

Factors which Influence the Involvement of the Family in their Children's Education at the Beginning of the Romanian Primary Education

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Abstract

Keywords:

Family involvement
School-family partnership
Primary education

We aim to find the main factors that influence the family level of involvement regarding the children's education and in school life at the beginning of the Romanian primary education. The results of this investigation are useful for educators, counselors and school principals interested in applying the effective strategies in order to increase the family level of involvement regarding the children's education. We were interested in finding out if there are significant differences regarding the family involvement at school or at home, given the living environment of the participants. The geographic area where the participants live and their professional status were the main factors considered during the investigation. We have found that most of the participants are moderately involved in their children's education. The results obtained both in the rural and urban areas, help us to conclude that the common efforts of the school and family are necessary in order to consolidate the school-family partnership and increase the family participation in school activities.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Familienbeteiligung
Schule-Familien-
Partnerschaft
Grundschulbildung

Unser Ziel ist es, die wichtigsten Faktoren, die den Grad der Einbindung der Familie in der Bildung der Kinder und Primarschulbildung in Rumänien zu untersuchen. Die Ergebnisse dieser Untersuchung sind nützlich für Lehrer, Schulberater und Schulleiter interessiert bei der Anwendung wirksame Strategien Einbindung der Familie in der Bildung der Kinder zu erhöhen. Wir wollten herausfinden, ob es signifikante Unterschiede im familiären Engagement in der Schule oder zu Hause gibt, wenn man die Lebensumstände der Teilnehmer berücksichtigt. Das geographische Gebiet, in dem die Studienteilnehmer leben, und ihr beruflicher Status waren die Hauptfaktoren, die während der Untersuchung berücksichtigt wurden. Wir haben festgestellt, dass die meisten Teilnehmer aktiv an der Erziehung ihrer Kinder zu Hause beteiligt sind. Die Ergebnisse, die sowohl in ländlichen als auch in städtischen Gebieten erzielt wurden, helfen uns zu dem Schluss, dass die gemeinsamen Anstrengungen von Schule und Familie notwendig sind, um die Schul-Familienpartnerschaft zu stärken und die Familienbeteiligung an Schulaktivitäten zu erhöhen.

1. Introduction

It is widely agreed that an effective family involvement in children's education is needed at the beginning of the primary education. Families are important educational agents with a large influence on children's development and school evolution. (Pancu & Bocoş, 2016; Sreekanth, 2011; Vahedi & Nikdel, 2011; Porumbu, Necsoi & Beldianu, 2013). A high involvement of the family at home and at school is associated with the increased motivation for learning, positive school results, and high self-esteem. We consider that this investigation is very useful in understanding the educational realities that significantly influence the quality of family involvement in children's education.

2. Theoretical foundation

We can define the family involvement in children's education as a set of constructive behaviors and positive parental practices

involved at home, at school and within the community, in order to provide each child with the best educational opportunities. J.L. Epstein et al. (2009) have identified six types of family involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community, emphasizing that each type of involvement can be enhanced by different partnership practices. Studies on parental involvement in children's education show that the factors that significantly influence the school-family cooperation are: employment status, marital status, family size, and the parental educational level. (see Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs; 2000, Epstein et al. 2009; Porumbu & Necsoi, 2013). According to J. L. Epstein et al. (2009), research on school, family and community partnerships reveals that the "single parents, parents who are employed outside the home, parents who live far from the school, and fathers are less involved, on average, at the school building, unless the school organizes opportunities for families to become involved and to volunteer at various times and in various places to support the school and their children. These

parents may be as involved as other parents with their children at home". Table 1 includes positive behaviors that could be associated with an effective parental participation in children's

education, at home, within the community, and in different school contexts. (see Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs; 2000, Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry & Childs, 2004; Epstein et al., 2009).

Table 1. Examples of positive behaviors of the families actively involved in their children education

<i>Dimensions of family involvement</i>	<i>Family involvement at home or within the community</i>	<i>Family involvement in school activities</i>	<i>Family involvement in maintaining an effective school-family communication and cooperation</i>
<i>Effective parental practices</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spending time with children at home or within the community in order to improve their knowledge and abilities, including their learning skills; - Manifesting enthusiasm in learning and positive attitudes towards school and educators; - Providing attractive educational materials and creating educational contexts for children; - Applying effective parenting strategies; - Analyzing children's work and encouraging the children's learning efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Volunteering and adopting positive and cooperative attitudes in relationships with other parents; - Attending school activities (i.e., trips, workshops, fundraising activities etc.) and participating in the process of decision-making; - Offering support to educators and other parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attending conferences with the teacher; - Teacher-parent discussions by phone, by written notes or face to face, about the child's interests, learning behaviors, difficulties, accomplishments, etc. - Manifesting openness and trust towards the teacher; - Establishing the content of the learning activities that could be realized at home in order to improve the child's educational experience and their educational progress.

According to Srekanth (2011), the "parental involvement is subjective in nature and difficult to assess". At the same time, it is very useful for the educational practitioners and researchers to understand the factors influencing the family participation in children's education and assess the family involvement at home and in different school contexts.

3. Research methodology

This quantitative research was used as the main data collection Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ). Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) is defined by its authors as a multi-dimensional scale that can be used to assess the family involvement in early childhood education. The three dimensions of parent involvement assessed through the FIQ are Home-Based Involvement, School-Based Involvement, and Home-School Conferencing. The scale contains 42 items and was designed in a 4-point Likert format (Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry & Childs, 2004).

In the Romanian educational system, the preparatory grade is a part of the primary education stage and is considered a school year of preparation with the educational demands. The questionnaire was applied to a sample of 227 parents. Their children were

enrolled in the school year 2016-2017 into the preparatory grade. 170 participants live in urban area, while the other (57) live in rural area of Cluj County. All the respondents are aged between 21 and 60, and their average age is 35.21 years. The participants live in the urban and rural areas of Cluj County. The purpose of the study is to understand the educational realities that may influence the quality of the family involvement in children's education. We were interested in finding the answer to the following questions:

- How involved are families in children's education at the beginning of the Romanian primary education stage?
- Are there any differences between the levels of family involvement in the children's education living in the rural and urban areas?

4. Results

During the discussions with the teachers involved as partners in our research, we have established that most of the parents who are highly involved in the children's education have a medium or high educational level and a good socio-economic status. Figure 1 contains the details regarding the involvement levels of the families in children's education at home and in school life. We can see that

most of the parents are moderately involved in their children’s education.

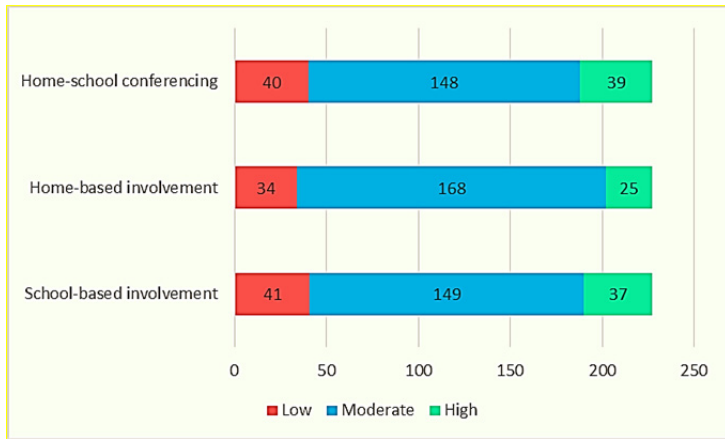


Figure 1. Family involvement at the beginning of the preparatory grade

The Results in Figure 2 show that most of the participants in the urban areas (67.06% of the respondents living in the urban areas) are moderately involved in school activities. The most of the respondents in the rural areas (61.4%) have obtained scores that can be associated with a moderate level involvement of the family in school activities. 22.81% of the participants to whom high levels of family involvement in school life were associated, are living in rural area. At the same time, 14.12% of the participants in the urban area are highly involved in school life.

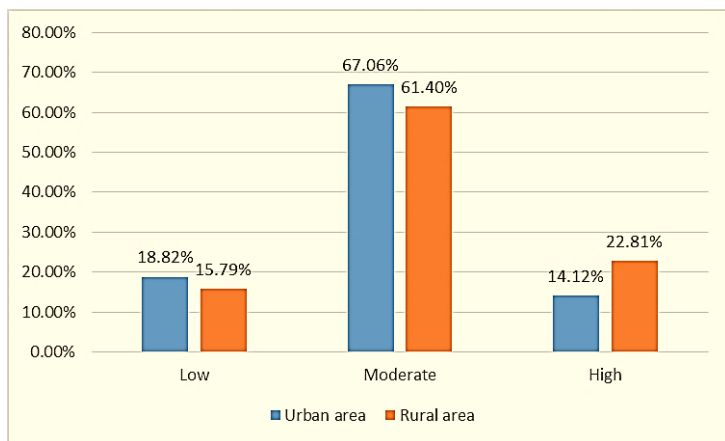


Figure 2. Comparative results obtained in the urban and rural areas for the "School-based involvement" subscale

Figure 3 includes information about family involvement in the home-based children’s education. Most of the participants who live in urban areas (77.65%) are moderately involved in the home-based educational activities. At the same time, 63.16% of the participants in the rural area are moderately involved in the children’s education outside the school.

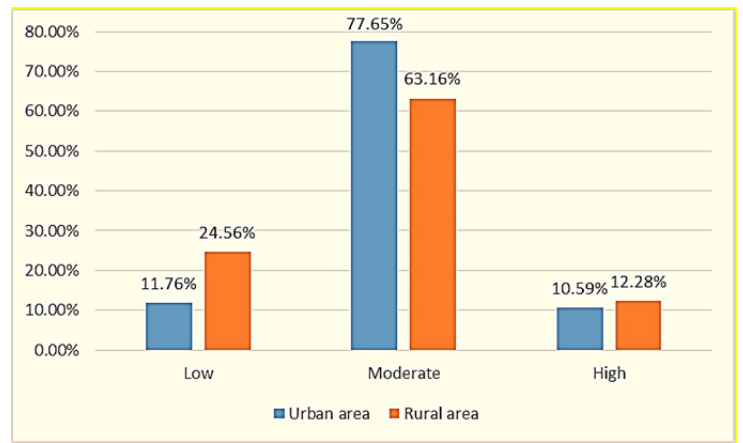


Figure 3. Comparative results obtained in the urban and rural areas for the "Home-based involvement" subscale

Most of the parents in both the rural and urban area are moderately involved in building effective teachers relationships (see Figure 4). The percentage of the participants in the rural area, who are highly involved in maintaining a high-quality cooperation between family and school (24.56%), is higher than the percentage of the highly involved urban participants (14.71%).

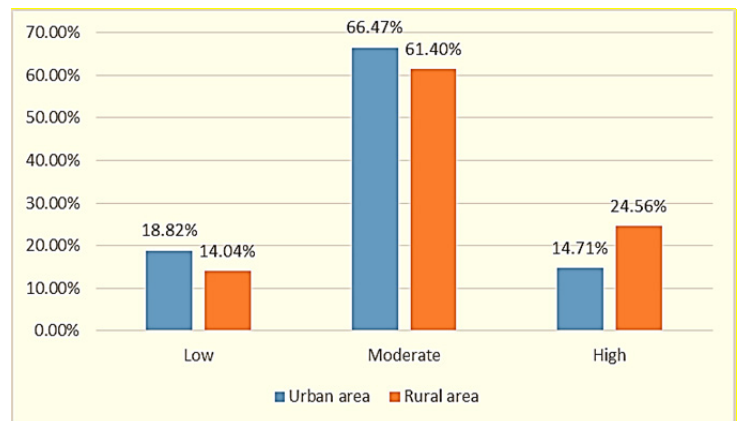


Figure 4. Comparative results obtained in the urban and rural areas for the "Home-school conferencing" subscale

The results in Table 2 show that in the urban areas, there is a greater involvement of the family in the home-based children’s education. At the same time, in urban areas, efforts are necessary to increase the degree of family involvement in school life, and the quality of school-family partnership.

Table 2. Geographic area where the highest average score was obtained

Size of family involvement	Living environment of the participants
School-Based Involvement	Rural area
Home-Based Involvement	Urban area
Home-School Conferencing	Rural area

Most of the parents who are highly involved in their children’s education at home, in school life, and in maintaining a good cooperation with the teachers are employed.

5. Discussions

The survey described in this paper identifies different levels of family involvement in children's education, for each size of family involvement that was assessed during our research. The obtained results are useful for school principals and teachers interested in increasing the family involvement in children's education. Some of the limits of this survey are the low number of participants and the fact the participants live in a single county of Romania. Future surveys should be implemented on a larger sample of participants from all major geographical areas in Romania.

Conclusions

The main goal of the survey was to determine how parents involved are in children's education during the preparatory grade. We consider that the research on methods of increasing the family involvement in children's education should be continued in order to provide each child enrolled in Romanian educational system with the best educational opportunities. At the same time, the teachers should encourage parents to become real partners in children's education and apply effective strategies in order to strengthen the school-family partnership.

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