

Evaluating the affective needs of adopted children: demonstrations of psychomotor expressiveness

Evaluación de las necesidades afectivas en niñas y niños adoptados: manifestaciones en su expresividad psicomotriz

Josefina SÁNCHEZ RODRÍGUEZ, PhD. Senior Lecturer. Universidad de La Laguna (jsrodri@ull.edu.es).

Talia Cristina MORILLO LESME, PhD. Lecturer. Universidad de La Laguna (tmorillo@ull.edu.es).

Concepción RIERA QUINTANA, PhD. Senior Lecturer. Universidad de La Laguna (cquinta@ull.edu.es).

Abstract:

Adoption is a process of creating new emotional bonds, an encounter in which bonds are built that make it possible for the child to have the support to enable it to grow in different developmental areas. This article sets out to present the results obtained from a collective case study with 21 adopted children which describes their manifestations relating to emotional expressiveness, body language, and verbal language. To do this, narrative observations of the relational psychomotricity evaluation sessions were made, biographical interviews with the families carried out, and previous reports on the children analysed. The data were analysed using the SPSS statistics package, following prior identification of a list of categories.

The results and conclusions refer to the detection of both the needs and of the capacities of the children in this study, with particular attention to the emotional manifestations deriving from the absence (or rupture) of a primary support.

Keywords: adoption, psychomotricity, empathy, family bond, child protection.

Resumen:

La adopción supone un proceso de creación de nuevos vínculos emocionales, un encuentro en el que construir unos lazos que posibiliten al niño o a la niña disponer de un sostén que le permita crecer en las diferentes áreas del desarrollo. Este artículo pretende mostrar los resultados obtenidos en un estudio colectivo de casos realizado con 21 menores en situación de adopción, en el que se describen las manifestaciones referidas a la expresividad emocional, corporal y verbal. Para ello, se han realizado observaciones narrativas de las sesiones de evaluación en Psicomotricidad Relacional, entrevistas biográficas realizadas a las familias y análisis de los informes previos de los menores. El análisis de los datos se realizó con la utilización del paquete estadístico SPSS, tras la identificación previa de un listado de categorías.

Los resultados y conclusiones hacen referencia a la detección tanto de las necesidades

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como de las competencias de los niños y niñas de este estudio, destacando las manifestaciones emocionales derivadas de la falta (o ruptura) de un sostén primario.

Descriptor: adopción, psicomotricidad, empatía, vínculo familiar, protección a la infancia.

1. Introduction

Adoption is, fundamentally, a process of separation and re-bonding with new attachment figures. The fundamental aim of adoption is to turn a child who has been deprived of a caring and secure family environment into the child of a family where he or she can find the affection, attention, and confidence to be able to develop with new bonds that strengthen their capacities as someone who merits attention and act as a model for relating to others. The way in which the attachment relationship is established or reconfigured in the adoptive family predicts the child's well-being in its future life.

The child's invisible sufferings before adoption, shape maladjusted reactions in its relationship with itself, with others, and with the surrounding environment. Authors such as Barudy (2010), Loizaga (2010), and Múgica (2010) have noted how situations of neglect, abuse, and abandonment that the children experience in their biological families before being classified as abandoned create disorganisation and faults in the functioning of the limbic system and in the organisation and development of the prefrontal cortex.

The effects of such disorganisations, the product of pain, fear, and an absence

of affection and care, affect the sensory disturbances displayed by some of these children, on recognising and managing emotions, and on their difficulties in displaying empathy.

Traces of displeasure and abandonment start to be generated before birth, as the unborn child can already experience rejection through the nervous and chemical signals produced by the emotional state of the mother in relation to her unborn child. The stage between birth and the age of six months is also vitally important as it is a stage when unconscious memories are recorded somatopsychically, being expressed through psychomotor displays of anxiety (Barudy, 2010; Aucouturier, 2004).

The absence of appropriate support and physical care, as well as causing stressful experiences, can create difficulties in the organisation and functioning of the prefrontal areas, which play a fundamental role in regulating attention, the capacity for planning, impulse control and reflective functioning (Barudy, 2010, Loizaga and Múgica, 2010). Difficulties in coping with frustration and managing feelings of anxiety, fear, or annoyance, frequent in these children, might then be because of their lack of experiences of primary containment.

The children who arrive in adoptive families need to reconstruct their internal attachment models, something that for many of them, who have been deeply harmed, is a complex and slow process that requires considerable time after adoption. In some cases, complete resilience and the consequent reconstruction are impossible as there are flaws in the construction of their mental identity that affect their behaviour throughout their life, causing mental disorders or criminal behaviour in the adult stage (Amenábar, 2014).

The feeling of loss is an element that recurs throughout the life of any adopted person. The processing of the first loss—their biological family—is a construction that shapes the identity of these people and which is expressed and processed differently throughout their lives. The behavioural problems and emotional difficulties that adopted children display are a manifestation of the pain resulting from this loss. Irritability, sleep disorders, lack of motivation, anger, anxiety, etc. are expressions of an internal state of unease that is associated with the traces that the fact of feeling abandoned has left. Having affection and relationships is a vital issue for the human being; when this ceases to exist, as Spitz showed many years ago with institutionalised minors, it can even result in death (Spitz, 1965). A person's capacity to be resistant and try to find defence mechanisms to survive and silence these feelings, becomes a shell or armour to protect the self. These manifestations include, as common aspects of adopted children, a defiant attitude, rejecting affection, evasive responses, an overbear-

ing attitude, and constantly demanding affection.

For studying children who have been adopted or have been in foster care, we have developed our own evaluation protocol based on relational psychomotricity. This is based on putting forward and analysing the child's difficulties and capacities based on its how it acts in a situation of interactive play with a psychometrist, who uses an intervention system based on physical willingness to get involved in playing with the child, listening, and analysis of the meaning of the play, starting by establishing a relationship of empathy. This evaluation session facilitates a global and complex analysis of children's expression, which reaches its apogee in free play with an adult who accompanies the child and becomes a partner, including moments of separation, exploration of the materials with a bonding meaning and creating symbolic play and projective manipulative play. Following various authors who have worked on expression of the affection history based on psychomotricity (Aucouturier, 2004, García, 2007; Lapierre, 2015), we can detect how, through primitive physical anxieties, repetitive presymbolic and symbolic play, and motor inhibition or impulsiveness, the history of the lack of primary support experienced by these children is expressed, as well as their capacities, fears, and current difficulties in establishing relationships with others. Accordingly, this evaluation model based on relational psychomotricity allows us to detect the difficulties and potentialities each child displays, and compare it with the family's experiences, exploring their life history.

2. Method

2.1. Objectives

The aim of this piece of work is to analyse what emotional needs children in fostering or adoption situations display by reconstructing their life history and through play and analysis of their psychomotor expressiveness during an evaluation session.

2.2. Case selection

A collective case study (Álvarez and San Fabián, 2012) was performed. The

case selection was carried out using theoretical criteria (school age) and practical ones (children placed by the Adoption Team of the Department for Children of the Canary Islands' Regional Government, whose families were willing to cooperate with the project, believing that their children displayed some difficulties that could be evaluated).

The sample comprised twelve girls and nine boys. Table 1 shows the data relating to age and the current status of the adoption process through which the twenty-one children who were studied are passing.

TABLE 1. Children's' ages and current status of their adoption process.

Age (years)	Frequency	Percentage	Current status	Frequency	Percentage
3 to 4.9	6	28.6	Full adoption	14	66.7
5 to 8	8	38.1	Pre-adoption	6	28.6
8.1 to 12	7	33.3	Professional foster care	1	4.8

Source: Own elaboration.

At the time of adoption, eight of them were classified as children with special features, meaning that there were risk factors because they had lived in situations of family violence, parental incapacity, or settings with addiction. The percentage of special features (38.1%) leads us to think that an early ruling of there having been abandoned and an appropriate institutional response, can offset the consequences of initial adverse condi-

tions. Furthermore, three of the cases in the study were taking medication owing to displays of hyperactivity, impulsiveness, and aggression.

Sixteen of the children had passed through institutions and five had been in foster care with another family. Three of the children had spent under a year in institutions, while for thirteen it was over two years. This period in institutions is important as the children

spend a longer period uprooted from a family and go through another period of mourning and separation, as they have established bonds with the professionals and children in the centre which they again lose with the transition to the family (Berástegui, 2010). Many of the children continue to receive visits from their family until the adoption procedures begin. Some of the children evaluated carry on talking about their friends and the people who took care of them in the institutions they were in before adoption. Several of the families interviewed commented that their children do not remember their biological families, as they were very young at the moment of separation, but they do remember the people from the centre. A total of eight children were fostered in another family before being adopted, this measure lasting for between two months and two years.

With regards to the age at which the children were separated from their biological family and classified as abandoned, 38.1% of them were classified as abandoned before the age of 6 months, 19% between six and eighteen months, 23.8% between eighteen and thirty-six months and 19% aged over thirty-six months. These figures suggest that situations of social neglect are generally detected early, something that creates better conditions of adaptability in the children.

Most of the families who took part in this project have now been with their

adoptive children for over four years, while just two were recent adoptions with one to two years having passed since the adoption. For this project, we therefore had a majority of families whose bonds are more consolidated.

2.3. Instruments

The data collection procedures used were as follows:

– Narrative observation (following video recording) of the individual evaluation sessions, carried out with each of the children by the Psychomotricity Service of the Universidad de La Laguna. These sessions are carried out following the principles of relational psychomotricity intervention proposed by Lapierre (Lapierre, Llorca, and Sánchez, 2015). The structure of the evaluation sessions is listed in Table 2.

– Biographic interviews with the family members who are the children's guardians. The areas covered in these interviews are: the child's characteristics, situations experienced prior to the adoption process, characteristics of the adoptive family, period of adaptation, relationships with people in the child's immediate environment, school setting, and development of the child.

– Analysis of the reports prepared by the Department for Children, which contains the history of the child and its biological family, and the care measures applied.

TABLE 2. Structure of the evaluation session.

WELCOMING THE CHILD AND FAMILY:
Introducing the team, a chat with the child about its school setting, interests, and friendships. Suggesting free play presenting the materials in the room to the child. The family remains present during the evaluation.
MATERIALS PROVIDED FOR SPONTANEOUS PLAY SUGGESTED BY THE PSYCHOMETRIST:
<p>Sensorimotor play materials: mats, foam rubber cushions, wall bars, and plinth. Objective: to see the child's motor skills and the presence or absence of primitive anxieties and repetitive actions.</p> <p>Materials available for spontaneous play: round cushions to squeeze into 2 balls, 2 or 3 blankets with which they can cover themselves or modify their body, 2 foam rubber sticks, 2 hoops, 2 ropes, dolls and toys that represent scenes of eating and caring (in case they do not start symbolic play with the previous materials).</p>
FINAL MOMENT OF REPRESENTATION:
The psychometrist suggests that the child does a drawing and invents a story using the sand tray method.
NOTES ABOUT THE INTERVENTION:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The child is encouraged to speak about its relationships with peers and is given the chance to ask the psychometrist about any doubts relating to the evaluation. – The psychometrist participates in the play, observing how the child uses the materials and suggests exploring ones the child does not spontaneously use. – Creating affective dynamics of collaboration, help, exchange, and provocation while playing. – Situations are created where the child can attain physical contact with the psychometrist, both through affection and care and through opposition. – At points the psychometrist withdraws from the game, observing how the child responds and its initiative to re-establish the relationship. – During the evaluation, another psychometrist appears, taking into account the child's capacity to play and maintain relationships with two people of different sexes, observing whether complicity, recognition, affirmation, or the affectional relationship is different with the two figures separately and how the child positions itself when these figures intervene together, representing a reference couple.

Source: Own elaboration.

2.4. Data analysis

The study has considered a total of nine dimensions (history prior to adoption, characteristics of the families, process of adaptation, the family's concerns, expressing affection, body language and

verbal language, relations with the people in the child's immediate environment, school setting, and development of the child). Indicators were defined for each of these through detailed analysis of the content of the transcripts of the inter-

views, of the stories obtained based on the observations, and of the reports provided by the Department for Children.

Once the indicators had been obtained for each dimension, these were turned into variables that allowed us to establish the profile of each of the children studied through a quantitative analysis of the content. For example, the following indicators were established for the body language and verbal language dimension: problems with oral expression, speech therapy treatment, expressive level, conversational level, appropriate response in conversation, difficulties with listening, and comprehension. Each indicator was turned into a variable with different options for responding, considering the content analysis carried out (for example, for the indicator relating to the expressive level, the following options were recorded: quiet/withdrawn, quiet until they feel confident, talkative, and excessively talkative).

After this, descriptive and correlational analyses of the data obtained for the variables under analysis were performed. In this article we present the results relating to two of the dimensions analysed: expressing affection and body and verbal language.

3. Results and discussion

The methodology used is subject to observer biases (although several experts inspected it to reach a consensus about the information obtained), to the evaluation system itself based on psychomotor expressiveness (non-validated), and to

the interpretative theory used, supported by the theoretical foundation of psychomotor intervention.

The results of this research are descriptive and have been arranged according to the categories established for the interview and the analysis of the evaluation session.

3.1. Expressing affection

Physical contact is vital for establishing a bond and developing a secure attachment as it enables the child to establish healthy affectional bonds. For adopted children, the probability that they have undergone previous affectional experiences is low, considering that many of them have suffered neglect or inconsistent care, causing two different reactions in affectional manifestations. A high percentage of children become highly demanding of affection, indiscriminately and excessively, while others shun affectionate physical contact and become distrusting, as a defence mechanism and projection of the feelings of affectional rejection experienced in the biological family (Sagarna, 2010).

In the analysis of the interviews we found that sixteen children (76.2%) accept physical contact well, with various families commenting that their displays of affection are excessive. Furthermore, with thirteen children (61.9%) indiscriminate manifestations of affection towards people close to or distant from the family was mentioned, something that entails an internal status of «begging» by seeking affection from everyone. This situa-

tion is worrying for the families who fear that something might happen to their children because of this excessive trust in strangers.

Three of the cases in this research (14.3%) were averse to physical contact, one with ambivalent responses and two with selective responses, allowing one parental figure to approach but not the other. Despite this, all but one of the families believe that their children are affectionate, despite the relational tensions and difficulties that might be present.

Comparing these data with the evaluation sessions we carried out with the children, as shown in Table 3, we were able to observe that in seven cases (33.3%) there were problems maintaining physical contact, especially affectional-type contact, with the children shunning the adult's closeness. Eleven children (52.4%) were initially wary of physical contact, but became more willing to accept it as the session went on, and accepted the psychometrist's offer of situations with physical contact. Three of them (14.3%) sought out physical contact with the adult and enjoyed it.

TABLE 3. Physical contact with the adult and affection initiated by the child.

Recognition	Frequency	Percentage	Affection	Frequency	Percentage
Displeasure, avoids	7	33.3	Does not initiate	17	81.0
Enjoys, accepts	11	52.4	Affection with family	1	4.8
Enjoys, seeks contact	3	14.3	Affection with family and psychometrist	3	4.3

Source: Own elaboration.

The internal mistrust experienced by adopted children is manifested physically in their difficulties allowing themselves to be held by others or be taken care of, and we noted how these behaviours continue to be present in the relational dynamics the children establish in the psychomotricity room, revealing to us the persistence of an insecure internal attachment model that they have been un-

able to replace since adoption (Román and Palacios, 2010). In the proposed evaluation situations, we observed a strong relationship between the confidence shown by the children in letting themselves be held and the possibility of entering into relationships where they can be cared for by the adult ($r_{rho} = .714$; $p = .000$).

For these children, getting involved in a reciprocal affectional relationship

requires handing over the control and autonomy that made it possible for them to survive in an environment of emotional neglect, something that can be very threatening (Berástegui, 2010). Most of the children in this research (81%), did not initiate affectional relationships with the psychometrists during the play situation; only four of them spontaneously approached the psychometrists or their families for a spontaneous display of affection.

To analyse the type of attachment, one important indicator is how easy or difficult they find separation from their families. Finding it easy to go with strangers and ignoring the parental figures in the first moments in which the separation occurs (staying with other people for the first time, at a children's centre, at school) is one indicator. We believe that this reaction relates to a lack of bonds, while finding separation hard is more related to an insecure attachment. In our research, in the analysis of interviews with families, we found that just four children (19%) displayed no difficulties with separation, while five (23.8%) displayed a high level of anxiety when faced with these moments. According to the bond theory, these children would have an insecure bond.

During the evaluation session, we recreated, in an adapted form, the situation proposed by Ainsworth (1989) to identify the type of attachment, observing how, with their families present, the children are able to separate from them and start interacting with a stranger (the psychometrist), and whether the presence of the parental figures as security figures

is sufficient for them. For seven children (33.3%), separation from their parents was difficult; it took time to initiate and was only briefly achieved. According to Bowlby's theory (1998), this would correspond to an anxious insecure attachment. In ten cases (47.5%), the children turned to their family when they were afraid in a situation in the evaluation or sought recognition for what they were doing, and only four of them did not come over at any point in the session (19%). Turning to their family in a situation of fear or in search of some recognition enables us to think that the families are a security figure for the child, who seeks them to ask for help or share an achievement. The children who did not turn to their family during the evaluation session displayed overbearing attitudes throughout the session, probably as a learnt way of protecting themselves given that they lacked security figures in their early infancy. This type of response is proposed by authors such as Lapierre (2015) from the perspective of relational psychomotricity that explains the response of the overbearing child as one that lack this bond, and overbearing attitudes as manifestations of a damaged and fragile child who takes refuge in this attitude, avoiding its large affective need. This is an example of avoidant attachment.

Regarding being overbearing, we start from the premise that, trusting in the other involves accepting that a person cannot cope with everything on their own and that the reference adults are there to help us. In this sense, it is striking how the adopted children displayed a tenden-

cy during the evaluation session not to request help or do so infrequently; thirteen of the children (61.9%) did not ask for help at any point in the session, and eight did so on just one occasion addressing the psychometrist (38.1%). These values increase if we take the family as a reference, noting that 76.2% of cases (sixteen children) did not ask their family for help during the evaluation session, probably as they had the psychometrist's attention.

Recognition from their family and the psychometrist was sought by 66.7% of the children, and 23.8% (five cases) were strongly dependent on obtaining this recognition (see Table 4). This frequent demand relates to low self-concept and self-esteem in the adopted child, to which authors such as Mirabent and Ricart (2012) allude when they state that

in the construction of the adopted child's identity, becoming aware that he or she has been abandoned might bring with it feelings of worthlessness. If someone feels that they are worthless, this requires that, externally, they are given frequent recognition for what they do, thus reassuring them that they will not be abandoned again. Six families (28.6%) believe that their children have low or poor self-concept, with value judgments that might be made about them having an excessive impact. In the data analysis we observe that it is the children who display insecurity who need to seek recognition throughout the session ($\chi^2 = 12.131$; $gl = 6$; $p = .05$; $C = .605$). These results might relate to the need to find a locus of external control when starting from a poor perception of their own capacities.

TABLE 4. Recognition seeking and its frequency.

Recognition	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency of seeking	Frequency	Percentage
Does not seek it	3	14.3	Does not seek it	4	19.0
Just parents	2	9.5	Just once	2	9.5
Just psychometrist	2	9.5	Sometimes, with specific achievements	10	47.6
Seeks parents and psychometrist	14	66.7	Frequently, dependent on recognition	5	23.8

Source: Own elaboration.

Insecurity therefore appears to be a characteristic that is typical of adopted

children. In the evaluation sessions we observed displays of this insecurity in

fourteen children, accompanied in eight cases by examples of body language such as gripping clothing, finding a space to restrict their bodily movements, and wriggling their hands (38.1%). These physical manifestations show us the child's difficulties in constructing a psychic envelope, a secure personality, something that is manifested in a body that is emotionally self-contained by the skin (Anzieu, 2002). Eight of the families interviewed were worried by the insecurity their children displayed.

In the evaluation sessions we observed how the affirmation before the adult in oppositional or confrontational play was non-existent in five of the children evaluated (23.8%), while fourteen (66.7%) tried it but displayed fear, needing the adult to pretend to become vulnerable. The child's capacity to enter into oppositional and affirmation play reveals its internal security its achievement of autonomy from the reference figures. This type of play appears in children at around two or three years of age when they enter the personalism stage (Wallon, 2000; Lapierre and Lapierre, 1997).

These data confirm that many of the adopted children, behind their apparent extroversion and dynamism, have an insecure and dependent personality structure. In the evaluation session, fifteen of the twenty-one children evaluated use provocation (71.4%), trying to find in this game a possibility of maintaining the relationship with the adults and so affirming itself, although only two are capable from the first attempts. It is the children with the most initiative, the ones who move the quickest, who tend to display the greatest

capacity to engage in this provocation and affirmation play ($r_{\text{rho}} = .446$; $p = .049$).

For eight of the families interviewed (38.1%), their children generally appear to be dependent, needing explicit approval for their actions, again indicating the presence of insecurity.

Another of the features that define this insecurity can be found in the difficulties that the children display when facing new situations. In seven cases (33.3%), the children manifest resistance, refusal, or fear before new and unknown situations, frequently needing to control what is going to happen (66.7% of cases). This need for control might be a defence mechanism the children have found to avoid feeling anxiety, thus meeting an important need to remain alert, because of the unconscious trace that has remained that their integrity might be threatened. Aware of this situation, most of the families (76.2%) use anticipation to calm their children.

In the evaluation sessions, we saw the children display the same tendency to control when faced with their difficulties in letting themselves be surprised and led by the psychometrist's suggestion. Throughout their play and interactions, a commanding or sometimes even domineering tone is observed as the children reassure themselves that nothing bad can happen if they set the pattern of what happens in the play. Analysis of the results shows that it is the children who have a good self-concept who display the best adaptation and response to novel situations ($\chi^2 = 3.97$; $gl = 1$; $p = .046$; $C = .623$).

3.1.1. Coping with frustration:

During the symbolic oppositional play and in the general dynamic of the relationship during the evaluation session, we observed inappropriate reactions to the psychometrist imposing limits with challenging and aggressive behaviour in only two of the children (9.5%).

Ten of the families interviewed (47.6%) find it difficult to place limits on the children because they do not listen, with these limits and rules needing to be repeated frequently in twelve cases (57.1%). The child's response is in general maladjusted (47%, ten cases), with them displaying tantrums and anger that reflect their children's difficulties coping with frustration. Nine of the children (42.9%) give up or dwell on their desire when something does not turn out how they hope. Taking the sex of the children as a reference point, we observe that, in this research, outbursts of rage and aggressiveness are present in the boys and not in the girls ($\chi^2 = 8.750$; $gl = 1$; $p = .003$; $C = .685$).

3.1.2. Fear of loss:

One of the most important problems for adopted children is their difficulty processing feelings of loss and pain (Loizaga, 2010). Accordingly, we asked the families how their children handle situations relating to the death of a person or animal, the loss of objects, or illness. Also relating to these feelings, we asked how they handled separation.

Analysis of the interviews shows that five of the children (23.8%) find separation frightening and difficult when they have to stay away from home, and seven of

them (33.3%), need to take objects to feel more secure. This does not happen when they have to go to school, as habit and daily routine mean that most of them accept this separation normally. Separation anxiety shows how these children have still been unable to construct an internal model of secure attachment. Reuniting after the separation shows the anxiety experienced by some children, with them being very effusive in four of the cases studied (19%), and two children displaying anger and problematic reactions (9.5%).

Adopted children commonly worry about the death of parents and family members, and this attitude displays their fear of being abandoned again. Six of the children in this research (28.6%) frequently speak about death, with four of them (19%) displaying worry and anxiety with difficult recovery when an animal or a family member dies. In this respect, it appears significant to us that in nine cases (42.9%), the children worry excessively about the state of health of the family when one of its members is unwell.

The attitude to the loss of objects can also be an indicator of anxiety. Five of the children (23.8%) were affected excessively when one of their objects is lost or broken.

3.2. Body language and verbal expression

Experience of abandonment, the lack of an adequate affectional support and the breakages in relationships are expressed through corporeal primitive anxieties and through altered psychomotor expressiveness (Aucouturier, 2004). In this research we have found that the children most –twelve cases (57.1%)– display primitive

separation anxiety, with manifestations such as thumb sucking, clenching fists, or a need to put their hands together. Ten of the children (47.5%) displayed anxiety of lacking limits, expressed through constantly running, a lack of awareness of space and of the body, and not noticing if they hurt themselves. Of the children, 19% showed anxiety of falling resulting from a lack of support and primary containment. This causes the children to seek security by clinging onto an object, a sound, or a rhythmic activity, or relying on constant oral stimuli. The rest of the primitive anxieties analysed (annihilation, breakage, liquefaction, etc.) were only present in one or two children, and were not regarded as significant.

Twelve of the children in this research (57.1%) displayed repetitive actions during the evaluation session; as Table 5 shows, the most frequent were sensorimotor actions (42.9%), among which we draw attention to climbing up the wall bars and jumping off them, thus feeling their bodily limits as a form of self-containment. Moving around on the floor was also frequent, relating to the lack of security and the search for regressive feelings. According to Aucouturier's proposals (2004), standing up is an act of affirmation and separation from the mother figure; crawling and moving on all-fours are linked to the unconscious demand for a primary support that was missing or has been insufficient.

TABLE 5. Most common repetitive activity and sensation sought the most.

Repetitive activity	Frequency	Percentage	Sensation sought the most	Frequency	Percentage
Sensorimotor	9	42.9	Climbing	3	14.3
Manipulation	1	4.8	Crawling	2	9.5
Language	2	9.5	Experiencing self by jumping	5	23.8
Symbolic play	2	9.5	Experiencing self on the floor	5	23.8
Presymbolic play	2	9.5	Climbing up and jumping down	2	9.5

Source: Own elaboration.

In the evaluation sessions we also observed that 19% of the children displayed

stereotypical movements, the result of the difficulty in containing their emotions.

Among the most frequently observed movements, we note walking on tip toes, which is related to insecurity and the lack of a secure base.

The muscle tension of most of the children is normal, four of them displaying a more rigid muscle tension resulting from their alert and defensive state faced with relating with their setting.

Facial expression was adapted to the demands of the setting. Many of the children were smiling and happy when faced with the possibility of playing with an adult in the psychomotricity room. Only three of the children evaluated (14.3%) displayed a blank and restrained expression.

Concerning oral expression, when first adopted, fourteen children (66.7%) displayed difficulties in their ability to speak, although after a period of time living with their adoptive families these difficulties gradually disappeared, with the figure falling to 38.1% (eight cases).

When the families were asked about their child's oral expression, most of the children were described as talkative (81%), with them sometimes being excessively so with problems being quiet. In the analyses performed, we observed that there is a clear relationship between fast movements and a fast speaking pace ($r_{rho} = .684$; $p = .001$), and that the most talkative children also appear to be the ones who display the greatest capacity for initiative ($r_{rho} = .527$; $p = .017$), and request the most help from the psychometrist during the evaluation session ($r_{rho} = .478$; $p = .028$).

Seventeen children were capable of maintaining a conversation, while only 19% (four children) changed the subject frequently, lacking focus in their speech. Impulsiveness and attention demanding traits are reflected in the high percentage of children who display difficulties in letting other speak and in listening (42.9%). According to their families, practically all of the children present appropriate comprehension. The results of this research show that this ability to understand has a direct relationship with the possibility of maintaining a good rate of learning ($r_{rho} = .581$; $p = .007$).

During the evaluation session we observed how, sometimes, the pace when speaking reflected the children's inhibition or impulsiveness problems. Four children spoke with a fast pace, and there were two whose anxiety was so high that it was hard to understand them because they spoke excessively quickly. Only three children displayed a slow pace of verbal expression, something that could reflect their state of inhibition.

As for tone of voice, we observed that 33.3% of the children used a low tone when addressing the psychometrist; furthermore, in five cases (23.8%), there was poor formation of phrases and infantile speech. The analyses performed show that difficulties in oral expression were more frequent in children adopted before the age of 4, while the children who were older when adopted show fewer difficulties in oral production ($\chi^2 = 13.067$; $gl = 6$; $p = .042$; $C = .619$).

The use of the gaze as a reflection of the involvement and interest in what comes to us from the other was present

in almost all of the children, and in only one of the cases evaluated was it absent in most encounters. Despite this, we noted that a high percentage –61.9%– maintained the gaze from the distance or in structured situations but that it became evasive at moments of greatest affective involvement, physical closeness, and recognition.

4. Conclusions

Taking into consideration the characteristics of the sample in this case study, we can draw the following conclusions:

With regard to the expression of affection, we note that:

– Adopted children are on the whole insecure, even if they have spent some time with their adoptive families. This insecurity leads them to have controlling attitudes and difficulties in affirming themselves in front of others. Behind their apparent extroversion and dynamism, they display an insecure and dependent personality structure.

– A high percentage of adopted children display difficulties accepting physical and affective contact, something that generates ambivalent behaviour between seeking affection and fear of receiving it.

– A high percentage of adopted children display a great demand for recognition, revealing low self-concept.

– Fear of loss continues to be present after adoption, and can be observed through excessive worry about the state of health of family members or the loss of objects.

In the body and verbal language of the adopted children we note that:

– The children's' experiences of abandonment and the lack of a primary affectional support can be observed in the presence primitive corporeal anxieties such as separation anxiety and the lack of limits. These traces of abandonment are also present in the repetitive sensorimotor actions that enable them to ease their anxiety.

– The presence of fast movements is very frequent and is sometimes combined with a tendency to speak quickly. In this research, the children with the most initiative are the ones who display the fastest movements.

– In their form of moving around while playing we can observe that the search for regressive feelings and feelings of self-containment is frequent in adopted children.

– The children's oral expression develops favourably after adoption, although in many of them there is still verbomania, with traces of impulsiveness and demanding attention, with difficulties allowing others to speak. We also frequently encountered the presence of a low tone of voice, denoting insecurity, and a tendency towards infantilised speech.

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Authors' biographies

Josefina Sánchez Rodríguez is a PhD of Educational Sciences and Senior Lecturer of the Department of Didactics and Educational Research (area of Didactics and School Organization) of the Faculty of Education of Universidad de La Laguna (LLG). She coordinates the research group PSICOREL (Relational Psychomotricity) and the Psychomotor Service of ULL. Her main lines of research are psychomotricity and attention to the specific needs of educational support.

Talía Cristina Morillo Lesme is a PhD in Pedagogy from Universidad de La Laguna and Lecturer in the Department of Didactics and Educational Research (area of Didactics and School Organization) of the Faculty of Education of ULL. She is member of the Psychomotor

Service of ULL and of the research group PSICOREL. Her main lines of research are psychomotricity, detection and attention to educational needs and adoption and institutional care.

Concepción Riera Quintana is a PhD from the Universidad de La Laguna and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Didactics and Educational Research (area

of Research Methods and Diagnosis in Education) of the Faculty of Education of the Universidad de La Laguna. She is a member of the research group PSICOREL (Relational Psychomotricity), and also participates in the Laboratory of Education and New Technologies of Universidad de La Laguna.

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