adjustment is recognized as an important educational outcome impacting the comprehensive development of students.

In studies assessing the social adaptation of schoolchildren, measurement tools are developed and their reliability and validity are tested [5–7]. Kazakhstani research primarily focuses on the social adaptation of university students or the adaptation characteristics of specific groups within the context of inclusive education [8–10]. The definitions of social adaptation and its components vary across studies. Some studies highlight differences in students' levels of adaptation and the difficulties associated with it [11, 12]. This diversity necessitates a systematic synthesis of scientific knowledge related to assessing the social adaptation of schoolchildren. A review of the existing literature reveals a lack of scientifically-based assessment methods to support social adaptation in educational practice. The relevance of this issue is also reflected in the country's education policy. As indicated in the

National Report on the State and Development of the Education System, improving assessment and monitoring systems – specifically, the early identification of developmental risks – is a key priority for the sector [13]. Assessing social adaptation allows for an understanding of a student’s integration into school life, their emotional state, social interactions, and potential difficulties during socialization. Furthermore, it can serve as an important pedagogical tool for developing support programs and evaluating their effectiveness. Therefore, it is important to determine the indicators for assessing social adaptation and to understand how assessment results are interpreted pedagogically. In this regard, this study systematically reviews empirical research on the assessment of schoolchildren’s social adaptation and qualitatively synthesizes its findings. To achieve this goal, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1. What methods are employed in studies assessing the social adaptation of schoolchildren?

RQ2. What components and indicators are most frequently utilized in the assessment of social adaptation among schoolchildren?

RQ3. What tools are used to assess social adaptation in schoolchildren?

RQ4. How are the findings of social adaptation assessments interpreted within a pedagogical context, and what limitations exist in the practice of these assessments?

Methods and Materials. The study used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) method [14]. During the review, empirical studies examining the social adaptation of schoolchildren were selected, analyzed, and synthesized. Publications from 2015-2025 were selected for the review. Databases including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ERIC were searched using keywords related to the research topic. The keywords “social adaptation,” “social adjustment,” “evaluation,” “student,” “schoolchildren,” “scale,” and “questionnaire,” combined with logical operators “OR” and “AND” were utilized to identify relevant articles. Empirical studies were selected based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria for the systematic review. Inclusion criteria encompassed studies focused on the development and application of measurement instruments for diagnosing social adaptation in students, studies specifically examining schoolchildren, and studies with full-text availability. Exclusion criteria included studies addressing social adaptation in adults or students, studies that did not assess social adaptation, theoretical reviews, and studies with insufficient data.

The study selection process followed the PRISMA algorithm (Figure 1). Fifteen studies were selected for content analysis at the conclusion of this process. The results of the analysis were summarized using a qualitative synthesis method and presented in tables. As the study was based on scientific publication data, ethical approval was not required.

Results and Discussion. RQ1. Studies assessing students’ social adaptation. Table 1 provides a detailed description of the studies included in the systematic review conducted between 2018 and 2024. Of these studies, 47% were carried out in China, 20% in Spain, 13% in Russia, 6.6% in France, 6.6% in Iran, and 6.6% in Kyrgyzstan. The studies include primary, middle, and high school students. Empirical studies were conducted in two scientific directions. The first is psychometric, and the second is applied-interpretative research. Psychometric studies focused on developing and validating tools to assess social adaptation among children and adolescents, examining their reliability and factor structure. In these studies, students’ social adaptation is defined as a multidimensional construct [6, p.106, 7, p. 395]. Researchers Hashemi and Abdullah-Parihani (2024) investigate the relationship between social adaptation and happiness in high school students. In the works of Chinese scholars, social adaptation is presented as a key indicator of mental health. Yu et al. (2024) analyzes the influence of social support and subjective well-being on the successful social adaptation of school-aged children. Romera et al. (2016) and Herrera López et al. (2016) examined the relationship between social adaptation and peer interactions. Such research utilizes tools to determine students’ degree of social adaptation. There are also studies aimed at identifying the relationship between social adaptation and related factors. Furthermore, some studies investigated the relationship between social adaptation and related factors, including interpersonal relationships, social comparison, and interactions within the school environment (e.g., Xiang et al. 2022; Miao et al. 2018). Several studies

employed established measurement tools to diagnose students’ social adaptation (Babazhanov 2021, Egorenko 2023).

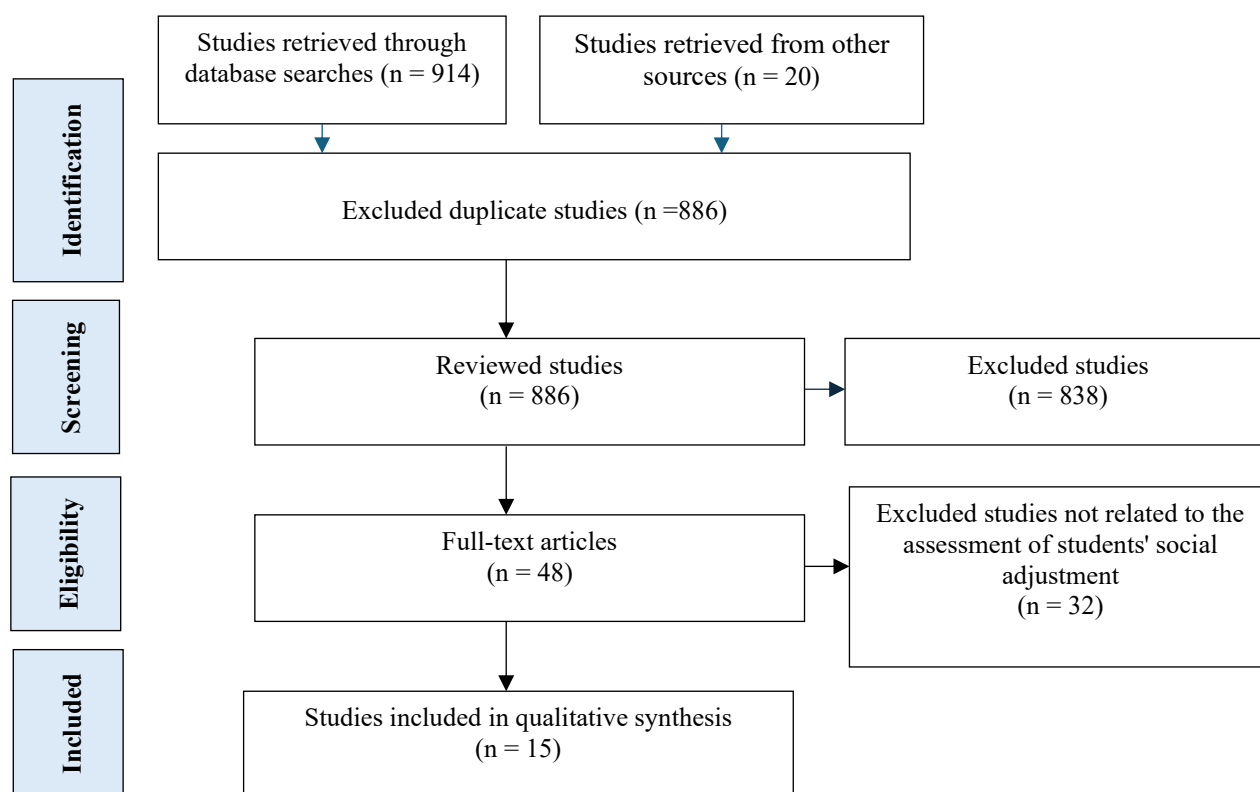


Figure 1. Stages of the selection process and quantitative indicators

Source: developed by the authors

Table 1. Description of empirical studies included in the systematic review

Author (year, country)	Sample (age/class)	Assessment tools	Structure of Social Adaptation (components / indicators)
Gavrilova et al., 2024 (Russia) [5, p. 118]	n=232, Grade 1	School Adaptation Questionnaire	cognitive activity; behavior regulation; social integration; psycho-emotional stress
Hualing Miao et al., 2021 (China) [6, p. 108]	n=63 626, school students	Social Adaptation Questionnaire	interpersonal harmony; compatibility with the environment; individuality; learning autonomy
Guo Xin et al., 2024 (China) [7, p. 396]	n=11 958, Grades 4–9	Social Adjustment Questionnaire for Grades 4–9	interpersonal; emotional; academic; self-regulation; cognitive-behavioral; adaptation to rules
Babadzhanov et al., 2021 (Kyrgyzstan) [11, p. 56]	n=447, Grades 10–11	SV Questionnaire	low; medium; high social adaptation
Xiang et al., 2022 (China) [12, p. 12]	n = 434, 11–17 years old	Adolescent Social Adjustment Assessment Scale	PSA: active coping, prosocial tendency, acting efficiency; NSA: self-trouble, social alienation, violations and social withdrawal
Romera et al., 2016 (Spain) [15]	n = 2060, 12–19 years	Social Adjustment Scale	socially competent behavior; acceptance by peers
Guo Cheng et al., 2018 (China) [16]	n = 1 400, Grades 10–11	Revised Social Adaptation Questionnaire	interpersonal friendship, participation in activities, learning autonomy, living independence, environmental satisfaction, interpersonal coordination, social identity and social vitality

Herrera López et al., 2016 (Spain/Colombia) [17]	n = 492, 12–17 years old	School Coexistence Questionnaire	Social efficacy, self-perception, and social goals are taken as indicators that influence social adaptation
Owiti & Hauw, 2023 (France) [18]	n≈543, sports school	Social Adaptability Skills Questionnaire	Social adaptation skills in the context of changing sports clubs
Yu et al., 2024 (China) [19]	n=1537, high class	Social Adjustment Diagnosis Scale	Social Adjustment
Liu Li et al., 2022 (China) [20]	n = 3217, Grades 4–11	Social Adaptability Ability Questionnaire	resilience, coping skills, recovery skills, and reflection skills.
Miao et al., 2018 (China) [21]	n = 1658, 10–11 grade	Adolescent Social Adaptation Assessment Scale	Positive and negative levels of social adaptation (PSA, NSA)
Egorenko et al., 2023 (Russia) [22]	n=2030, 9–11 years old	SDQ; CMAS; Dembo–Rubinstein Self-Esteem	peer relations; prosocial behavior; emotional symptoms; hyperactivity; motivation
Hashemi & Abdollah-Parikhani, 2024 (Iran) [23]	n=364, 15–18 years old	CPI (High School Form)	Personal adaptation and social adaptation
Aranda-Vega et al., 2023 (Spain) [24]	n = 1564, 6–12 years old	Social Skills Scale	denial, self-expression, non-opinion, relationship with peer group and expression of emotions

Source: developed by the authors

RQ2. Components of Assessing the Social Adaptation of Schoolchildren. The assessment of schoolchildren’s social adaptation is based on a multicomponent structure (Table 1). Interpersonal adaptation constitutes the primary component, accounting for 93.3% of the assessment frequency (Table 2). Studies typically measure social adaptation by assessing students’ level of integration with the school community, their ability to establish relationships with peers, group integration, and social acceptance [6, pp. 108–111; 15, pp. 3–4; 16, pp. 2–3; 24, p. 8]. This suggests that social adaptation is closely linked to a student’s capacity to effectively integrate into the system of social relations. Personality adaptation (53.3%) and behavioral adaptation (46.7%) are also important components characterizing the regulatory mechanisms of social adaptation (Table 2). Several researchers have identified students' behavior, self-regulation, adaptation to social demands, and ability to organize actions, compliance with school rules and social norms [5, p. 118; 7, pp. 396-397; 12, p. 12], as key indicators of social adaptation. Analysis reveals that social adaptation is associated with a person's ability to self-regulate, set goals, and control behavior. Academic adaptation (33.3%), emotional-regulatory adaptation (26.7%), and adaptation to the school environment (26.7%) are present at a moderate frequency, yet they are important factors supporting successful student integration into the educational environment (Table 2). In some studies, such indicators of a resource nature as coping strategies, and adaptability are considered. However, they are not systematically included in the overall structure of social adaptation [20, p. 9]. The component of social exclusion is relatively infrequent (20.0%). Most research focuses on the positive aspects of social adaptation (Table 1).

Table 2. Components of social adaptation assessment of schoolchildren (share in systematic review studies, %)

Components	Frequency
Interpersonal adaptation (communication, social interaction, social skills, prosocial behavior, peer relations, acceptance, integration, harmony)	93.3%
Self-personal adaptation (self-regulation, self-affirmation, reflection, goal setting, personal adaptation, life skills)	53.3%
Behavioral adaptation (following rules, adhering to norms, behavioral regulation)	46.7%
Academic adaptation (academic adaptation, learning autonomy, cognitive activity)	33.3%

Emotional-regulatory adaptation (emotional well-being, anxiety, emotional tension, coping, resilience)	26.7%
Adaptation to the school environment (school connectedness, school satisfaction, environmental identity)	26.7%
Social exclusion (alienation, withdrawal)	20.0%

Source: developed by the authors

RQ3. Tools for Assessing Students Social Adaptation. The assessment tools utilized in these studies can be categorized into three groups (Table 1). First, students' social adaptation is measured through questionnaires comprising multiple components or factors. For example, Miao et al. (2018) and Xiang et al. (2022) classify the social adaptation construct into positive and negative adaptation. In the study by Guo Cheng et al (2018), the questionnaire consists of eight factors: interpersonal friendship, participation in activities, learning autonomy, living independence, environmental satisfaction, interpersonal coordination, social identity, and social vitality. Second, social adjustment is assessed as a general or integral indicator. Researchers consider social adjustment as a single, subjective variable and use a questionnaire to determine its level. In particular, the study by Yu et al (2024) measures the general level of social adjustment. The relationship of social adjustment with support, subjective well-being, and psychological stability is examined. The third group includes diagnostic and psychological means that indirectly characterize social adaptation. These tools are designed to identify learning difficulties related to students' social adaptation [22, p. 158]. Research on assessment tool development rigorously tests both the reliability and validity of the tools. However, in applied research, only the reliability of the structural components is typically assessed. Notably, some studies lack psychometric characteristics, and those employing tools from earlier years are infrequent. Furthermore, studies utilizing established standardized psychodiagnostics methods often exhibit variations in the number of conclusions drawn (Table 3).

Table 3. Description of tools used to assess students' social adaptation

Author (year)	Assessment objective	Number of questions	Psychometric Rationale
Gavrilova et al., 2024 (Russia) [5, p. 119]	Early identification of difficulties adapting to school	16	High internal consistency ($\alpha \approx 0.88$); 4-factor model confirmed
Hualing Miao et al., 2021 (China) [6, p. 106]	Assessment of social adaptation	34	Very high reliability ($\alpha = 0.95$)
Guo Xin et al., 2024 (China) [7, p. 398]	Comprehensive assessment of social adaptation	31	High reliability ($\alpha = 0.88$); structural validity confirmed
Babadzhanov et al., 2021 (Kyrgyzstan) [11, p. 57]	Diagnosis of social adaptation	20	Psychometric indicators not provided
Xiang et al., 2022 (China) [12, p. 12]	Identifying positive and negative adaptation	50	Satisfactory reliability ($\alpha = 0.70$); a valid instrument
Romera et al., 2016 (Spain) [15, p. 4]	The relationship between social adaptation and bullying	8	High reliability ($\omega = 0.90$); CFA confirmed
Guo Cheng et al., 2018 (China) [16, p. 3]	Comprehensive assessment of social adaptation	35	High reliability ($\alpha = 0.93$); CFA confirmed
Herrera López et al., 2016 (Spain/Colombia) [17, p. 34]	The connection between social objectives and adaptation	9	Good reliability ($\omega = 0.81$); previously established validity
Owiti & Hauw, 2023 (France) [18, p. 1]	Assessment of social adaptation skills	17	Good reliability ($\alpha = 0.87$); factor structure confirmed
Yu et al., 2024 (China) [19, p.3461]	Diagnosis of social adaptation	20	Validated tool; $\alpha = 0.77$
Liu Li et al., 2022 (China) [20, p. 6]	Determine the level of social adaptation	30	Very high reliability ($\alpha = 0.95$); criterion validity confirmed

Miao et al., 2018 (China) [21, p. 4]	Research on the relationship between social comparison orientation and social adjustment	50	Previously confirmed for reliability and validity
Egorenko et al., 2023 (Russia) [22, p. 157]	Identifying adaptation difficulties and risk groups	25–42	Validated standardized tools were used
Hashemi & Abdollah-Parikhani, 2024 (Iran) [23, p.5]	The connection between personal-social adaptation and happiness	—	High reliability: content validity confirmed by experts
Aranda-Vega et al., 2023 (Spain) [24, pp. 4–5]	Diagnosis of social skills	33	Moderate confidence ($\alpha \approx 0.70$); factor structure confirmed

Source: developed by the authors

RQ4. Objectives for assessing students’ social adaptation and limitations of assessment practices. Research measures social adaptation for diagnostic and resource-oriented purposes (Table 3). As shown in the table, assessments aim to identify students’ levels of social adaptation and associated difficulties. Furthermore, researchers have investigated the relationship between social adaptation and psychological and social factors [12, p. 25; 23, p. 11]. Social adaptation has also been examined in relation to students’ adjustment and well-being [19, p. 3455]. Assessment results pertaining to social adaptation are presented alongside recommendations for psychosocial support and mental health services. Pedagogically, these results are important for identifying at-risk student groups. The analysis highlighted the need to consider the development and support of students’ social adaptation. Researchers cite the limitation that social adaptation outcomes are obtained solely through the survey method.

Although research on assessing the social adaptation of children and adolescents has largely employed a diagnostic approach, a psychometric paradigm has been established. Assessments of students’ social adaptation primarily aim to identify at-risk groups and levels of adaptation. We contend that the goal of social adaptation assessment should be developmental.

Qualitative synthesis has revealed the importance of interpersonal relationships among the components of social adaptation. This result demonstrates that the quality of students’ social adaptation is determined by their ability to integrate into the school environment and to establish social relationships. Therefore, assessment should be a formative process that informs pedagogical decisions aimed at supporting students’ social development.

Foreign studies provide a sufficient number of reliable and validated instruments for measuring the social adaptation of children and adolescents. However, these instruments require cross-cultural validity and reliability checks before their use within the context of Kazakhstan. Researchers acknowledge limitations associated with the direct application of foreign instruments, stemming from cultural differences and variations in education systems across countries [5, p. 124]. Studies conducted in Kazakhstan reveal a dearth of psychometrically validated instruments. Furthermore, researchers note a lack of standardized, valid, and adapted diagnostic instruments in the Russian language for identifying social adaptation difficulties in schoolchildren [22, p. 164]. Assessment using a single instrument is recognized as limited in its ability to comprehensively measure social adaptation [21, p.8]. Consequently, it is necessary to psychometrically validate instruments designed to measure students' social adaptation within the context of local schools. Additionally, integrating data from multiple sources is crucial when assessing the social adaptation of schoolchildren.

As a systematic review demonstrates, the results of assessing social adaptation are rarely utilized for pedagogical purposes in school practice. We believe that it is necessary to incorporate the use of the results of assessing students’ social adaptation into the educational process.

Conclusion. A systematic review revealed that studies on the assessment of social adaptation of schoolchildren are mainly focused on developing questionnaires and testing their validity and reliability. In studies aimed at analyzing the relationship between social adaptation and factors affecting it, multicomponent or multifactorial questionnaires are widely used to measure social adaptation. The most frequently used component in measuring social adaptation is interpersonal relationships. The majority of the instruments used have high reliability and construct validity

indicators. The general level of social adaptation and adaptation difficulties are determined through questionnaires. The systematic analysis showed that the results of the questionnaires are diagnostic in nature. There is also a lack of use in supporting and developing students' social adaptation. The questionnaires correspond to the characteristics of one country, a certain age or cultural environment. The results of social adaptation are based on students' responses. In this case, the inability of students to accurately assess their own situation may lead to unreliable responses. Therefore, there is a need to study social adaptation assessment tools in the national context and consider the integration of various tools. Some studies use variables related to social adjustment, such as anxiety and social skills, as indicators. In this regard, it is necessary to clarify the indicators for assessing the social adjustment of schoolchildren. It is also important to improve the interpretation of the results of social adjustment assessments in order to support the development of students.

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МЕКТЕП ОҚУШЫЛАРЫНЫҢ ӘЛЕУМЕТТІК БЕЙІМДЕЛУІН БАҒАЛАУ: ЖҮЙЕЛІК ШОЛУ ЖӘНЕ САПАЛЫҚ СИНТЕЗ

Аңдатпа

Мектеп оқушыларының әлеуметтік бейімделуі білім беру ортасына сәтті интеграциялануының және жеке дамудың нәтижесі болып табылады. Оқушылардың әлеуметтік бейімделуін зерттеуге көптеген еңбектер арналған. Соған қарамастан, біздің еліміздегі мектеп оқушыларының әлеуметтік бейімделуін бағалау жеткіліксіз зерттелген. Бұл мақалада әлеуметтік бейімделуді өлшеу құралдары, оның құрылымдық компоненттері және бағалау нәтижелерін педагогикалық түсіндіру жүйеленген. Жүйелі шолу PRISMA әдісін қолдану арқылы жүргізілді. 2015-2025 жылдар аралығындағы Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC және Google Scholar дерекқорларынан алынған мақалалар қарастырылды. Белгіленген іріктеу критерийлеріне негізделген сапалық синтез үшін он бес эмпирикалық зерттеу таңдалды. Жүйелі шолу нәтижелері оқушылардың әлеуметтік бейімделуін бағалау негізінен сауалнамаларға негізделгенін көрсетті. Әлеуметтік бейімделуді өлшеу құрылымы әртүрлі. Жалпы, тұлғааралық, мінез-құлықтық және когнитивтік компоненттер жиі кездеседі. Дегенмен, көптеген зерттеулерде бағалау диагностикалық функцияны атқарады және оны әлеуметтік бейімделуді қолдау және дамыту үшін қолдану шектеулі. Сапалық синтез мектеп оқушыларының әлеуметтік бейімделуін үздіксіз ілгерілетуге арналған бағалау моделін және онымен байланысты құралдарды әзірлеу қажеттілігін анықтады.

Түйінді сөздер: әлеуметтік бейімделу, мектеп оқушылары, бағалау құралдары, сауалнамалар, тұлғаралық қарым-қатынас, PRISMA, жүйелі шолу.

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ОЦЕНКА СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ АДАПТАЦИИ ШКОЛЬНИКОВ: СИСТЕМАТИЧЕСКИЙ ОБЗОР И КАЧЕСТВЕННЫЙ СИНТЕЗ

Аннотация

Социальная адаптация школьников является результатом успешной интеграции в образовательную среду и личностного развития. Многочисленные исследования посвящены изучению социальной адаптации учащихся. Тем не менее, оценка социальной адаптации школьников в нашей стране остается недостаточно изученной. В данной статье систематизируются инструменты измерения социальной адаптации, ее структурные компоненты и педагогическая интерпретация результатов оценки. Систематический обзор проводился с использованием метода PRISMA. Были рассмотрены статьи из баз данных Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC и Google Scholar за период 2015–2025 годы. На основе установленных критериев отбора для качественного синтеза были включены пятнадцать эмпирических исследований. Результаты систематического обзора показали, что в большинстве исследований оценка социальной адаптации учащихся осуществляется с помощью опросников. Структура измерения социальной адаптации различна. В целом, часто встречаются межличностные, поведенческие и когнитивные компоненты. Однако во многих исследованиях оценка выполняет диагностическую функцию, а ее применение для поддержки и развития социальной адаптации ограничено. В результате качественного анализа была выявлена необходимость разработки модели оценки и соответствующих инструментов, предназначенных для непрерывного содействия социальной адаптации школьников.

Ключевые слова: социальная адаптация, школьники, инструменты оценивания, опросники, межличностные отношения, PRISMA, систематический обзор.

Received: 18.02.2026

Approved after peer review: 22.04.2026

Accepted for publication: 29.06.2026