

## ANALYSIS ON FAMILY SUPPORT RESSOURCES AS PREDICTORS OF SCHOOL DROPOUT

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**Abstract:** *Understanding the factors influencing school dropout rates is crucial for developing effective educational policies and interventions. High dropout rates not only affect individual students but also have significant societal and economic implications. In the sociological exploration of the phenomenon of children's school abandonment, the intricate dynamics of familial characteristics emerge as a compelling focal point, considering that they form the sociological landscape where the predictors of academic disengagement may find expression. In correlation with other indicators, known as early warning signs – like poor attendance, academic struggles, behavior problems, and disengagement from school activities, these can signal that a student is at risk of dropping out. Understanding and addressing the resources of support within the family unit is essential for creating effective educational policies and interventions. By recognizing the influence of family support resources, educators and policymakers can develop strategies that empower families to actively contribute to their children's academic success and overall well-being. This paper embarks on an analysis of the relationship between school-aged children and their families, aiming to unravel the extent to which these contribute to the educational success rate and the prevention of school dropout, a phenomenon that still marks the Romanian society.*

**Keywords:** family, vulnerability, family support, formal education, school dropout.

### 1. Introduction

School dropout is a pervasive issue that poses a formidable challenge to educational systems worldwide. The consequences of individuals prematurely leaving the education system extend beyond the classroom, impacting their future prospects and contributing to broader societal issues. To address this complex problem, it is essential to delve into the various factors that contribute to school dropout, with a particular focus on the role of family support resources.

High dropout rates can perpetuate cycles of poverty and limit opportunities for personal and professional development. Individuals who do not complete their education often face increased challenges in securing stable employment and accessing higher education. This, in turn, can lead to economic disparities and hinder social mobility, fuelling a cycle of disadvantages across generations.

Furthermore, the societal impact of school dropout is not limited to the economic realm. It can contribute to social inequality, exacerbate issues related to crime and public health, and strain social welfare systems. Understanding the root causes of school dropout is, therefore, a critical step in fostering a more equitable and prosperous society.

By specifically examining the influence of family dynamics and characteristics, we can uncover key determinants that either support or hinder a student's educational journey. This knowledge is fundamental for designing targeted interventions and support systems that address the unique challenges faced by students within the family context, ultimately working towards reducing dropout rates and fostering a more inclusive and effective educational system.

## 2. Key- concepts

The following key-concepts are at the focal point of our analysis: family, formal education and school dropout.

A *family* is a fundamental social unit typically consisting of individuals who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption. It is a dynamic and evolving entity that serves as the primary context for socialization, emotional support, and the transmission of cultural values and traditions. Families come in various forms, and their structures may include parents, children, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other extended relatives. The concept of family extends beyond biological relationships and can encompass individuals bound by strong emotional ties or shared experiences. Family is a central institution in society, influencing individual development, well-being, and the broader social fabric. The conceptualization of family has evolved over time, reflecting cultural, societal, and demographic changes. Specifically, amongst the family models recognizable within the Romanian society, we distinguish:

- the Nuclear family: traditional conceptualization involving two parents and their children living together in a single household. This model emphasizes a stable and self-contained family unit;
- the Extended family: includes relatives beyond the nuclear family, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Extended families often provide a broader support network;
- the Single-Parent family: comprises a single parent and one or more children. This notion recognizes diverse family structures and highlights the challenges and strengths associated with single-parent households;
- the Blended or Stepfamily: arises from the blending of two families through marriage, where at least one parent has children from a previous relationship. This concept acknowledges the complexities of family dynamics in non-traditional settings;
- the Cohabiting Family: involves unmarried couples living together with or without children. This conceptualization recognizes the changing trends in family formation and acknowledges non-traditional living arrangements.

The conceptualization framework of family is diverse and multifaceted, reflecting the complexity of human relationships and societal changes. Different perspectives provide insights into the roles, functions, and challenges associated with families in various cultural and historical contexts.

*Formal education* refers to the structured, systematic, and organized learning that takes place within officially recognized institutions, typically following a prescribed curriculum. This type of education is intentional, planned, and guided by trained educators, and it often leads to the attainment of formal qualifications, such as degrees, diplomas, or certificates. Formal education is commonly associated with schools, colleges, and universities, where students progress through grades or levels, and the learning process is subject to specific regulations and standards.

Formal education serves as a foundational and widely accepted means of providing individuals with knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for personal and professional development in various fields. It is a cornerstone of educational systems worldwide and is often mandatory for a certain period in many countries.

*School dropout* refers to the premature departure of a student from the formal education system before fulfilling the requirements for completing a specific grade level, course, or educational program. This can occur at various stages, including primary, secondary, or higher education. School dropout is a critical issue with significant implications for individuals and society, as it can limit opportunities for personal and professional development and contribute to broader social and economic challenges. Various risk factors contribute to the likelihood of school dropout. These may include academic challenges, socio-

economic disadvantages, family issues, health concerns, lack of motivation, and negative school experiences. School dropout can have far-reaching consequences for individuals and society. It may limit future employment opportunities, hinder access to higher education, and contribute to a cycle of poverty and social inequality.

### **3. Theoretical perspective**

In examining the complex relationship between family dynamics and support and school dropout, this analysis is guided by a multidimensional theoretical framework that incorporates key sociological perspectives. The chosen theoretical frameworks provide lenses through which to understand the intricate interplay of factors influencing a student's educational journey and the likelihood of dropout. Two primary theoretical perspectives are particularly influential in shaping the analytical approach:

- the Social Capital Theory, developed by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1986) and further expanded by Robert Putnam (Putnam, 2000), posits that social networks, relationships, and resources within a community or social group contribute to individual and collective success. It emphasizes the importance of social connections, shared norms, and access to resources in influencing educational outcomes. This framework will be utilized to explore how the family, as a social unit, acts as a source of social capital. Examining the quality of family relationships, the extent of social networks, and the resources available within the family context can provide insights into their impact on a student's educational resilience and ability to navigate potential dropout risks.

- the Ecological Systems Perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) explores how families interact with their broader environment, including the community, culture, and societal structures. This perspective considers the multiple influences on family dynamics.

- Functionalism (Parsons & Bales 1955) views the family as a social institution with specific functions, such as socialization, economic support, and emotional care. This conceptualization emphasizes the role of families in maintaining societal stability.

These theoretical frameworks complement each other, providing a comprehensive understanding of the social, relational, and systemic factors influencing school dropout. Additionally, this approach acknowledges the interrelation of various factors, such as socio-economic status, cultural background, and individual characteristics, within the broader social structure. The goal is to illuminate the nuanced ways in which family dynamics and characteristics operate within the larger sociocultural context, contributing to a more holistic understanding of the predictors of school dropout.

### **4. The role of family support in preventing school dropout**

Family dynamics and characteristics play a pivotal role in shaping a child's educational journey, influencing their academic performance, socio-emotional development, and overall well-being.

The family serves as the primary environment where a child's early learning experiences take place. Positive family dynamics, characterized by support, encouragement, and engagement, create a foundation for academic success. Furthermore, family dynamics strongly influence the cultural and educational values instilled in a child. Families that prioritize education and intellectual growth tend to foster a positive attitude towards learning, creating an environment conducive to academic achievement.

On one side, the level of parental involvement and support is a critical determinant of a child's educational success. Supportive parents who actively participate in their child's education, attend parent-teacher conferences and provide homework assistance contribute significantly to academic motivation and achievement.

On the other side, family characteristics, such as socioeconomic status, impact a child's access to educational resources. Families with a higher socioeconomic status have

more resources, including educational materials, extracurricular opportunities, and access to quality schools, giving their children advantages in their educational journey.

Family dynamics shape a child's aspirations and career goals through role modeling. Parents who value education and pursue lifelong learning inspire their children to set ambitious educational and career objectives, also contributing to the child's emotional well-being, by creating a stable and supportive environment. Emotional stability is linked to better concentration, cognitive functioning, and resilience, all of which are crucial for academic success.

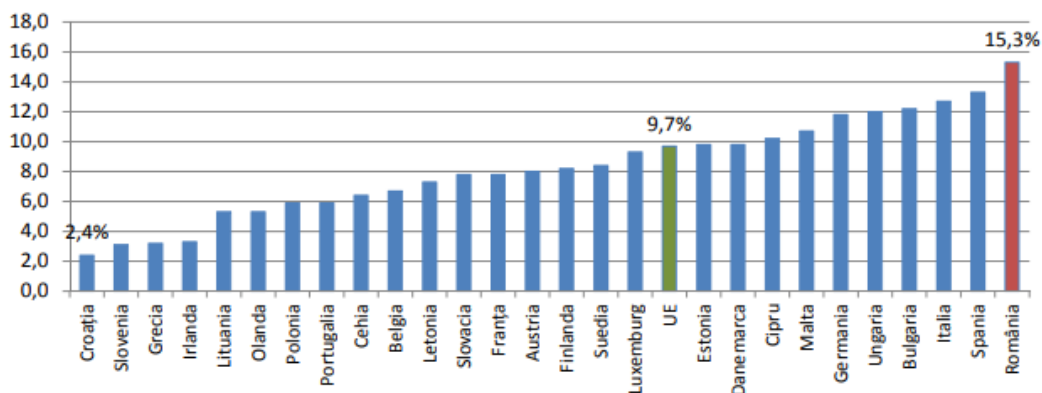
Of great relevance are also the communication patterns within the family that significantly impact a child's language development, but also the crisis and challenge mitigation abilities. When facing crises, such as bullying or academic struggles, family dynamics play a crucial role in reducing the negative impact on a child's educational journey. A supportive family environment can provide the necessary resilience and coping mechanisms.

### 5. Facts

Dropout rates can vary across demographic groups and socio-economic backgrounds, contributing to educational inequality. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may face additional challenges that increase the risk of dropout.

A report published by the Romanian Ministry of Education in 2022 (Ministry of Education, 2022), citing data published by Eurostat, showed that, in 2021, Romania had the highest early school dropout rate in the EU, namely 15.3%, much higher than the European average rate of 9.7%. This indicator measures the number of population aged between 18 and 24 years that at most finished secondary studies and are not comprised in any form of education or professional qualification at the moment of the analysis.

**Figure 1: Early school dropout rates in the EU- comparative analysis**



Source: Ministry of Education, 2022

Also in 2022, the Ministry published a list of 3235 schools with a high and moderate risk of school abandonment, at national level, identified with the aim of being included in a National Program for the Reduction of School Abandonment (Ministry of Education, 2022). In Dolj county, there were 117 schools with an abandonment rate over 26%, out of which 56 schools at high risk. Out of these, 22 schools were in the urban environment and 95 in the rural environment, where the school dropout risk is higher due to poor socio-economical conditions.

A more recent report, published by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2023), mentioned a number of 4.461 students that abandoned school in 2023 – the equivalent

of 178 classes with 25 pupils each. From the 179.563 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in 2023, at national level, only 161.652 took part in the national assessment exams, which means that 17.911 students will not attain highschool education.

Social Monitor data (Social Monitor, 2023) show that the school drop-out rate is closely correlated with the country's employment poverty rate, i.e. people who have jobs but do not earn enough for a decent living. Our employment poverty rate is 14.5%, one of the highest in the EU and well above the European average of 8.5%.

Research shows that the two rates (school drop-out and in-work poverty) are perfectly correlated. Eurostat data shows that more than half of early school leavers are not currently working or looking for work, or at least not working formally, with proper documentation. Moreover, Romania also has the highest percentage of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU (34.5%), according to Eurostat data. Early school leavers tend to remain strained from the labour market for long periods of time or, if they find a job, they tend to be underqualified for it, or, in other words, this job will bring them an income below the level of decent living.

## 6. Risk factors for school dropout

The majority of researchers on education, sociology of education and social work in the international field identify, amongst the main risk factors for school dropout, the following categories: individual factors – family environment, family involvement, interest and engagement towards the educational outcomes of their children, personal motivation etc; economic factors: the family's income level, the accessibility of educational services in the community; and social factors like: school environment and climate, peer relations, teacher-student relationships, bullying and harassment.

In Romania, according to the *Strategy for the Reduction of Early School Leave in Romania* (Ministry of Education, 2014), the main risk factors for school dropout are the following:

- low household income level as a financial constraint to meet costs;
- collateral costs of education, especially among poor and disadvantaged families;
- low territorial accessibility of education services in remote rural areas;
- involvement of children in seasonal work and care of younger siblings;
- migration of parents from some communities abroad (leading to temporary withdrawal from school);
- education level of parents, especially mother's education level;
- perceived benefits of home schooling;
- children with disabilities and special educational needs;
- health, early marriage and/or pregnancy, other personal reasons;
- poverty, low employment opportunities and low parental participation in education in many rural/suburban communities; high rates of early school leave among Roma children are also associated with high rates of poverty;
- in some cases, cultural factors.

These findings are confirmed by a study performed in 2021 in a rural community in the South-West area in Romania, amongst parents and caretakers of children aged between 6 and 16 years, revealed the main risk factors for school dropout. "lack of material resources of the family, poverty (38.9%); they are part from disorganized families (21.5%); large distance from home to school (11.8%); their parents left them and went to work abroad- (13.2%); low level of education of parents (5.3%)." (Niță, Motoi & Goga, 2021:26).

The study further points out the importance of the family factor, that plays a major role in motivating and supporting the child's determination to attend school: "As far as the influence of the family factor on school dropout, our research has highlighted the fact that children from poor families (where at least one parent does not work), where parents are devoid of education (especially those who are part of the Roma ethnic group) or have a low level of education (neglecting the educational activity of children), tend to follow the models

offered by parents and their concepts, according to which education is not a priority and the attendance of the school does not increase the chances of a better future.” (Niță, Motoi & Goga, 2021: 30).

Risk factors associated with dropout occur over the course of schooling, and over the last decades, no significant changes in the presence or disappearance of certain factors became noticeable, regardless of country or educational system. The only significant changes occur rather in the prevalence of a factor or another within a risk group. (Badulescu, Csintalan, 2016: 458)

According to some authors, no single risk factor can be an exact and exclusive predictor for school dropout, but the probability of dropout increases with the prevalence of each. (Bowers et al, 2013).

## 7. Methodology

The main objective of our research was to identify the role of family involvement and support in preventing school dropout, or, in other words, family support as a predictor for school dropout.

Our research was based on the quantitative method, given the necessity to obtain measurable results. We addressed a survey to a target group of 210 students enrolled in the primary and secondary formal education system. The batch was selected from 3 secondary schools in Dolj county, one from the rural area, one from the large urban and one school from the small urban area, for a representative coverage. The study was performed during the period September- October 2023.

The questionnaire was structured according to 2 sections: A. “You and your family” and B. “At school” and included questions with pre-formulated answers, scaled according to the Likert scale sample.

We analysed the results from both sections, with a particular focus on the perspective of the family-student relationship, in order to be able to extract a relevant conclusion regarding the influence of family support on the risk of school dropout.

## 8. Results

In the following, we have selected the quantitative results, generated through SPSS, from both sections of the survey that we considered to be most relevant for the subject of our study.

### *Questionnaire for the assessment of school dropout risk*

Section A: You and your family

Question A1: *When you think about your parents, to which extend do you agree with the following statements?*

Answers:

#### **A1.1. I feel that I can trust my parents**

|                            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid                      |           |         |               |                    |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 6         | 2,9     | 2,9           | 2,9                |
| Agree                      | 111       | 52,9    | 52,9          | 55,7               |
| Totally agree              | 93        | 44,3    | 44,3          | 100,0              |
| Total                      | 210       | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

The majority of the respondents (97.2%) stated that they feel they can trust their parents.

#### **A1.2. If I talk to my parents, they try to understand how I feel**

|       | Frequency                  | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Neither agree nor disagree | 39      | 18,6          | 18,6               |
|       | Agree                      | 138     | 65,7          | 84,3               |
|       | Totally agree              | 33      | 15,7          | 100,0              |
|       | Total                      | 210     | 100,0         | 100,0              |

81.4% of the respondents agree or totally agree that their parents would try to understand them if they need talk to them, but 18.6 percent do not clearly perceive this empathy from their parents.

**A1.3. My parents listen to me when I have something on my mind**

|       | Frequency                  | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Neither agree nor disagree | 22      | 10,5          | 10,5               |
|       | Agree                      | 137     | 65,2          | 75,7               |
|       | Totally agree              | 51      | 24,3          | 100,0              |
|       | Total                      | 210     | 100,0         | 100,0              |

10.5% of the participants in the study are not convinced that their parents would listen to them when they are worried about something.

**A1.4. I can ask my parents to help me when I have problems**

|       | Frequency                  | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Neither agree nor disagree | 14      | 6,7           | 6,7                |
|       | Agree                      | 151     | 71,9          | 78,6               |
|       | Totally agree              | 45      | 21,4          | 100,0              |
|       | Total                      | 210     | 100,0         | 100,0              |

93.3 percent of the respondents agree that they can ask their parents for help when they have problems, but 6.7% are not sure about this.

**A1.5. If I had any personal or social problem, my parents would advise me**

|       | Frequency                  | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Neither agree nor disagree | 11      | 5,2           | 5,2                |
|       | Agree                      | 162     | 77,1          | 82,4               |
|       | Totally agree              | 37      | 17,6          | 100,0              |
|       | Total                      | 210     | 100,0         | 100,0              |

94.8% of the children participating in the study count on their parents' advice if they had a personal or a social problem, but 5.2 percent are undecided about it.

Question A2: *When you think about your parents, to which extent do you agree with the following statements?*

**A2.1. My parents make sure that I do my homework**

|       | Frequency                  | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Disagree                   | 3       | 1,4           | 1,4                |
|       | Neither agree nor disagree | 10      | 4,8           | 6,2                |
|       | Agree                      | 146     | 69,5          | 75,7               |
|       | Totally agree              | 51      | 24,3          | 100,0              |
|       | Total                      | 210     | 100,0         | 100,0              |

Only 75.3% of the children state that their parents check if they did their homework.

**A2.2. My parents make sure that I go to school**

|                            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Disagree                   | 1         | ,5      | ,5            | ,5                 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 24        | 11,4    | 11,4          | 11,9               |
| Valid Agree                | 130       | 61,9    | 61,9          | 73,8               |
| Totally agree              | 55        | 26,2    | 26,2          | 100,0              |
| Total                      | 210       | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

Almost 10% of the students taking part in the study are not sure about their parents checking if they went to school or not.

**A2.3. My parents praise me when I have good results**

|                            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Disagree                   | 3         | 1,4     | 1,4           | 1,4                |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 12        | 5,7     | 5,7           | 7,1                |
| Valid Agree                | 113       | 53,8    | 53,8          | 61,0               |
| Totally agree              | 82        | 39,0    | 39,0          | 100,0              |
| Total                      | 210       | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

The majority of the respondents are encouraged by their parents when they have good results, but 5.7.% of them hesitated to respond and 1.4% disagreed with this statement.

**A2.4. My parents support me in order to have good results in school**

|                            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Disagree                   | 4         | 1,9     | 1,9           | 1,9                |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 42        | 20,0    | 20,0          | 21,9               |
| Valid Agree                | 128       | 61,0    | 61,0          | 82,9               |
| Totally agree              | 36        | 17,1    | 17,1          | 100,0              |
| Total                      | 210       | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

78.1% of the children taking part in the study are being supported by their parents in order to obtain good educational results, but there is a consistent percentage – 20.0% that are not sure about this support and 1.9% that do not receive this type of support.

**A2.5. I talk to my parents about my future**

|                            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Disagree                   | 4         | 1,9     | 1,9           | 1,9                |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 32        | 15,2    | 15,2          | 17,1               |
| Valid Agree                | 143       | 68,1    | 68,1          | 85,2               |
| Totally agree              | 31        | 14,8    | 14,8          | 100,0              |
| Total                      | 210       | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

More than 17% of the children would not talk to their parents constantly about their future.

**A2.6. My parents consider that education is important for success**

|                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Disagree | 4         | 1,9     | 1,9           | 1,9                |



|         |                            |     |       |       |       |
|---------|----------------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
|         | Neither agree nor disagree | 25  | 11,9  | 12,0  | 13,9  |
|         | Agree                      | 149 | 71,0  | 71,3  | 85,2  |
|         | Totally agree              | 31  | 14,8  | 14,8  | 100,0 |
|         | Total                      | 209 | 99,5  | 100,0 |       |
| Missing | System                     | 1   | ,5    |       |       |
|         | Total                      | 210 | 100,0 |       |       |

The parents of only 85.8% of the respondents consider that education is important for success.

Question A4: *What expectations do your parents have about you?*

**A4. What expectations do your parents have about you**

|       | Frequency   | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |       |
|-------|---|---------|---------------|--------------------|-------|
|       | I don't know, I don't think they have any expectations about my education | 11      | 5,2           | 5,2                | 5,2   |
|       | To finish 10 classes  | 6       | 2,9           | 2,9                | 8,1   |
|       | To finish high school   | 30      | 14,3          | 14,3               | 22,4  |
| Valid | To finish a professional school   | 28      | 13,3          | 13,3               | 35,7  |
|       | To finish high school (12 classes) with a degree                          | 23      | 11,0          | 11,0               | 46,7  |
|       | To pursue my studies and finish a post-secondary or technical school      | 11      | 5,2           | 5,2                | 51,9  |
|       | To pursue my studies and finish university studies                        | 101     | 48,1          | 48,1               | 100,0 |
|       | Total   | 210     | 100,0         | 100,0              |       |

Regarding academic expectations, less than 50% of the respondents state that their parents would want them to pursue university studies, 11% of the parents want their children to finish high school, 21.4% have expectations about their children finishing 10 classes or a technical/ professional school and a worrying percentage of 5.2 are supposed not to have any expectations about their childrens' education.

Section B: "At school"

Question B1: *When you think about your school, to which extent do you agree with the following statements?*

**B1.2. I feel that I belong to this school**

|       | Frequency                  | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |       |
|-------|----------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|-------|
|       | Totally disagree           | 1       | ,5            | ,5                 | ,5    |
|       | Disagree                   | 5       | 2,4           | 2,4                | 2,9   |
| Valid | Neither agree nor disagree | 52      | 24,8          | 24,8               | 27,6  |
|       | Agree                      | 123     | 58,6          | 58,6               | 86,2  |
|       | Totally agree              | 29      | 13,8          | 13,8               | 100,0 |
|       | Total                      | 210     | 100,0         | 100,0              |       |

2.9% of the children totally disagree with belonging to their schools, while 24.8% are unsure about this aspect. 72.4% feel like they belong to their schools.

**B1.3. I would recommend other children to come to this school**

|       | Frequency        | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |    |
|-------|------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|----|
| Valid | Totally disagree | 1       | ,5            | ,5                 | ,5 |

|                            |     |       |       |       |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Disagree                   | 5   | 2,4   | 2,4   | 2,9   |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 27  | 12,9  | 12,9  | 15,7  |
| Agree                      | 160 | 76,2  | 76,2  | 91,9  |
| Totally agree              | 17  | 8,1   | 8,1   | 100,0 |
| Total                      | 210 | 100,0 | 100,0 |       |

2.9% of the respondents would not recommend this school to other children, while 12.9 % nether agree nor disagree.

Question B1: *When you think about your teachers, to which extent do you agree with the following statements?*

**B4.1. I feel that I can trust my teachers**

|                            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Totally disagree           | 5         | 2,4     | 2,4           | 2,4                |
| Disagree                   | 15        | 7,1     | 7,1           | 9,5                |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 54        | 25,7    | 25,7          | 35,2               |
| Agree                      | 118       | 56,2    | 56,2          | 91,4               |
| Totally agree              | 18        | 8,6     | 8,6           | 100,0              |
| Total                      | 210       | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

9.5 percent of the students in the study do not trust their teachers at all, while 25.7 % are not sure about this, which leaves only a percentage of 64.8% of children that trust their teachers.

**B4.2. I think that, if I talk to my teachers, they would try to understand me**

|                            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Totally disagree           | 12        | 5,7     | 5,7           | 5,7                |
| Disagree                   | 21        | 10,0    | 10,0          | 15,7               |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 71        | 33,8    | 33,8          | 49,5               |
| Agree                      | 74        | 35,2    | 35,2          | 84,8               |
| Totally agree              | 32        | 15,2    | 15,2          | 100,0              |
| Total                      | 210       | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

15.7% of the respondents think that their teachers would not try to understand them when they approach them.

**B4.3. When a certain thing bothers me, the teachers listen to me**

|                            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Totally disagree           | 12        | 5,7     | 5,7           | 5,7                |
| Disagree                   | 17        | 8,1     | 8,1           | 13,8               |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 49        | 23,3    | 23,3          | 37,1               |
| Agree                      | 118       | 56,2    | 56,2          | 93,3               |
| Totally agree              | 14        | 6,7     | 6,7           | 100,0              |
| Total                      | 210       | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

The perception of 13.8% of the respondents is that teachers would not listen to them if they were worried about something.

**B4.5.If I have a personal or a social problem, my school counselor or mediator would advise me what to do**

|                        | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Totally disagree | 5         | 2,4     | 2,4           | 2,4                |

|                            |     |       |       |       |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Disagree                   | 6   | 2,9   | 2,9   | 5,2   |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 66  | 31,4  | 31,4  | 36,7  |
| Agree                      | 120 | 57,1  | 57,1  | 93,8  |
| Totally agree              | 13  | 6,2   | 6,2   | 100,0 |
| Total                      | 210 | 100,0 | 100,0 |       |

5.3% of the respondents disagree or totally disagree with the fact that they would receive advice from the school counselor or mediator if they had a problem.

Question B6: *In the past 12 months, how often were you in one of the following situations?*

**B6.1. You were upset that the other students called you names**

|                                  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Totally disagree                 | 82        | 39,0    | 39,0          | 39,0               |
| Disagree                         | 87        | 41,4    | 41,4          | 80,5               |
| Valid Neither agree nor disagree | 28        | 13,3    | 13,3          | 93,8               |
| Agree                            | 13        | 6,2     | 6,2           | 100,0              |
| Total                            | 210       | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

6.2% of the children were upset that their colleagues called them names. 13.3% didn't either deny or confirm this fact.

**B6.2. Other students in school forced you to give them money**

|                                  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Totally disagree                 | 176       | 83,8    | 83,8          | 83,8               |
| Disagree                         | 28        | 13,3    | 13,3          | 97,1               |
| Valid Neither agree nor disagree | 3         | 1,4     | 1,4           | 98,6               |
| Agree                            | 3         | 1,4     | 1,4           | 100,0              |
| Totally agree                    | 210       | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

1.4% of the respondents stated that other kids in school demanded money from them by force, while 1.4% neither agree nor disagree.

**B6.3. Other students threatened to hit you**

|                                  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Totally disagree                 | 192       | 91,4    | 91,4          | 91,4               |
| Disagree                         | 14        | 6,7     | 6,7           | 98,1               |
| Valid Neither agree nor disagree | 3         | 1,4     | 1,4           | 99,5               |
| Agree                            | 1         | ,5      | ,5            | 100,0              |
| Totally agree                    | 210       | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

The majority of the respondents denied that they received threats about physical violence from their colleagues, but the rest of 1.4 % either hesitated. There is on respondent that admitted to have received threats.

**B6.4. Other students hit you**

|                                  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Totally disagree                 | 193       | 91,9    | 91,9          | 91,9               |
| Disagree                         | 13        | 6,2     | 6,2           | 98,1               |
| Valid Neither agree nor disagree | 2         | 1,0     | 1,0           | 99,0               |
| Agree                            | 2         | 1,0     | 1,0           | 100,0              |
| Totally agree                    | 210       | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

2 children (1%) confirmed that they were physically aggressed by other colleagues, 1% didn't either agree or disagree with this statement, while 98.1 % denied this.

### Conclusions of the research

In the following, we will try to summarize only the negative results of the study – namely the children's negative perception on a supportive attitude from their parents towards their school performances and – in section B- their negative perception about the school environment, considering these possible predictors for the risk of school abandonment.

**Table no. 1. Summary of Section A - Family**

| Identified issue   | Percentage - % |
|--|----------------|
| Not sure they can trust their parents                                | 2.9            |
| Not sure that their parents try to understand them                   | 18.6           |
| Not sure that their parents would listen to them                     | 10.5           |
| Not sure that they could ask their parents for help                  | 6.7            |
| Not sure that they would receive help from their parents             | 5.2            |
| Parents do not check homework or not sure about that                 | 7.6            |
| Not sure about parents checking if they go to school                 | 11.9           |
| Parents do not praise good results or not sure about that            | 8.5            |
| Not sure that their parents support them for good results in school  | 21.9           |
| Parents do not support them for good results in school               | 1.9            |
| Do not or do not constantly talk to their parents about their future | 19             |
| Parents do not value education as being important for success        | 15.8           |
| No expectations about their education                                | 5.2            |

According to the results of our study, significant percentages of students in the primary and secondary schools from we selected the batch of respondents do not feel understood by their parents (18.6%), they are not sure about their parents' availability to listen to them (10.5%) or do not feel that their parents monitor their school attendance to a sufficient extent (11.9%). Moreover, 21.9% of the students are not counting on their parents' support for obtaining good results in school and for 15.8% of them, education is not enough valued by their parents as an important factor for success. Also, 19% of the children in our analyzed batch do not constantly talk to their parents about their future.

**Table no. 2: Summary of Section B – School**

| Attitude towards school   | Percentage - % |
|---|----------------|
| Not sure that it is a good school   | 8.6            |
| Disagree that it is a good school   | 1.4            |
| They feel that they don't belong to this school                                 | 3.4            |
| Not sure that they belong here  | 27.6           |
| Would not recommend this school   | 3.4            |
| Not sure to recommend this school   | 15.7           |
| Relationship with teachers  | Percentage - % |
| Do not trust their teachers   | 11.9           |
| Not sure if they trust their teachers   | 35.2           |
| Teachers would not understand them if they talk to them                         | 21.4           |
| Teachers would not listen if they had a problem                                 | 19.5           |
| The school counselor or mediator would not help if they had a problem           | 7.6            |
| Not sure that the school counselor or mediator would help if they had a problem | 36.7           |
| Relationship with other colleagues  | Percentage - % |
| Other children called them names  | 6.2            |
| Other children forced them for money  | 1.4            |
| Other children hit them   | 1              |

Regarding the results in section B of our research, more than a quarter of the students are not sure that they fit in their school and 15.7% would not recommend their school to other children, which proves a low satisfaction degree towards their school environment. As for the teacher-student relationship, a significant number of children do not trust their teachers (11.9%) or are not sure if they can trust them, 21.4% are convinced that teachers would not understand them if they needed to talk to them or that these would not listen to them (19.5%). Also worrying is the lack of trust that children manifest towards their cooperation with the school counselor or mediator, in case they would need advice: 36.7%.

There is also a “red flag” that signals bullying behaviors in the school environment: verbal – 6.2%, financial – 1.4% and physical – 1%.

There are also some assumptions that we could make about the results of both sections of our research, namely that consistent percentages of children often respond with “neither agree nor disagree”, which may indicate either a lack of self confidence and awareness, either a certain lack of interest about the topic. Usually, a child’s lack of confidence in personal life and in his/her family translates as lack of confidence about school and education in general and about his/her ability to pursue and achieve goals.

#### *Possible correlations*

As also confirmed by the results of previous studies in the field, the family-student relationship plays a major role in building a child’s positive and consistent attitude about school. Children who do not trust their parents or their parents’ personal or educational support are, usually, prone to exhibit the same lack of trust in their teachers and school, in general. On the contrary, parents with higher education levels or with respect for education and academic performances as a condition for a successful life are more likely to support their children about going to school and finishing more education stages, to monitor their school performance, to engage in stable communication with the school, to provide their children efficient counseling about coping with problems and about building healthy social relationships.

It is known that socio-economic factors, like poor material resources, parents migrating abroad for work, parents’ unemployment etc. influences access to equality of chances and may expose the child to marginalization and bullying in the school environment, significantly causing low self esteem and lack of confidence.

### **9. Conclusions**

The long-term impact of school dropout extends beyond the individual, affecting communities and societies. It can contribute to economic disparities, increase the likelihood of involvement in criminal activities, and strain social welfare systems.

Understanding the factors contributing to school dropout and implementing effective prevention strategies are crucial for fostering educational attainment, social mobility, and overall societal well-being. Addressing this issue requires a holistic approach that considers individual, familial, and systemic factors influencing students’ educational experiences.

There is, also, another essential component of the family factor that must be taken into account: the quality and strength of family bonds, the involvement of family in the relationship with the school, the core values and beliefs that the family passes on to the child, especially the vision on school and education, family’s trust in education as a tool for the child’s future success and life quality.

### **10. Proposals and recommendations**

As assumed in the *Strategy for the Reduction of Early School Leave in Romania* (Ministry of Education, 2014), Romania had to reduce the target of reducing the school dropout rate to 11.3% by 2020. As shown before, it failed to reach this objective, as the dropout rate was, in 2021, of 15.3% (the highest of all EU member states).

Although the Romanian's Government efforts are undeniable and financial allocations were substantial in order to plan, support and implement measures to address this issue, efficient and focused action still remains a high priority; educational and social policies must be further developed and harmonized with the aim of gaining coherence and relevance. Amongst possible causes for this failure, we may find that the Strategy did not lay a particular focus on the quality of the family-student and family-school relationship, as well as on the bullying phenomenon in the Romanian school environment as predictors for school dropout. Our research showed that there are a significant number of children for which family is not a resilience building environment, revealing lack of trust and confidence, poor involvement of the parents in the relationship with their child and a deficient attitude towards education and cultivating and promoting educational goals. This attitude reflects upon the children's trust in their teachers and counselors, as well as in a sense of non-belonging in the school environment, at times marked by rejection and bullying.

Efforts to prevent school dropout often involve targeted interventions and support programs. These may include mentoring, counseling, academic assistance, and community engagement initiatives aimed at addressing the underlying causes of dropout. Governments, educational institutions, and advocacy groups must continue their work to develop and implement policies that address the root causes of school dropout. We recommend a more detailed mapping and analysis of risk factors and on their variation according to family background and models, as well as according to socio-economic particularities.

We also recommend and encourage more initiatives focusing on improving educational quality, providing support services, and promoting inclusivity.

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