

Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)**ScienceDirect**

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 127 (2014) 733 – 737

**Procedia**  
Social and Behavioral Sciences

PSIWORLD 2013

# The effects of parental influences and school readiness of the child

Stan Maria Magdalena<sup>a\*</sup><sup>a</sup>University of Pitești, Târgul din Vale street, no. 1, Pitești 110040, Romania

---

## Abstract

The specialty literature affirms that school readiness plays a very important role for the subsequent academic success of the child. NEPG proposes an articulate model of the child school readiness, adopting a multilevel approach of the factors which can influence it: the child level, the family, the school and the community in which he belongs. It is obvious that parental involvement during the first school years is reflected in the later school results of the child. The present study aims at analyzing the effects of parental influences (parental style, parental involvement at school and at home) within the context of the beginning of the formal schooling and of the academic success of children.

© 2014 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).  
Selection and peer-review under responsibility of Romanian Society of Applied Experimental Psychology.

*Keywords:* school readiness, parental involvement, parenting style, social competence, emotional competence, academic performance

---

## 1. Introduction

It is well-known that a child whose educational line has a positive beginning has great chances to obtain beyond the average school performances. The parents know that if at the kindergarten their children learned to recognize the letters of the alphabet, to count, to cipher out to 10, to write and to read their own name correctly, it means that they will be successful in their future school activities. The level of school readiness is reflected during a first stage in the level of school adaptation - „the pupil’s adequate answer to the instructive type exigencies, respectively, his

---

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +0040723265950; fax:.  
E-mail address: [magdalena.stan@upit.ro](mailto:magdalena.stan@upit.ro), [smariamagdalena@yahoo.com](mailto:smariamagdalena@yahoo.com)

availability to acquire the conveyed information and to operationalize them in a creative, efficient way” (Negovan, 2006) and largely, in the school performances obtained at the evaluation tests.

School readiness is the term used on a wide scale in order to define school competence, but there is no consensus in defining the concept of school readiness of the child or in describing the best way to obtain this competence. Most approaches refer to the child’s ability to learn and to adapt to school demands efficiently. Approaches which refer to the criterion of the child maturity consider school readiness „maximum of correlation among the developmental domains: cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and social”. (NEGP, 1997).

School readiness involves the control of basic abilities and aptitudes which allow the child to function successfully in the school environment, to adapt himself at both the academic and social level (Hair & al, 2006).

Besides the child’s psychosocial maturity, the studies show that parents’ involvement during the first school year increases the probability to adapt easily and to obtain good grades significantly. The specialty studies show the fact that parents’ involvement in their children’s school activities determine higher grades and better school attendance, more positive attitudes and behaviours, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in higher education (Hunderson & Berla, 1994).

The beginning of formal schooling represents for the child and for his parents a new start with several expectations and with as many fears: the child anxious to take up his role as a schoolchild, to continue to learn and to discover in a guided manner what he began at kindergarten, to learn to write, to read and to cipher out; the parent worried and fearful asks himself questions very often- if the child is ready for school and if he will comply with current requirements of educational policies whose standards become higher and higher. One speaks very often about the child who is ready for school activities but also about the parents who are ready to comply with the child’s transitioning to school (Pelletier, Brent, 2002; Kreider, 2002).

Parental involvement in the beginning period of formal schooling is not well defined and cannot be very clearly operationalized (Fan, 2001; Fan, Chen, 2001), however, it can be described in terms of behaviours, patterns, practices and education – related rules in the home and participation in school activities (volunteering or involvement in school governances).

Epstein (1995) proposes a model of parental involvement which contains 6 dimensions: parenting (supporting, nurturing, rearing the child), school to home and home to school communication, volunteering (providing assistance at child’s school), learning at home (managing, recognizing, rewarding the child), decision making and collaborating with the community.

Besides parental involvement, socio-demographic characteristics of the families have been analyzed as predictors of academic success of children – lower income, large families, single parent and the educational level of parents (less educated).

The parental style – represents a constellation of attitudes manifested towards children that create an emotional climate within which the parental behaviour manifest itself (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Parental style represents a powerful predictor of the child’s school performances, more powerful than socio-demographic characteristics. (Dornbusch, et al., 1987; Deslandes et al., 1999). The specialty literature conceptualizes parental styles around two dimensions „demandingness” and „responsiveness” which are illustrated in the interaction between parents and children (Mangleburg, 1992). The dimension of responsiveness refers to the fact that parents which fall in this category manifests behaviours of encouraging children’s autonomy and individuality, supportive behaviours to their children’s needs. The dimension demandingness contains those parental practices which impose upon their children maturity, discipline, excessive control and confrontation in case of disobedience. *The authoritarian style* associates a high level of control and a limitation of the child autonomy; he is enforced strict principles and behaviour rules: authority, tradition, work, discipline, order are values the parents impose systematically. *The authoritative style* combines systematic control with a high level of parental support. Parents formulates rules and control their observance, but they are not imposed, they are open to verbal changes, explaining them the reasons for the rules and the situations of their application, stimulating at the same time their autonomy in thinking. *The permissive style* is characterized by a low level of control, associated with the identification of the parent with the child’s emotional states. Few behaviour rules and few responsibilities are enforced upon him and the manner in which he responds to parental expectations is subject to a low control.

Darling and Steinberg (1993) develop an integrative model of the influence of parental styles upon the child’s development– parenting style as a context, by which they demonstrate the moderator role of the parental style upon

parental practices in relation to child development. Both parental style and parental practices are results of parental goals and values, but these ones influence in a different manner the development level, namely, if parental practice has a direct effect, the parental style alters the parent's capacity to socialize with their children by changing the effectiveness of their parenting practices (Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p.493).

## 2. Objectives

Studying the specialty literature, we have observed that the parental style does not manifest directly upon the child's development, but through the agency of parental practices. The present study proposes to analyze the effects of the relations among family characteristics (education level, structure, size), parental involvement during the first year of formal schooling (parent –child communication, communication with the teachers, affective support), parental style (warmth, supervision) and the academic success of the child, thus determining the moderator role of the parental style.

## 3. Methodology of research

### 3.1. Participants

The research has been performed on a fixed, non-aleatory sample, the group of subjects being formed of 106 children, having the average age of  $m= 6,531$ ,  $SD= 0,27$ , 59 boys and 47 girls, which come from school units in the Argeş district, from the urban – 79 children, and the rural - 27 children environment. The parents group consisted of 106 members, 94,33% females and 5,67% males, aged between 32 and 43 years. As concerns the structure of the families these are intact - 97,17 % and 2,83 % made up of a single parent; size of the family: 54,71% - 1 child, 24,52%- 2 children and 19,77 % above 3 children. Concerning the educational level of the parents, 84,90% have university studies, 9,44 % pre-university studies and 5,66% vocational studies.

### 3.2. Instruments

Parental Authority Questionnaire- PAQ instrument elaborated by John R. Buri. The PAQ is a 30 item instrument designed to measure parental authority or disciplinary practice from the point of view of the child of any age. The PAQ has three subscales based on prototypes of parental authority: permissive – relatively warm, nondemanding, noncontrolling parents; authoritarian – parents who value unquestioning obedience and attempt to control their children's behaviour, often through punitive disciplinary procedures and authoritative – falling somewhere between other two dimensions, using firm, clear but flexible and rational modes of parenting. The PAQ is scored easily by summing the individual items to comprise the subscale scores.

The evaluation of the involvement level at home and / or at school was evaluated by a questionnaire adapted following the French variant (Deslandes et al, 1995) of the instrument proposed by Epstein et al, 1993. The instrument has 5 dimensions and 20 items which include activities involving parents at school and at home: parental affective support – 6 items, communication with the teacher – 4 items, the parent-child daily interaction based on school subjects – 4 items, communication parent-school – 3 items and communication parent –child – 3 items.

The evaluation of school acquisitions at the end of the I-st grade had been achieved through standardized tests elaborated by us in the learning domain mathematics (writing and reading of natural numbers; addition and subtraction of natural numbers; problem solving; the use of mathematical language), the reception of the written language (identification of letters, groups of letters, syllables, words, statements in the written text; identification of the meaning of the words, identification of the meaning of the written statements, the reading of words, sentences, statements, texts, capacity of written expression (writing of small and capital letters, of syllables and words; writing of simple and complex sentences and of declarative, interrogative, exclamatory sentences; transcription/ copying of letters, words, sentences, texts; writing after dictation of letters, words, sentences, texts; composition of words, sentences, short texts. The tests proposed by us refer to the diagnosis (measurement) of the level of acquisitions

achieved by the pupil of the first grade in the curricular area mathematics and language and communication. We had in view the informational aspect (knowledge acquisition) as well as the formative aspect, (the capacity to act, to operate, to solve problems). The competences in the domain of mathematics and language and communication had been set according to the curricular standards for the primary education –I-st grade. The method used in the elaboration of problems is the deductive one and implied the construction of items and their selection were based on specialized persons' (experts) opinion. Using a specific methodology, rigorously applied, 3 final tests had been elaborated, each of them containing 10 items having different difficulty levels which relate to the mentioned competences. The tests elaborated by us imply an accepted value of fidelity, the calculated value of the coefficient  $\alpha$  Cronbach being of 0,79- the test in the domain mathematics, 0,72 – the test for the identification of the written expression capacity and 0,82- the test for the identification of the capacity for the reception of the written language. The criterion validity had been ensured by the use of the objective appreciation method of school performances in the domain mathematics, using the unmarked graphic scale, the value of the validity coefficient being of  $r=0,68$ ,  $p=0,000$ , bilateral- mathematics,  $r=0,83$ ,  $p=0,000$ , bilateral – the tests of acquisitions in the domain of the written expression,  $r=0,76$ ,  $p=0,000$ , bilateral – the test in the domain of the reception of the written language.

#### 4. Results and discussions

The data collected had been analyzed by means of the statistic processing program SPSS 17. During a first stage, we verified normality, homogeneity, linearity and multi-collinearity among the inferred variables (parental characteristics, parental style, parental practices and school performance). In order to find out which of the above-mentioned variables contribute to a great extent as predictors of school performance, we used the regression analysis, the procedure stepwise.

Table 1. Correlation matrix among the variables: parental characteristics, parental style, parental practices, school performance

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Structure	1.000	-.154	.237	-.296	-.378	-.050	.000	-.287	-.213	-.432*
2 Education level		1.000	-.156	.102	.092	.228	-.014	-.144	-.236	.105
3 Size			1.000	-.055	-.027	.191	-.298	-.253	.189	.047
4 Warmth				1.000	.125	.123	.452	.012	.144	.793*
5 Supervision					1.000	.047	.145	.277	.225	.548*
6 Authonomy						1.000	.222	.325	.145	.325*
7 Affective support							1.000	.447	.322	.657*
8 Communication with the teachers								1.000	.187	.555*
9 Parent –child communication									1.000	.245*
10 School performance										1.000

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ ,  $N = 106$

The analysis of the data indicates that 84,5% from the variation of school performance is explained by the combination of predictor variables: warmth, supervision, parent- child communication and autonomy,  $F(4,105)=34,97$ ,  $p < .01$ . In case of our study, the most important predictor is warmth whose value is  $\beta=0,38$  followed by supervision, communication parent-child and affective support.

School performances at the beginning of formal schooling depend to a large extent on parents' involvement (Epstein, 1992, Deslandes, 1999) – communication, affective support, but also largely on the practised parental style. Parents who exercise a behavior which determines limitation in the autonomy of their children and lack of affective support have the chance that they obtain low school performances. Children who feel they are loved and who feel their parents' involvement have a fair turn to obtain academic success.

It is very interesting that the results of the present study show that fact that the communication parents-teachers do not represent an important predictor in the pupils' school performances. It seems that the communication relation parent-child is much more important ( $\beta=0,22$ ).

The characteristics of the family and its modality of involvement have lesser effects in obtaining school performances as compared to their educational style.

## 5. Conclusions

Transitioning to school represent a difficult process not only for children but also for their parents. The present study proposed to identify the predictors at the level of parental- variable (parental characteristics, parental style, parental involvement) in obtaining academic success in the process of transitioning to school. The data obtained demonstrated the fact that parental style and parents' implication are more powerful predictors as compared to the family characteristics (structure, size, educational level), as well that the parental style manifest through the parents' degree of involvement.

The practical implications of the study refer first to the home –school connections which are crucial in the transition from kindergarten.

School must offer support for the parents, to facilitate their access to their children's activities through the preparation and dissemination of home – learning activity, and not lastly to offer the parents access to optimization and efficiency support groups for parental educational styles.

## References

- Darling, N., Steinberg, L. (1993). Parenting style as context: an integrative model. *Psychological Bulletin* vol 113, no3, 487-496
- Deslandes, R., Bertrand, R., Royer, E., Turcotte, D. (1995). Validation d'instruments de mesure du style parental et de la participation parentale dans le suivi scolaire. *Mesure et evaluation en education*, 18, 2, 63-79.
- Deslandes, R., Potvin, P., Leclerc, D. (1999). Family characteristic as predictors of school achievement: parental involvement as a mediator. *Mc Gill Journal of education*, vol. 34, no 2, 135-153
- Epstein, J. L., Connors, L. J., & Salinas, K. C. (1993). *High school and family partnerships: Questionnaires for teachers, parents, and students*. Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University, Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning.
- Fan, X. (2001). Parental involvement and student's academic achievement: a growth modeling analysis. *The journal of Experimental Education*, 70, 27-61
- Fan, X., Chen, M. (2001). Parental involvement and student's academic achievement: a meta analysis. *Education Psychological Review*, 13,1-22.
- Hair, E., Halle, T., Humen, E. T, et. al., (2006). Children's school readiness in the ECLS- K: Predictions to academic, Health, and social outcomes in the first grade, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21, 431-454
- Henderson, A., Berla, N. (1994). *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement*. Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.
- Kreider, H. (2002). *Getting parents "ready" for kindergarten: the role of early childhood education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project. <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/getting-parents-ready-for-kindergarten-the-role-of-early-childhood-education>
- Negovan V. (2006). *Introducere în psihologia educației* [Introduction to psychopedagogy]. București: Editura Universitară
- National Educational Goals Panel, (1997). *Getting a good start in school*. Washington, DC
- Pelletier, J., Brent, J. M. (2002). Parent participation in children's school readiness: the effects of parental self-efficacy, cultural diversity and teacher strategies. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 34, 45-60