Supporting shy children in the classroom: A review

Abstract

The modern era is characterized by rapid changes, multiple transitions, and the frequent need to adapt to new social frameworks. Consequently, in recent years there has been a rise in awareness of the consequences of shyness, which is a phenomenon that guides many aspects of a person's life (e.g. considerations in choosing a career and in forming relationships). Research in this field indicates the necessity of supporting these children from an early age in order to help them expand the scope of their experiences and realize their personal potential. This review sums up the research and the theory of support for shy students in the school framework. There are two parts to the article. The first part reviews the nature of shyness, its impact on childhood and on adult life, the causes of its development, and possible channels in the socio-emotional development of these children. The second part focuses on support of these children in educational frameworks, including teachers' outlooks on the subject, identification of the students, and support strategies on the intrapersonal and interpersonal planes. The last part describes applicable insights for the support of shy children in the classroom and directions for further research.

 In light of the rapid changes that characterize the modern era, the many social transitions, and the emphasis on teamwork and communication skills, people who are characteristically shy may experience negative feelings and encounter obstacles on the way to realizing their personal potential. The approach that advocates "leaving shy children alone" is not recommended in the theoretical literature (e.g., Greco & Morris, 2001; Lund, 2008), and the researchers call on the educators to support these children starting at an early age in order to limit the negative consequences of shyness (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Badger, Barry, Carroll, & Madsen, 2008). That being said, there are not many studies on intervention and support for these students. (Greco & Morris, 2001; Kalutskaya, Archbell, Moritz Rudasill, & Coplan, 2015; Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009). This review article intends to address this discrepancy. Its objective is two-fold: **firstly**, to integrate traditional empirical knowledge and current knowledge regarding the nature of shyness; **secondly**, based on this review, to propose informed emphases for the support of shy students in educational frameworks and directions for further research.

**Shyness and Its Consequences**

 Shyness is a personality trait tied to wariness, fear, and discomfort in social situations (Greco & Morris, 2001; Kalutskaya, Archbell, Moritz Rudasill, & Coplan, 2015; Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009). On the cognitive plane, these people are characterized by strong self-awareness and self-attributions of social difficulties. The emotional plane is characterized by a sense of anxiety in social situations (that are expressed as physiological symptoms) and the behavioral plane by restraint and reticence (Crozier, 2005). At times a closed circuit may be formed: the individual feels insecure about his social ability and is concerned about the impression his behavior will make on others; as a result he may behave awkwardly or in an inhibited way and this may lead to undesirable social results (Crozier, 2005). The behavioral aspect, therefore, is not only a characteristic but may also be a defense mechanism against social difficulties, in the sense that it is better to be quiet than to feel uncomfortable or to make a fool of oneself (protective self-presentation)) Lund, 2008; Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009).

 From the motivational point of view, shyness refers to conflict of the approach-avoidance type, which is to say that the person is interested in getting close to others, but this desire is inhibited. In this way it is different from unsociability (lack of desire to get close to another person and lack of desire to avoid it) and from active avoidance of the company of others (Asendorpf, 1990). Distinguishing between the motivations is simpler at a young age (Coplan, Prakash, O'Neil, & Armer, 2004). As the individual gets older and her defense mechanisms become more developed, the discernment becomes more complex (for example, difficulty in integrating into society may be expressed as a lack of interest in society). Indeed, it has been proposed to define the tendency toward avoidance as a combination of a high level of shyness and a low level of sociability (Coplan et al., 2013; Nelson, 2013). The present article will focus on both shyness characterized by conflict and that characterized by avoidance.

 Certain virtues are attributed to shyness, such as sensitivity, attentiveness, the ability to work independently, attention to detail, empathy, and pro-social behavior (Clain, 2011; Kalutskaya, Archbell, Moritz Rudasill, & Coplan, 2015). During the period of emerging adulthood it may serve as a shield, in that it delays the individual's participation in social activities, some of which could be harmful or dangerous (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Badger, Barry, Carroll, & Madsen, 2008). Nevertheless, research in the field indicates many aspects in which it may be a disadvantage and may negatively influence the path of development, in the present and in the future.

 Among young children who are characterized by a high level of shyness, there is a limited vocabulary (compared to children who are not shy); apparently shyness keeps them from experiences, exposure to stimuli, and speech practice (Spere & Evans, 2009). With regard to scholastic achievement, it was found that shy children reached lower achievement levels in face-to-face examinations (as opposed to testing in a group situation); the explanation offered is that in the first case they are the center of attention and experience performance anxiety (Crozier & Hostettler, 2003).

 Additional consequences are tied to negative self-perception. Already among preschoolers, shyness is tied to the child's negative perception of his social ability (Coplan, Prakash, O'Neil, & Armer, 2004). During adolescence, it was found that shy girls feel invisible to others and describe themselves in negative terms (Lund, 2008). Even these children's social ties don't necessarily make up for the difficulties. On the one hand, it was found that they have close and stable friendships, similarly to their not-shy peers, which testifies to their ability to form and keep close friendships; on the other hand, they and their friends report a low quality of connection. The explanation that was offered is that it is hard to feel close to a friend who offers little in the way of ideas, help, and support (Rubin, Wojslawowicz, Rose-Krasnor, Booth-LaForce , & Burgess, 2006). Similarly, adolescent girls characterized by shyness, including those who have friends, reported a feeling of loneliness; apparently the reason for this is that the ties lack aspects of intimacy and enjoyment (Lund, 2008).

 Phenomena identical to shyness in childhood and in adolescence were found in the period of emerging adulthood, except at this age the shyness may become more severe and lead to feelings of depression and anxiety. Shy people in their twenties perceive themselves as lower in social acceptance, outward appearance, and romantic relations; they struggle with social comparisons, with fear of negative assessment by others, and with suicidal ideations (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Badger, Barry, Carroll, & Madsen, 2008; Nelson, 2013). During this period of life it is necessary to cope with new frameworks of studies, work, and romantic relationships; avoidance of or lack of success in the tasks at hand may reinforce the sense of inability (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Badger, Barry, Carroll, & Madsen, 2008). In addition, the shy people's support system is also damaged. They report a low quality of connection with their good friends and their romantic partners (Nelson, 2013). It is likely that this is tied to the linkage between shyness and insecure romantic attachment beliefs (Rowsell, & Coplan, 2013), and these negatively affect the quality of the relationships.

**The Development of Shyness: Risk Factors and Protective Factors**

 There are personality traits that are tied to a predisposition toward shyness. Shy children tend to be quiet and restrained, to be "on their guard" and to assess the situation and their resources before action (Kagan, 1989). Different fears (such as a fear of speaking in class, participating in summer camp, or staying home alone) were found in the childhood of a major portion of the children who were characterized at a young age as having an inhibited personality (Kagan, 1989). Furthermore, it appears that these children grow up to be cautious and reserved adults; the connection is so strong that in some of the cases adult development is foreseeable based on the judgment of a preschool teacher (Asendorpf, Denissen, & van Aken, 2008). The children who showed extreme behavior connected to an inhibited personality in early childhood were those who tended to maintain the behavioral style to the highest degree (Kagan, 1989). The reasons for the continuation of the personality into adulthood may vary, among them genetic influences and differences in social problem-solving skills (Caspi, Elder, & Bem, 1988).

 Temperamental characteristics may project onto reactivity (the way in which the child reacts to different stimuli) and self-regulation (the degree to which the child succeeds in changing the intensity of his emotional arousal) (Derryberry & Rothbart, 1997). Self-regulation is considered a central factor in socio-emotional acclimation (Henderson & Fox, 1998).

 In connection with shyness, two types of inhibitions are described: sensitivity to novelty and sensitivity to negative assessment by the surroundings (Asendorpf, 1990). Differences in self-regulation among children may be tied to the differences between the two types of inhibitions: those who are characterized by sensitivity to novelty may indeed encounter difficulties again and again when meeting unfamiliar people and environments, but on the other hand they are able to function well with people they know well (in everyday language it is common to refer to the phenomenon as "a child who warms up slowly"). In other words, it is likely that in familiar situations these children's self-regulation ability is better. In contrast, children who are characterized by sensitivity to negative assessment by the surroundings may experience fears and discomfort for an extended period.

 Secure attachment is considered an important factor in the development of self-regulation (Hay, Payne, & Chadwick, 2004). For example, an overprotective (insecure – incorrect translation in source) parenting style is tied in early childhood to the creation of dependency. (Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009). Nevertheless, the direction of this connection is not clear: it may be that the lack of encouragement of independence intensifies the children's social fears and it may be that these children tend to react more to this parenting style (Coplan, Prakash, O'Neil, & Armer, 2004). In addition, there is a likelihood of the biologically based transfer of anxiety on the part of the significant adults (Hay, Payne, & Chadwick, 2004). Apparently, the combination of influence of family and peers on the child's social abilities is complex and bidirectional, and this aspect requires further research (Attili, Vermigli, & Roazzi, 2010).

 Another kind of difficulty may come about when the significant other does not recognize the child's shyness (hidden shyness) for reasons connected to the characteristics of the child or the parent, or because the parent is not exposed to situations in which the child feels shy (Spooner, Evans, & Santos, 2005). The difficulty in recognition is problematic, since it may cause the child a sense of "lack of environmental fit"; in these situations children may feel inadequate and develop low self-esteem (Spooner, Evans, & Santos, 2005). To sum up this issue, the difficulty of significant people in regarding the shy children's emotions in an inclusive manner may lead to non-inclusive responses on their part, and may make it harder for the children to develop the ability of self-regulation in social situations.

**Developmental Pathways**

 Difficulty in the regulation of fear in social situations may be tied to the appearance of various problems. The immediate risk is entrapment in a cycle of social rejection, bullying, and peer victimization. Another risk, in childhood and in adulthood, is that of the fears taking over, leading to the development of a tendency to distance oneself from social interaction (avoidance).

 Children who have difficulty regulating their fears in society tend to display irregular behaviors (e.g., lowering one's eyes or being silent for long periods). As a result, they are likely to attract negative attention. As the children grow older and the psychological construct known as "the social self" matures, children take more of an interest in other children's uncommon behaviors. Therefore, they tend to pay more notice to children who show fear in society or leave the group, **and some of them may bully them.** In this respect, the existence of a close friend might be a protective factor for shy children (such a friend could help them regulate their feelings in society). Indeed, it was found that shy children who have a close friend are perceived by the peer group as more sociable than those who don't have one; nevertheless, there are sometimes similarities between shy children and their friends, and this will make it difficult for them to protect each other in situations of peer victimization (Rubin, Wojslawowicz, Rose-Krasnor, Booth-LaForce , & Burgess, 2006). Therefore, similarity between friends could be a developmental pathway that exacerbates shyness.

 As to the possibility of fears taking over in social situations, adolescence is a particularly sensitive period. At this age there is significant development of self-perception, which becomes more complex and more psychological, and the adolescent tends to be concerned with others' thoughts and how he is perceived by his surroundings. While the "imaginary audience" phenomenon tends to fade away during adolescence, it has been found that the shyness of adolescents who are sensitive to this phenomenon actually rises with age (apparently due to a lack of social experiences) (Hauck, Martens, & Wetzel, 1986). This finding is testimony to the potential increase of social fears during adolescence.

 There is an assumption according to which, over time, repeated exposure to intense fears in the social realm or peer exclusion extinguish certain children's desire to get close to others and are liable to lead to a pattern of avoidance (Coplan, Rose-Krasnor, Weeks, Kingsbury, Kingsbury, & Bullock, 2013; Nelson, 2013). It is likely that these children find it especially difficulty to regulate their fears in society, and therefore they tend to avoid these situations. During adolescence they may experience psychological distress, in light of the distancing of the peer group from them and the feeling that they no longer have freedom of choice (Bowker & Raja, 2011). The social climate surrounding the child has significance in the creation of the developmental pathway. It was found that young people who tend to avoid social interactions tend to maintain the distancing route when the surroundings also move away from them (Gazelle & Rudolph, 2004).

 On the other hand, it appears that children and adults who avoid social interaction tend to suffer less than those characterized by conflictual shyness (Cheek & Buss, 1981). The latter report negative feelings, social anxiety, and symptoms of depression in childhood (Coplan, Rose-Krasnor, Weeks, Kingsbury, Kingsbury, & Bullock, 2013). Young adults characterized by this type of shyness are indeed interested in participating in social interactions and therefore experience more social comparisons and worries about negative assessment by the surroundings (Nelson, 2013).

 Ultimately, each child has unique characteristics and shyness is only one aspect of the entire profile. For example, among shy young children who are characterized by a high level of pragmatic language, fewer acclimation problems were found; therefore it has been suggested that this ability has a sort of buffering effect with regard to the damaging effects of shyness (it helps one understand nuances in social situations and may even improve the peer group's response to these children) (Coplan & Weeks, 2009). On the other hand, it was found that a low socio-emotional class is a factor that increases the occurrence of shyness; the more the learning methods are based on oral work and group work, the more these young people will be at a disadvantage and their problem may limit them and lead to a low level of achievement (Lawrence & Bennett, 1992).

**Gender and Culture**

 Most of the studies indicate that, during childhood, shyness is more problematic for boys than for girls (Coplan & Weeks, 2009), and it appears that some elementary school teachers see it this way as well (Akseer, Bosacki, Rose-Krasnor, & Coplan, 2014). This trend was also found during the period of emerging adulthood: boys who were characterized as shy during their childhood built up their personal and professional lives at a later age than most of their not-shy peers (Caspi, Elder, & Bem, 1988); likewise, it was found that the negative connection between shyness and psychological well-being is stronger among men (Rowsell, & Coplan, 2013).

 Nevertheless, in recent years researchers are finding less gender difference with regard to the negative effects of shyness on emerging adulthood (Asendorpf, Denissen, & van Aken, 2008; Nelson, 2013) ;(Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Badger, Barry, Carroll, & Madsen, 2008). The change is attributed to the characteristics of modern Western society: today women are expected go through a process of exploration, studying and building a career before marrying and raising a family. This process forces them to confront shyness, which is a type of obstacle to the realization of personal potential, and exposes them to anxieties surrounding the necessity of social coping. In addition, the independent conduct of women on dates requires them to develop assertiveness skills and is liable to arouse emotional difficulties (Nelson, 2013; Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Badger, Barry, Carroll, & Madsen, 2008).

 In addition, gender differences were found in shy people's style of communication. Women worry more about saying something foolish to a stranger (Crozier, 2005). In conversation, they tend to make use of confirmations (e.g, "I think so, too"); it has been suggested that this may be interpreted as a tactic for finding favor with others: women try to create a warm, sensitive, expressive image, while men are interested in creating the impression that they are assertive, independent, and in control (Leary, Knight, & Johnson, 1987). On this subject, further research is required in light of the trends of gender-related change previously described.

 Shyness also has a socio-cultural side. There are sometimes certain characteristics in a culture that increase the tendency to develop it. For example, in traditional Japanese culture there is a lot of emphasis on conduct that is appropriate for one's social role. In other words, in a social situation the individual tends to ponder the question: "Who am I supposed to be in this situation?" Since this characteristic is also common among shy people, it is liable to increase the probability of the development of shyness (Sakuragi, 2004). In addition, it is perceived differently in different cultures. For example, the possibility was raised that socially anxious behaviors are not perceived negatively by the peer group in the Arab society (Scharf, Kerns, Rousseau, & Kivenson-Baron, 2016). In a study done in India among adolescents, it was also found to be less associated with difficulty(less problematic?) (source difficult to understand) it is likely that this is grounded in differences between cultures with a collectivistic orientation (in which dyadic connections are considered highly important) and cultures with an individualistic orientation (Bowker & Raja, 2011).

**Support of Shy Children in the School Framework**

 Certain teachers are of the opinion that shy students wish to be "left alone". This interpretation is natural and understandable, since shy people's communication aims to limit their involvement in social interaction, among other things (Leary, Knight, & Johnson, 1987). However, contrary to common belief, it has been found that shy teenage girls are interested in being challenged by adults to speak and participate in the group and in the class; they are interested in being more visible and they are not interested in a "leave me alone" policy (Lund, 2008). Likewise, it was found that shy people are interested in being more talkative and sociable (Kalliopuska, 2008). Additionally, when deciding whether or not to intervene, one must take into account the negative impact of shyness on the present and on the future, as described in the first part of the article. The main theme of the articles in the field is that it is indeed preferable to build skills in order to deal with the deficiencies, thus acting on a preventative and therapeutic plane (e.g., Greco & Morris, 2001; Kalutskaya, Archbell, Moritz Rudasill, & Coplan, 2015). It is important to note that the intention is not to change the personality but rather to expand social experiences and opportunities for the realization of the personal potential.

 In recent years, awareness of shyness has increased among educators (Coplan & Prakash, 2003), and it is seen as a phenomenon that deserves attention and intervention (Bosacki, Coplan, Rose-Krasnor, & Hughes, 2011). Teachers report that they provide inhibited children with high levels of support and make changes in their social environment (Thijs, Koomen, & Van Der Leij, 2006). Nonetheless, they are not sure how they should act with regard to these children and tend to search for guidance from an external source (Coplan, Hughes, Bosacki, & Rose-Krasnor, 2011). In addition, it was found that when interactions occur between a teacher and a shy student, it is appropriate to examine their characteristics and their benefit to the child (Evans & Bienert , 1992).

**Identification of Shy Children**

 There are people who describe themselves as shy, but who integrate well into society; therefore, an attempt was made to identify different types of shyness, and it was indeed found that there are differences among people regarding the relative importance they attribute to the experience of anxiety (private shyness) and to their social behavior (public shyness) (Pilkonis, 1977). Subsequently, a discrepancy was found, with regard to certain students, between the way the adults (parents and teachers) assessed the children's level of shyness and the way the children themselves assessed it, with the adults tending to underestimate it (Spooner, Evans, & Santos, 2005). It is likely, for instance, that good capability in the use of pragmatic language may make it difficult for the surroundings to recognize the child's shyness. Identification is important since these children do not tend to attract the teacher's attention and also because the probability that they will confide in the adults on their own initiative is not high (Lund, 2008). In the process of identification, it is recommended to rely on the children's self-report (Spooner, Evans, & Santos, 2005). In addition, one can devote lessons in the class to the encouragement of open discussion about shyness (as described by Korem, 2016) in order to legitimize sharing and discussing the subject with a faculty member.

**The Way Teachers Perceive the Shy Children**

Both positive and negative perceptions were found among educators regarding shy children. Kindergarten teachers attributed self-control and cooperation to these children (Rudasill & Konold, 2008). Elementary school teachers described them as students who pay attention and develop close ties with one or two children (Bosacki, Coplan, Rose-Krasnor, & Hughes, 2011). As to the negative perceptions, kindergarten teachers rank them as having a lower tendency to help other children (Coplan, Prakash, O'Neil, & Armer, 2004). Elementary school teachers describe them as communicating orally infrequently, preferring to be alone or in the company of one other child, focusing on observing the surroundings, and hesitating to join big groups (Bosacki, Coplan, Rose-Krasnor, & Hughes, 2011). Some of them expect them to have poor academic results; for example, teachers reported that these children have less verbal skills; apparently the teachers link the child's social and academic characteristics, the risk being that the teacher's perceptions of the child's academic abilities could act as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Coplan, Hughes, Bosacki, & Rose-Krasnor, 2011).

As one can see, the way in which teachers perceive the shy students is focused on the behavioral aspect. Korem's article (2016) claims that teachers do not pay enough attention to these children's inner experience (that is characterized by fears, stress, and discomfort in social situations); the teachers' inclination toward the behavioral plane of shyness may lead to less inclusive responses and to the choice of less appropriate support methods. It is likely that teachers who are themselves characterized by shyness understand the inner experience better; this aspect requires further study (Coplan, Hughes, Bosacki, & Rose-Krasnor, 2011).

**Strategies for the Support of Shy Students in the School Framework**

 In order to increase the effectiveness of the support strategies and the ability to generalize the new behaviors, it is recommended to include elements of the children's natural surroundings, i.e. support within the school framework, by the educational staff; this will reduce obstacles to requests for support and will help reach a wider range of children (Greco & Morris, 2001;Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009). This process requires teamwork by the different elements (Miller & Coll, 2007). The support methods will be presented according to the emphasis placed in them on the intrapersonal dimension or the interpersonal dimension of social competence (Ten Dam & Volman, 2007). How the two dimensions can be combined in educational activity in school will be demonstrated later on.

**Support Strategies with an Intrapersonal Emphasis**

 One of the important directions is to nurture the shy children's self-regulation ability in social situations (Kalutskaya, Archbell, Moritz Rudasill, & Coplan, 2015). It has been suggested, for example, that the connection between a good level of pragmatic language and acclimation is rooted in the fact that this ability helps them verbalize their thoughts (Coplan & Weeks, 2009). Verbalization of thoughts and feelings may contribute to the organization of the emotional world.

 Different programs were found to be effective in reducing the children's anxieties, particularly at a young age. For example, among preschoolers it was found that through a parent-education program it is possible to reduce the child's level of anxiety (Rapee, Kennedy, Ingram, Edwards, & Sweeney, 2005). Programs aimed at reducing the children's anxieties can be implemented at school, with the objective of improving the adjustment to school; the behavioral element in this sort of program includes problem solving, the cognitive element helps the child develop positive self-talk, cope with negative thoughts, assess themselves realistically, and reward themselves for progress, and the physiological element increases the awareness of body clues and includes relaxation techniques (Rodgers & Dunsmuir, 2015).

 Other strategies that support shy children in organizing their emotional world are based on the strengthening of the bond between the children and the teacher. This bond has a protective potential because it gives the children a sense of a secure base in school, and this allows them to open up to the exploration of their social environment (Arbeau, Coplan, & Weeks, 2010). However, one must be careful not to form a bond characterized by dependency, since this may limit the children's social interactions and make them stand out in front of the other children as those who need the teacher's support (Arbeau, Coplan, & Weeks, 2010).

 An additional strategy for the organization of the shy children's emotional world is the strengthening of their sense of control in the social situation. For instance, it was found, paradoxically, that when the teacher's conversation with shy children was in a low control style (e.g. posing fewer questions to the child), shy preschoolers used more words, their speech sequences were longer, and they delivered more content (Evans & Bienert , 1992)**.** It may be inferred from this that the children felt they were in control of the situation; this lowered their anxiety and allowed them to increase their cooperation in the social situation.

 Another strategy for increasing the sense of control in the social situation is making it possible to plan ahead. In situations one knows about in advance (such as going out of the school for a social activity or a change of teachers in the class) the children can be informed ahead of time, allowing them to plan and to prepare themselves (Henderson & Fox, 1998). Anticipatory writing tasks before participation in a social activity may also provide the children with a sense of control. Another way is to give the children a choice of activities so they can choose those with which they feel comfortable (Henderson & Fox, 1998).

**Support Strategies with an Interpersonal Emphasis**

 Intervention with a group of shy children gives them opportunities for social interaction, for getting feedback from other children, and for "normalization" of the experience of anxiety (Rodgers & Dunsmuir, 2015). In the school framework, it is important to cultivate a climate of emotional support (Gazelle, 2006; Kalutskaya, Archbell, Moritz Rudasill, & Coplan, 2015). It was found, for example, that when anxious, solitary youth were not ostracized in class, their social fears were not verified and their social approach was enhanced (Gazelle & Rudolph, 2004). Additional strategies implemented by teachers in class are use of non-verbal communication (such as drawing) and conversations in small groups (talking circles) (Bosacki, Coplan, Rose-Krasnor, & Hughes, 2011).The involvement of the peer group is also considered an effective way to support children of low status, however one should consider implementing it in combination with additional elements of social skill development (and not as a sole strategy) (Greco & Morris, 2001). A different kind of strategy is participation in organized sports. In this activity the children are given a role in the group, their sense of belonging is enhanced, and topics of conversation are naturally created; among children who participated in such activities a decrease in the level of anxiety was found, over time (Findlay & Coplan, 2008).

**Support Strategies that Combine Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Emphases**

 Intervention that includes Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) can be implemented by educators in the school framework (Harris & Brown, 1982). The effective way is to structure hierarchies of fear-arousing situations with the student (e.g., Fisher, Masia-Warner, & Klein, 2004; Rapee, Kennedy, Ingram, Edwards, & Sweeney, 2005).

 For the purpose of illustration, I will share an exercise I run with teacher-training students in a lesson that deals with the subject of shyness. We focus on a situation from within the students' world of content: a shy person's participation in a staff meeting at a new workplace. First we discuss the negative repercussions of passive participation throughout the meeting (such as making a negative impression on one's colleagues). Afterwards, we brainstorm suggestions for various actions the person could carry out during the meeting, e.g.: recording it, expressing agreement with one of the speakers, or reading a piece of information prepared in advance (5-6 actions), and write them on the whiteboard. In the next step we have a vote regarding the level of anxiety each action might arouse and rank the actions accordingly on the whiteboard. The message that emerges from this exercise is that in order to deal with shyness one must identify the one action that arouses the lowest level of anxiety in the individual (and which he is prepared to carry out) and to start from there.

 Since some of the teachers tend to focus on the behavioral aspect of shyness and do not pay enough attention to the inner experience of these children in social situations (which is characterized by fears, stress, and discomfort) (Korem, 2016), they tend to begin their supportive intervention **in the opposite way**, i.e. with an activity that arouses in the student a high level of anxiety. For example, a teacher described how she offered a girl who excelled in her studies a "deal": she would receive a grade of 100 in the course, regardless of her performance on the exam, and all that was required of her was to participate in the class discussions during the trimester. The teacher expressed her disappointment when the girl pretended not to understand the offer, evaded the issue, and did not participate in the class discussions. If the teacher had considered the inner experience associated with shyness, she would have worked with the student to create a hierarchy of fear-arousing situations. With this method, the starting point of the supportive intervention would have been the identification of the action that would arouse the lowest level of anxiety in the girl, and to which she would have responded, "Yes, I'm prepared to try that."

 There are many creative ways in which the teacher can create hierarchies of fear-arousing situations with the students. One can, for instance, allow the student to choose the content and/or the friend he will work with, to read an answer that the teacher has checked ahead of time and certified as correct, or to present a subject in front of a small group of children (and not in front of the entire class). The thing they have in common is that they are all based on enhancement of the children's sense of control in the social situation. Thus they reduce the fear of social coping and increase the probability of cooperation on the part of the children.

**Avenues for Future Research**

 Each child is an entire world. Therefore, in further research, the consequences of shyness regarding the children's combination of characteristics should be examined. For example, what will the consequences be in connection with a shy child who also has a learning deficiency? Or –shy and also afflicted with ADD? In addition, we should examine the effects of shyness on indicators later in life, including a sense of missed opportunities and individual insights that were derived from overcoming fears in the social realm.

 As to support strategies, those that are intertwined with school life and include teaching strategies should be developed (Kalutskaya, Archbell, Moritz Rudasill, & Coplan, 2015). For example, entire lesson plans could be prepared based on hierarchies of fear-arousing situations and supporting the shy children. Additionally, contents and activities that give social situations a positive connotation can be integrated into the teaching. Simultaneously, the ways in which teacher-parent cooperation surrounding the subject could be reinforced should be examined (Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009), e.g. creating hierarchies of fear-arousing situations that are common to home and school. This sort of cooperation is likely to produce more effective results.

 Another direction which should be researched further is the influence of technology, particularly social media, on the child's shyness. As to the character of these effects, there are opposing approaches: on the one hand, the world of technology allows the children more involvement (in light of the possibility of avoiding situations that arouse anxiety); on the other hand, it may reflect social reality and limit the experience of face-to-face interaction even further (Coplan & Rudasill, 2016).

In conclusion, the modern era exposes shy children to problems and difficulties that await them in the various paths of development and also presents them with special challenges. We must prepare the children with the best coping mechanisms, including adaptation to change, teamwork, sharing, and getting help from others. In order to support them, educators should be actively involved in the process (Greco & Morris, 2001), the nature of shyness should be clarified, and effective support methods that are implementable in school should be developed.